



The Politics-Bureaucracy Relationship: A Variation of Clientelism Network in Jambi Local Election

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Abstract—This study analyzes the variations of political-bureaucratic clientelism in simultaneous regional elections in six regions in Jambi province. This study reveals two patterns of relationship. Network client exchanges are where the incumbent intervenes and mobilizes officials, while new politicians use technical persuasion or inducement. Another form, on their initiative, bureaucrats support, facilitate, and fund the campaigns of the candidates they support. We argue that the relationship between the politicians and apparatus is a pseudo and unequal network exchange. Politicians promise rewards such as promotions, while civil servants deploy their various elements to their patrons. This condition has double consequences for the state civil apparatus. On the one hand, they expend material and social capital with the effects of disobeying bureaucratic neutrality; on the other hand, they face "no guarantee or protection" after the election if their patron fails, which has the potential to disrupt the public service process.

Keywords—Politics, bureaucracy, patron-client, regional election

I. INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of the new order regime, political institutions in Indonesia underwent rapid and fundamental changes, including the electoral system. The simultaneous processes of democratic reform and administrative decentralization have changed the country's political system from a centralized and authoritarian to a more democratic and decentralized system. The most prominent and vital aspect of democratic reform and political decentralization is the introduction of regular and consistent regional elections[1], [2], and it has implications for increasing the power of local government[3]. The dynamics of implementing elections in the region continue to change, and simultaneous elections have been successfully conducted with the arguments for effectiveness and efficiency. Issues that often arise in this contest are money politics, black campaigns, and manipulation of election data. In addition, transactional politics usually occurs between politicians and the voters and involves bureaucrats who should be neutral in political contestation. The dominant understanding of democratic practices in Indonesia recently has been concluded as patronage democracy[4].

Politics-bureaucratic interface in Indonesia, especially in the post-reformation, has been the subject of researchers from various perspectives. The debates center on civil servant non-compliance with the neutrality principle in politics, the effect of regulation on the neutrality of the apparatus, and the difficulty in actualizing neutrality in elections[5], bureaucratic

neutrality in the 2020 simultaneous local elections[6], the urgency of state civil apparatus (SCA) neutrality in regional elections and synchronization of objectivity based on laws related to civil servants[7], as well as the patronage of political parties with the bureaucracy in regional power contestation[8]. Then previous studies also emphasized issues of patronage networks in provinces/districts related to their influence on human resources management practices in the service sector[9], and identification of bureaucratic politicization in environmental evaluations[10].

Furthermore, the researchers' attention also leads to empirical evidence of patronage in human resources management and service delivery in government institutions[11], the reciprocal relationship between politicians as patrons and the public as clients[12]. A clientelist of politicians with voters as the center of analysis uses a clientelism perception index (CPI) that uses seven categories of client practices; public services, welfare programs, contracts, jobs, licenses, social assistance funds, and vote-buying based on different social and economic characteristics[13]. Patronage does not only have an impact on the position and quality of public services but also has an impact on the informal dimensions of politics and local economic conditions that encourage clientelist practices in public service delivery[14], [15].

These studies tend to focus on bureaucratic neutrality, patronage, and clientelism in the provision of public services as well as in determining officer/apparatus positions. In contrast to previous studies, this study examines the variation in the relationship between politicians and the bureaucracy in the regional election. This study is important to review because politicians and bureaucracy establish patron-client relationships during power contestation stages. Clientelism is a social relationship between patron and client through direct and face-to-face interactions that are transactional, instrumental friendship, or dyadic alliances[16]. In another explanation, patronage is seen as a type of social relationship in the anthropological sense, and from this view, the study of patronage is the analysis of how persons of unequal authority, yet linked through ties of interest and friendship, manipulate their relationships to attain their goal. However, from the viewpoint of a political scientist, patronage "refers to how party politicians distribute public jobs or special favors in exchange for electoral support"[17].

Clientelism leads to corrupt contracting where there is favoritism in resource allocation in clientelist systems, bureaucrats may be pressured or incentivized to allocate resources, such as government contracts, public services, or development projects, to individuals or groups based on political considerations rather than objective criteria. This can result in inefficient resource allocation and hinder the equitable distribution of public goods[18]. This research

explicitly highlights what is happening at the provincial level to gain an in-depth understanding of the forms and variations of clientelism closely related to social relations. Moreover, local elites in the province exercise their hegemony through various means ranging from religious, regional, and political to employment organizations. They even build patronage through bureaucratic jobs because they control the rents in parts of the cities within the province [19]. This paper highlights explicitly the dimension of variation based on patronage and clientage resource base because it seems very relevant to the existing phenomenon, and this is appropriate for assessing how capital base exchanges between politicians and the bureaucracy.

II. METHOD

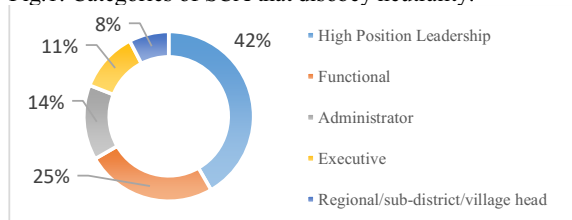
This study uses a descriptive qualitative method to describe the variation of patron-client between politicians and SCA in simultaneous regional elections in 6 regions in Jambi province conducted in 2020. Descriptive qualitative is appropriate in helping the writer to analyze the variations of client patrons formed. This paper relies on secondary data from news, social media, publications, and the General Election Supervisory Agency reports to reveal existing patronage phenomena. In addition, the authors also use observational data during the regional election. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's analysis stages[20]; data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. These three activities are interrelated at the time before, during, and after data collection in a parallel form. To explain the phenomena, this paper uses two indicators which are the resource base of patronage and the resource base of clients. The resource base of patronage is seen from a patron's perspective in collecting clients based on their ability to help them. In contrast, the resource base of clientage emphasizes how clients provide assistance and services when patrons need it. This variation is a characteristic that distinguishes one patron-client pair from another[21].

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

In the past five years, ahead of a regional head election, there has been an exchange of patronage and clientelism networks between politicians and the bureaucracy. Indonesian constitutional law places the bureaucracy in the same space as politics. This ultimately causes the position of the bureaucracy to become subordinate to political power. In consequence, there is a practice of clientelism between bureaucracy and politics, especially in local democracy. In Jambi Province, there are 6 (six) regencies/cities including, Tanjung Jabung Timur, Tanjung Jabung Barat, Batanghari, Bungo, Kerinci, and Sungai Penuh held simultaneous regional elections at the end of 2020. During the election period, local political dynamics showed the variation of clientelism between politics and bureaucracy.

Fig.1: Categories of SCA that disobey neutrality.



Source: [22].

The relationship between politicians and the bureaucracy can be detected from the involvement of officials from various levels in nationwide regional elections. SCA involvement in politics is affiliated with one candidate, and politicians and civil servants have a tie in reciprocal individual relationships during the contest. In this phase, the patron and client establish a relationship and exchange their resources where transactions can be carried out both during the election and post-election stages. Apparatus that disobeys neutrality and are involved in practical politics can be seen from the five position categories (Fig. 1). In the context of Jambi province, this involvement can be seen from the variants, as presented in the following table:

Table 1: SCA disobedience of neutrality

| Types of SCA involvement in Election | Number of Case |
|--|----------------|
| Providing support through social media | 398 |
| Attend/participate in hospitality/socialization/social service events | 129 |
| Approach or register itself in one of the political parties | 103 |
| Support one of the candidates | 85 |
| The village head or village officials provide support to one of the prospective candidates | 45 |
| Declares himself as a candidate for regional head | 44 |
| Dissemination of prospective candidates through campaign props | 398 |
| Promote their self or others | 27 |
| Disobey of the principle of neutrality/partisanship in the election | 22 |
| Inviting or intimidating to support a candidate | 14 |
| Total | 1,265 |

Source: [23]

1. The Resource Base of Patronage.

The essential basis for detecting the politicians' resources is what and how much they control them. Generally, patrons rely on; their knowledge and skills, direct control over private property, or indirect control over other people's (usually public) property or authority[21]. Politicians running as candidates for regent/mayor have or control economic resources, socio-cultural capital, and power at certain levels, effectively mobilizing masses from various masses or certain circles. The candidate pairs come from people in business who have or control property, religious leaders, and community leaders who have networks in various groups. Furthermore, they also have access to specific organizations such as political parties, social-religious organizations, or persons who are in power in the government institution. Those who fight not only rely on the vision, mission, and prospective programs that can appeal the rational voters, but they also control, own, and accumulate capitals that play a significant role in fighting for power.

At the simultaneous regional election stage, the accumulated capital owned by politicians is used to mobilize SCAs and their families to vote according to their expectations[24]. Apparatuses in regions/districts where the incumbent is again running for office, such as Tanjung Jabung Timur and Bungo, are easily threatened and intervened, and their families are mobilized to elect the incumbents. In this situation, they are forced to be involved in the succession in various ways and forms of involvement. On the other hand, in constituencies where the contesting candidates are

newcomers, such as Batang Hari, Kerinci, Sungai Penuh, and Tanjung Jabung Barat, officials are promised strategic positions, facilities, access, jobs/projects, and various ways to maintain relationships. This kind of relationship pattern can eventually coexist with the democratization process in the local sphere, but it is responsible for the emergence of collusive and nepotistic practices.

2. *The Resource Base of Clientage*

As a reciprocal relationship, the client provides assistance and services when the patron needs it or when the client builds a network. Assistance as a form of the transaction provided by the apparatus can be seen from three signs; the first, labor services and economic support, the second, the deployment of defense and security components such as those carried out by members of bandit groups for their leaders or heroic actions to defend their leaders, and the last, political services such as conducting campaigns, identifying and mapping supporters or acting as agents of politicians[21].

The apparatus's support for candidates in the succession can be seen through their involvement during the campaign period. Their activities are seen as taking part in the entourage of prospective mayoral candidates in Sungai Penuh[25], and in other areas, openly campaigning for candidate pairs both verbally, distributing candidate profiles[26], and symbolically such as using the "like" feature on social media, making the logo that was posted in the media, and posing with one of the politicians who are competing[27]. They mobilize people to vote with the code '*orang kito*' (our group). This issue is especially striking in Tanjung Jabung Timur district, where the district head's voter base was dominated by ethnic-based voters from the previous election. SCA propagates primordialism issues in informal activities such as family gatherings, weddings, and community events.

SCA facilitates campaign activities in the form of campaign props and campaign tools. This form of support is visible, such as one of the school principals in the Sungai Penuh putting up a banner of a candidate pair in front of the school[28]. Another form of service is in the form of one of the apparatus houses being used as a post and a gathering place for volunteers. Apart from that, they also donated accompanied by messages to vote candidates, such as equipment for routine activities of *tahlilan* groups (Qur'an recitation group), art tools, and sports equipment. The apparatus assisted in distributing money just before the voting day and helping funds for incumbent candidate pairs by giving money to prospective voters and then distributing masks for incumbent candidates to the public. They play a dual role, being involved as political brokers and showing as supporters[29].

Ultimately, what several apparatuses did during the election period was a clear demonstration of open and courageous involvement. Even attack each other personally on social media with political brokers from political opponents. Some warn them to not be involved but they do not care about the statement and even challenge it by replying 'Early retirement is not a problem'[29]. This is a fundamental practice of clientelism that exchanges power between patrons and their clients. It is common to find some bureaucratic elites who want to maintain control or get a higher position[6].

B. *Discussion*

Regional elections have provided a space to implement decentralization and autonomy in the reGENCY or province. The development of democratization and decentralization has

resulted in various local political dynamics in regions. One of them is the emergence of the domination of power in local politics. Political system changes in the post-new order have opened opportunities for the people to realize regional aspirations by having local leaders elected by the people. This also impacts the pluralization of political elites at the local level. Local democratic mechanisms provide equal rights for all citizens to be elected or to vote. It was a means for local elites to expand and legitimize their domination of power. Including its dominance in practicing patron-client ties. From the Asian context, clientelism politics has become part of the political dilemma in South Asia, including Indonesia[30].

In general, patronage practices vary widely, ranging from the use of money given to voters, the provision of education and health services, and the provision of public goods that target social groups such as farmers and youth organizations with the assumption that they are easily influenced emotionally. These transactional politics are ordinary, usually through political brokers and personal power. These practices take place not only within formal institutions, namely political parties but also it is increasingly practiced outside parties through informal agreements [31].

The findings above show how the dimensions of patronage variations involving the bureaucracy occurred during regional elections in Jambi Province. Bureaucrats in Indonesia, with whatever position they hold, have a special position within society. Undeniably, their position in work makes them influential in the social life of society. Thus, we found that bureaucrats have become the informal networks for politicians through their influence within society. Bureaucrats may become part of the clientelist networks established by political elites. They can act as intermediaries between politicians and constituents, using their positions to provide preferential treatment or access to government resources in exchange for political support. This can blur the lines between the bureaucracy's neutral role and partisan interests.

The traditional patron-client relationship was maintained and legitimized by a personalized perception of power and political adherence exemplified in religious and cultural values. Traditional patrimonial systems require a leader to provide security and protection for followers. This, in turn, is compensated for by the passive loyalty of the followers. However, in addition to safety, leaders in contemporary patrimonial systems provide material resources for their followers, which are then reciprocated with active political support[12]. Patronage practices that are widely highlighted generally show transactional relationships such as money politics or reciprocation.

The relationship between politicians and the bureaucracy at the election stage in the six regions of Jambi province is a network exchange that is "a pseudo and unequal patronage", where SCA mobilizes various elements at their disposal to win their patron. In contrast, politicians promise rewards that will be reciprocated if elected. This condition has double consequences for the apparatus; on the one hand, they expend material and social capital with the results of disobeying neutrality principles, and on the other hand, they face post-election uncertainty known as "unprotected pseudo-patronage." At this point, the imbalance in the exchange between patrons and clients, in the case of this paper, causes officer dysfunction, which goes hand in hand with damage to the system for filling public positions and the quality of public services.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It is worth noting that clientelism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, and its presence in Indonesian local government can vary across regions and contexts. The relationship between politicians and bureaucrats in contesting power in the regions shows a dyadic relationship where politicians promise rewards such as promotions and are sometimes accompanied by threats. Likewise, the bureaucracy facilitates and involves itself in the campaign during the election stages and becomes a successful team. As Scott argumentation, transactions between the two are not only direct and not always related to economic benefits, but the reciprocal relationship is almost uncertain, related to 'who gets what.' This undermines the integrity of public administration, hampers efficient service delivery, and erodes public trust. On the one hand, some believe that clientelist relationships help marginalized communities access resources and services that they might otherwise lack but not through a bureaucratic system. This paper is initial research conducted in several regions in Jambi, and there may be various variations in other areas. The broker between politicians and the bureaucracy should have been studied so this requires a more in-depth study.

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