

BOOK REVIEW

PATRONAGE DEMOCRACY IN INDONESIA

Edward Aspinall & Ward Berenschot. (2019). Democracy for Sale: Elections, Clientelism, and the State in Indonesia. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.

This book is the result of field research and expert surveys conducted by Aspinall and Berenschot about Indonesian democratic practices that occur directly with people's lives. Findings and analysis presented in this book are quietly comprehensive. As an opening in this book, Aspinall and Berenschot describe general concept and practice of patronage democracy in Indonesia. Then this description is elaborated in the form of clientelism variations as the basis of analysis in the next review. Based on historical context, the New Order Government created state-centered patronage system and it causes the role of political parties was insignificant. Aspinall and Berenschot believed it has implication for pattern between politician and political parties, which strengthens patronage and weaken the role of party; added with electoral system itself. Political parties were trapped in political clientelism for the survival of party organization.

From the field research, there are three aspects in this book. First, networking and mobilization of resources for supporting candidate in election. It called a success team as an *ad hoc* organization and the politicians rely on them. The practice of vote buying and selling has created political broker phenomenon in Indonesia. Second, control and power. This aspect highlight of politician struggle in order to control and utilize state resources, including bureaucracy politization. Third, the analyze

also discuss clientelist political intensity in Indonesia which create variations clientelism in various regions. Then, this book provides conclusion and some recommendations to reduce patronage democracy and clientelism which aims to create good governance.

The important matter from the whole discussion of this book is that the practice of clientelism is apparent at the time of the election, where the position of political parties eroded by political clientelism. Political clientelism has weakened the political position and institutional support of political parties. Quoting Hicken (2011), the essence of clientelism politics is *quid pro quo*; "Something for something", or contingent exchange. Politicians offer benefits and hope that recipients will reciprocate with political support. Therefore, the practice of political clientelism occurs when voters, campaign activists, or other actors provide electoral support for politicians (parties) in return for assistance or material benefits (W. B. E. Aspinall, 2019, p. 2). These politicians apply the clientelist method to win the election by distributing aid, goods, and even money to voters both individually and in groups.

The clientelist method can be seen when PPP candidates for the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) Pangkal Pinang work together with drinking water depots to distribute 20 liters refill drinking water to customers.

When customers come to refill drinking water, the owner of the depot will provide water for free and urge them to choose the candidate. The depot owner routinely collects fees to the sponsoring candidate, although as the candidate acknowledges, he does not know how to ensure that those who refill drinking water will choose him. Moreover, the candidate acknowledged that there were customers who did not merely refill drinking water, but asked for Aqua, which cost more (M. S. E. Aspinnall, 2015, p. 126).

Furthermore, the practice of political clientelism is seen when there is an exchange of material benefits at each stage of the electoral process. It starts with a large amount of money that must be paid by various candidates to political parties to get the support in order to nominate them in elections. During negotiations, they are with prospective candidates, party administrators often demand extreme “prices” and in return they promise support that benefits the candidates in the election. As an example, we can see from nomination of La Nyalla as governor of East Java in 2018 from Gerindra Party. From La Nyalla’s acknowledgment, he was asked to provide 40 billion rupiah as the cost of completing the winnings. Previously, La Nyalla stated that he had already given 5.9 billion rupiah to the chairman of the Regional Council of Gerindra East Java and would cash a check of 70 billion rupiah if a letter of recommendation from the Gerindra Party was issued (Lazuardi, 2018).

This is continued when the candidates set up their campaign organization. They attract the interest of campaign workers with money along with special access to projects or development plans. Then campaign workers continue this practice to community leaders with donations for infrastructure development or simply by giving them pay “under the table” (transportation cost, “tired” cost, etc.). Finally, on the day before election, the campaign workers carried out their duties on the streets and from house to house in the form of a “dawn attack” in which they distributed amounts of money to the voters.

This study shows that political parties have a role in the clientelism exchange because it becomes the life wheel of political parties. This is inseparable from the role of the government of the New Order regime which practiced a patronage political system that was very centralistic and closed. At that time the practice of control based on the discretion of position on state resources was dominated by political actors, local officials and former bureaucrats who lacked ties with political parties. This situation seems to continue until now, so that the distribution of government patronage and put the main control in their hands. This is what creates patronage democracy in Indonesia and does not benefit the life of the party machine in the reform era.

Subjects described in this book reinforce the phenomenon that candidates more depend on informal personal networks than on parties or another formal structures. Intellectuals describe Indonesia as a “patronage democracy” and as a system of “fragmented clientelism” in which “what matters is who you know, for what, and to whom you pay or repay services. From this view, patronage democracy, based on other study, also strengthened patron-client cultural factor. It becomes a socio-cultural product which has certain privileges (patrons) such as giving money or profits in return for the loyalty of their followers (clients). The institutionalist approach in clientelism studies emphasizes the design of political institutions that are credited with spreading patron-client practices; for example, competitive elections and multiparty systems are the cause of rampant political patronage in the electoral system, decentralization, and decision making processes, both in the legislative and executive branches (Muhtadi, 2013). For this group, patron-clients are increasingly attractive to politicians in countries where integration of the political system is still poor, strong ethnic divisions, and weak economic performance.

Moreover, on this book, other aspect which is interesting to discuss is the resource network that candidates rely on it for election as an alternative of political parties. It is the successful team which managed the broker’s

disciplinary issues, politician's role, integrating various social networks into the campaigns by involving community figures and providing collective forms of patronage.

The term "broker" in this book actually reinforces from previous Aspinall study. Brokerage; which is commonly called 'political intermediary' in Aspinall (2014) refers on three types of "political intermediaries" based on loyalty. The first type of predation who takes over resources intended for voters or some other team member. Although not all, loyalty predation occurs when the intermediaries (the success team) simultaneously work for more than one candidate. The second type is defection, which occurs when a successful team defects from the first candidate by leaving it then supporting the candidate's rival. The third type, Aspinall proposes a success team whose loyalty is influenced by political, ethnic, religious. This loyalty can be militant, far from the element of predation, but it further strengthens patronage democracy.

Although these teams manage large candidate campaigns, their function is more on the distribution of money and goods to voters. This is ironic because although Indonesia has a fairly institutionalized party system for a new Asian democracy, the existence of parties is surprisingly marginalized within the structure of the success team itself. Furthermore, clientelism and patronage caused the existence of political parties could not have significant role; even they are stuck in it. This is because of the oligarchic character of political parties and the clientelist nature of an election. The enormous cost of the campaign led to the widespread dominance of political elite, especially those that entered the political parties. They made political parties as political vehicles with a political money system (political dowry) so that they could be nominated. This continued until the campaign to the seizure of political power.

To conclude, this book shows that patronage democracy—which is strengthened by clientelism and resources—had created that elections only seen by politicians how to winning the competition. All strategies carried

out by politicians have an impact on the spread of money politics, and over time, it is considered normal by society. It shows that political parties in the reform era are still weak. The purpose of political parties in seizing power is no longer to carry out the function of control or balance of power, but to achieve pragmatic goals; to win the candidate through money politics. For this reason, on one side, political parties have indeed become political forces, but on the other hand they also support the practice of political clientelism.

The weak position of political parties was also caused by their funding problems. This causes political parties must "think hard" to get funding for running their political party organizations. Therefore, the position of business people began to enter the political career. They control finances and since politics needs money, business people can support finance for political wheels of political parties. With this high social status, business people have a strong bargaining position. When they are active in political parties, it is strongly suspected that they will have political behavior that will practice all habits in the business world, namely rational market mechanisms. (Mufti, 2013, p. 248). All political decision processes and policies are always associated with market calculations regarding profit and loss.

Faced with all these problems, this book recommends several things. One of them is strengthening civil society. This is because many social organizations, especially the grassroots which are always vulnerable to hijacking for the purpose of patronage distribution. Thus, in addition to political parties, CSOs also strengthen hierarchical social relations. That is why Indonesia needs a stronger organizational life, both civil society and political parties, to integrate various interests of social groups and conduct advocacy in the long run.

Secondly, it reminds us that the next threat of democracy is distrust of political parties which can further foster individual practice of clientelism. Thus, it is important to strengthen the institutionalization of political parties both in their organization and performance. The

institutionalization of political parties is needed to deter candidates who advance by bringing clientelist politics. When candidates advance in elections from the personal appeal and give anything as a person (not party representation), they will have a strong incentive to act collectivistically. On the other hand, if they advance as a representation of party that is already strong, the coordination of campaign promises surrounding the program offer is increasingly directed. In addition, candidates who are connected to stronger parties can reduce the amount of money used by the candidates to buy political party support.

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