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# Social Exchange of Political Elites in the Regional Leader Election of Gorontalo Province, Indonesia

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**Abstract**— This article aims to dissect the theoretical perspective of the social exchange of political elites in the regional leader election of Gorontalo Province. Data collection methods used interviews, documentation, and retrospectives. This research produces several findings, among others: Firstly, the social exchange relations of the political elite were strategic situations that were interdependent, mutually needy, and mutually beneficial as well as an effort to consolidate power in achieving electability/victory in the momentum of regional elections. Second, the pattern of social exchange was based on several potential ownership of elite resources both figure, financial, and social strength that were considered by political parties in determining and giving the party's blessing/recommendations for regional leader candidates. Third, the social exchange strategy was how the political elite used and maximized their resources to achieve victory in the regional leader election contestation. Fourth, sociological implications were how social and political interaction took place in the life of the community after the election of regional head candidates. Is the community fragmented, causing friction and how to reduce its potential? This research concluded that the process of regional heads succession, political parties utilizing the figure of a candidate pair to strengthen their political influence to gain support from the public (voters). Even though the candidate pairs of regional heads, voters and political parties do not have close relations, both ideologically and sociologically.

**Keywords**- *Social Exchange, Regional Leader Election, Sociology, Quantitative Research*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of social exchange of political elites in the regional leader elections the authors begin by submitting the research results of LSI and SMRC (2011); Political Indicator (2013) which conducted that the high political costs were due to both regional head candidates and legislative and constituent candidates only building short-term (pragmatic) political relations with political parties ([www.kompas.com](http://www.kompas.com), 12 December 2013).

The relevance of the research findings of some of the survey institutions above indicates that the political orientation in Indonesia has not yet moved away from the struggle for power. A political system that is supposed to articulate people's interests is only a means of achieving the goals of interest groups. Therefore, the social exchange of the political elite is still both a scourge and an ulcer in politics in the country. Transactional politics and all accompanying financial aspects are then packaged in more polite terms as a political cost also popular as a political budget cycle (Rogoff, 1987; Blais & Nadeau, 1992; Gonzales, 2002;

Brender & Drazen, 2004 Shi & Svensson, 2006) where all budgets related to political financing are considered rational in the democratic process.

In addition to research in the global context above, the theme of transactional politics has received the attention of many national and local researchers, for example, Hidayat et al. (2007) dissect the power relations of the elite at the local level between businessmen, authorities and post-election regional government administration discover what he calls the oligarchy of power practices. According to him, the oligarchic construction basis for power varies based on the strength of political parties, kinship ties, tribal ties, and family relations. The oligarchic practice of power is relatively effective in the administration of regional government because it is supported by the presence of shadow politics and business managers who act as liaison actors between regional officials and the community in general and to entrepreneurs in particular.

Muhtadi (2013) about money politics and electoral dynamics explained the rise of money politics due to two main things, consist of First, the lack of voter closeness to political parties. Second, the poor performance of political parties in the public's view because of the many party cadres involved in corruption cases. On the other hand, Razaqtiar (2015) examines the role of political parties in regional elections. In the 2013 Karanganyar District Election case, it was concluded that the victory of the regional head candidate pairs was not only determined by the popularity of the regional head candidate pairs, political parties had an important role not only as a political vehicle but also as a means of bringing together a number of strategic ideas to raise the electability of candidates for regional head candidates.

Likewise, the results of quantitative research conducted by Indora, Suntoro, and Nurmalisa (2014) found that there was a significant influence between the influence of transactional politics on voter behavior in regional head elections. Similarly, the findings of Rachim's (2017) doctoral dissertation on transactional politics in Makassar City explain that the closeness of political actors to several regional officials is enough to influence the level of electability of candidates for legislative members.

The findings of the previous researches in principle are sufficient to explain if the current democratic process still opens as wide a space as possible to the practice of social exchange of the political elite. This phenomenon also fosters the practice of patronage and clientelism in democracy. Patronage is interpreted as a form of distribution of material or political benefits made by politicians to their constituents, while clientelism is the character of the relationship between politicians and their constituents (Aspinall and Sukmajati, 2015: 4).

Substantially, previous research with the theme of social exchange of political elites can be grouped into two study patterns, namely: First, the researcher outlines the important role of transactional politics to sustain the strength of regional head candidates, legislative candidates and voters and political parties is an interdependent state and are mutually beneficial. Second, transactional politics as a scourge and ulcer that undermines the democratic system because it only perpetuates the pragmatic relationship of each element related to the administration of the political process (regional head candidates/legislative candidates, constituents, and political parties). As a result, the articulation of the interests of the people is defeated by the interests of the elite and limited interest groups. This also shows that the ontological reality of previous studies still rests on the classical paradigm of political sociology, limited only to the problem of patron-client relations.

In contrast to this research which wants to explore the post-structural and post-material spaces, focusing on the elements behind the reality of social exchange of political elites in the contestation of regional elections. The elements behind reality as an ontology object (area of knowledge) are not only to identify thematic social exchanges in the political elite but also how social exchanges work, are constructed, or

operationalized behind visible reality. The social exchange of political elites, voters, and political parties as a manifestation of the achievement of pragmatic goals that injures the electoral system is not a natural phenomenon but a representation of the complex multi-political interests.

The ontological novelty (state of the art) of this study is reinforced by the sociological fact that the process of holding local elections, including in Gorontalo Province in 2017 is still colored by the social exchange of the political elite. The phenomenon of transactional politics in Gorontalo Province, Gorontalo Regency, and Bone Bolango Regency as a research locus is even more interesting to study. For example, the 2017 governor election won by Rusli Habibie and Idris Rahim as cadres of the National Mandate Party actually won through the Golkar Party, because the National Mandate Party gave recommendations to pairs of non-cadre candidates. In Gorontalo Regency, the regional head election was won by a candidate pair from among political party cadres. Whereas in Bone Bolango District, which is the basis of the Indonesian Unity Party gave recommendations to non-cadres but suffered defeat.

Transactional politics is very broad in scope, can touch all political activities. Both in the election of the President, Governor, Mayor / Regent, even at the level of the village head requires political transactions. Costs incurred during the Presidential Election and Pemilukada become a burden that must be returned when someone has gained power.

Competition between political parties makes each ruling candidate try his best to spread influence on the public to get Party support. This action fosters money politics among party elites and can influence the democratization of regional elections.

From the perspective of political sociology, there is certainly a social-political exchange between the political elite and voters. Political reality indeed requires an attitude of interdependence and mutual benefit (mutualism symbiosis) between patron-client. Money which was originally a tool of economic transactions has been transformed into an effective tool to obtain non-economic benefits from the seat of power. It seems clear that candidates for regional head find it difficult to get support if not accompanied by money. Money is used not only to get support from constituents but also to bind constituent support. Thus, the social exchange of the political elite reflects the cultural expression, the result of the social construction of society which forms an important link between political events and individual behavior in reacting to these events (see Gaffar, 1989: 79).

Politics is a compromise or sharing of power. This is not only in Indonesia but also throughout the world that adheres to a democratic system. Politics is the process of sharing power, whereby a person or group of people who reach power will share power with others.

Usually, the distribution of power is related to the political coalition that was previously built. This coalition has made possible the social exchange of the political elite. Before the coalition is established, the exchange of the political elite must be agreed upon. If in practice, there is betrayal, then the political agreement can be evaluated or not done at all. What is interesting from researchers in the social exchange in the political elite among party elites who do not consider political ethics in determining regional head candidates. In Gorontalo, the Chairperson of Political Party A sells his party to a regional head candidate who does not have a party, and the party owner nominates himself to another party that meets the requirements for nominating a regional head.

## II. THEORY PERSPECTIVE

For explaining the phenomenon of political elite's social exchange as the main problem in this study, a theoretical thematic about the articulation of power in social life will be presented, in particular, the concept of Michel Foucault's power and will be elaborated both partially and comprehensively in matters having

strong links with the contestation of the head election. The area at the research locus. Second, examine the diversity of political participation and political recruitment systems, including political costs as a conceptual foundation of research results.

#### *A. Articulation of Power in Social Life*

The central point of the sociology study is related to human behavior in the context of social life. If this assumption were agreed upon, it would be important to apply political studies in terms of power in the context of the same community life. Therefore, the intersection between sociology and political studies is in the same domain of study, which is about social power.

Discussing power in the context of social life will be more meaningful when exploring ideas about the power of famous medieval philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Hobbes, Karl Marx, or Max Weber. For Aquinas, power is only a physical and social reality but does not contain an authority. According to him, there is no human being who by default has authority over other humans, because the only authority in that power is God (Suseno, 1986: 6).

Based on these, Aquinas radically demands the ethical legitimacy of human use of power. The core thought of Aquinas is that power is essentially right and good insofar as it goes within the limits of precise (accurate) law, whereas the law itself must support the state's goal, namely to seek public welfare and not the personal interests of certain authorities or groups. The meaning of power is totally different from Hobbes's view of putting power as a formal institutional force from the state by applying psychological manipulation in the form of threats and fears. For Hobbes, the state must be strong without competition so that it can ensure that, as necessary, it forces the people to obey the rules, and the state is obliged to establish its legal order. Similarly, the view of Marxism in which power as property owners can be controlled by one person or group to weaken another person or group, even the Weberian view which only limits that power as the subjective ability of actors to dominate other actors.

Gordin and Klingemann (Ahmad, 2012: 15) define politics as the limited use of social power. It is because the existence of power is present in social life, and its existence is also related to the social legitimacy of power itself. Social power in this case, not absolute, but there are various limitations of other powers which are always present simultaneously and unavoidably. The definition most closely matches the meaning of Foucault's power which articulates that power is scattered, cannot be localized, as an order connected to networks, marked by the structure of productive activities that are not repressive, and are attached to the will to know (Haryatmoko, 2002: 37).

In connection with the imbalance of the acquisition of rewards between two people who do a social exchange, Homans put forward the concept of power as the ability to control rewards or punishment in social exchange. A person who has power or authority means he can make the party controlled to do whatever he wants. Because the party under control cannot provide both rewards and penalties to the authorities. The ability to provide rewards or sanctions possessed by the authorities, the effect is the same for the party controlled, i.e. the position held depends on the authorities.

The contextualization of the social exchange of the political elite in the regional head elections as the main theme of this study means that power is spread as a form of complex strategic situations in the ongoing social relations. Foucault (Adil, 2016: 19) mentions five power propositions which he described as follows:

1. Power is not something that is obtained, achieved, used, or shared as something that can be grasped or even extinct; but power is exercised from various places of continuously moving relations.
2. The relation of power is not a hierarchical structural relationship which presupposes that there is a master and someone who is controlled.

3. That power comes from below which presupposes that there is no longer the distinction of binary oppositions because that power encompasses both.

4. Power relations are intentional and non-subjective.

5. There is power, there is also anti-power (resistance), and resistance is not outside the relations of power, everyone in power, there is no way to get out of it.

Foucault's five propositions above show how power is the complexity of the form of a strategic situation, and to understand the complexities of power related to such networks he proposes five approaches (Upe, 2016: 19), including:

1. Decentralization of power analysis, which rejects the form of centralistic power. The aim is to see the power and various material techniques intervening in life.

2. Observing power externally by bringing it closer to empirical studies where locations were forms of power effect.

3. Power is not considered as a property right (property right), but rather as a network involving individuals as subjects and objects of power.

4. Power does not work from the top down (top-down) but from the bottom up (bottom-up).

5. Not starting with ideology and exploring what instruments are used, but starting with mechanisms and practices, and exploring how actors shape ideology and knowledge.

Observing by the five approaches above, it can be understood that power does not operate negatively as a tool can be used to exert pressure/oppression on individuals. Power in this context operates positively and productively, although the manifestation of power is not seen and is not realized/felt as practices that control the individual, the effects of the practice of power can be known.

### *B. Exchange Theory*

The roots of exchange theory originate from behaviorism in psychology. Therefore, the theory of familiar exchange is referred to as the sociology of behavior. Behavioral sociology as a reduction in psychology is interested in gifts (or reinforcement) and costs (or punishment). Rewards are determined by their ability to strengthen behavior, while costs reduce the likelihood of a behavior. The idea of gifts and costs in behaviorism is influencing the theory of exchange.

Homans argued that actions relating to a will resulted in a reward and punishment for others. Therefore, the exchange can be mutually beneficial or as long as it is considered mutually beneficial by both parties. Homans developed several propositions that underlie the formation of his exchange theory, including:

#### *a. The success proposition*

For all actions taken by someone, the more often a person's specific action is rewarded, the more likely that person is to take that action. There are a number of things that Homans set out regarding this proposition, consist of First, although the more often a gift is indeed received causes the action to be carried out more frequently, and it does not mean it goes on indefinitely because at certain times the individual really cannot act like that as often as possible. Second, the shorter the time gap between behavior and gifts, the more likely people are to repeat the behavior. Conversely, the longer the time lag between behavior and gifts, the less likely people are to repeat the behavior. Third, intermittent gift-giving is more likely to result in repetitive behavior than it does to generate regular gifts. Gifts that are regular cause boredom and burnout, while gifts that are received in irregular intervals are very likely to cause repetitive behavior.

#### *b. The Value Proposition*



The higher the value of the results of one's actions for his drones, the more likely he is to carry out those actions. If the gifts given to each other are very valuable, the actor is more likely to take the desired action than if the prize is not valuable. Meaning, if the gift is positive, then the greater the possibility of giving birth to the desired behavior. Conversely, if the punishment is negative, the greater the possibility of the actor taking undesirable actions.

*c. Deprivation - Boredom (satiation proposition)*

Homans saw that the routine giving and receiving of gifts made the gift worthless. Then the duration of gift-giving must be proportionally adjusted as not to cause boredom. Therefore, Homans put the concept of cost and profit as something that can bind the repetition of that behavior. The cost of each behavior is defined as a lost gift for not doing the planned action, while the profit is seen as a greater reward for the costs incurred.

*d. Approval Proposition - Aggression*

In this proposition, Homans develops two conceptual possibilities that refer to positive emotions and negative emotions, namely: Proposition A: When a person's actions do not get the reward he expected or receive an unexpected punishment, he will be angry. He will probably take aggressive actions, and as a result, such actions are more valuable to him. Proposition B: If a person's actions accept the gift he expects, especially gifts greater than he expects or does not receive the punishment he imagines, then he will be satisfied; the more likely it is to take agreed-upon actions and the consequences of such actions will be more valuable to him.

*e. The Rationality Proposition*

In choosing various alternative actions, a person will choose one of them that considers currently has a value (value) as a result, multiplied by the probability to get greater results. This proposition aims to maximize the usefulness of alternative actions taken by individuals.

Observing the five propositions of the Homans exchange theory above, it can be concluded that individuals in the course of the process of social interaction are actors who seek to profit from the actions that they manifest.

### III. RESEARCH METHODS

The research paradigm of this research was constructivist. The constructivist paradigm is mainly based on the ontological assumption that the reality of the relationship of the political elite is formed as a result of social construction that is bridged by a particular value system (value of system), which can be relative or tentative following the interests to be achieved. The ontological explanation of the social exchange of the political elite can be examined in terms of the degree of structural relations that influence each other in the form of competition and cooperation.

The epistemological constructivist paradigm is bridged by subjective and dialectical transactional values between researchers and the phenomenon of social exchange of political elites. Meaning, the methodology used prioritizes comprehensive and contextual analysis to find the truth by revealing the truth that is behind the reality. Because this research methodology used comprehensive and contextual analysis, the approach was qualitative (Ratna, 2010; Budi Setyanto et. al, 2020).

Therefore, its axiological consequences on the contribution of discourse and knowledge on the matter were used as a channel in determining and voicing choices by all stakeholders in one momentum for the election of regional heads in Gorontalo Province in particular, and in Indonesia generally.

The method was comparative. Comparative methods were ex post facto, where data collection was done through completed events. Although the weakness of this method is not possible to know the cause that is used as a basis for comparison because there is no control of the independent variables. However, it can be overcome by multiplying the arguments that allow causal relations and presumptions in the context of concluding (Ratna, 2010: 333).

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Humans as *zoon politicon* (Aristotle) or *homo homini socius* (Adam Smith) are social creatures. Humans as social creatures interact with each other to fulfil their livelihood. Humans as social beings have several unique characteristics, different from one another such as physical, talents, emotions, needs, ideals, initiatives, behaviors, etc. all of which trigger the birth of collisions between interests. The differences often put the community in a situation full of conflict.

Articulation of individual and collective needs requires competition; both those are individual (private needs) and public (public needs). Individual needs are strongly influenced by the direction in which public needs are met because it will be very difficult to meet individual needs if public needs are not available. To avoid the appearance of collisions of interests requires conscious and collective efforts to create order, and that order can only be realized through politics.

Politics is interpreted differently by experts. No consensus was agreed upon. Politics can be articulated as sharing power, it can also be interpreted as an effort to influence others to achieve certain goals, or politics is about who gets what, when, and how it is obtained. Surely, politics encompasses all aspects of social, cultural, economic, and religious life.

According to Rush and Althoff (2013: 128) stated that political participation is broad. In primitive societies, where politics is tightly integrated with community activities in general, participation tends to be high and probably difficult to distinguish from other activities. However, in developing societies, due to a combination of institutions and modern and traditional influences, participation perhaps limited by factors such as the level of literacy and the general problem of communication. Contrary to this is political participation in totalitarian societies, in some forms, participation possibly very high, and others very low.

Political institutions and political systems are required in a democracy. According to Ahmad (1992: 28), political institutions means an institution created in public life that creates rules of the game that are agreed both formally and informally in the interaction of people's lives. Political institutions have several important roles, including First, determining whom the political actors have political legitimacy. Second, determine how the variety and number of actors develop in political institutions and political systems. Third, it becomes a reference and guide for how the behavior of political actors tends to be. Fourth, determine how likely political information will and will be owned and needed by political actors towards other political institutions. Fifth, determine how the logic of appropriateness of the political actors' behavior in certain situations.

Social exchange in the political process is necessary. In every momentum of elections, elites, voters, and political parties are always in a strategic situation, interdependent, need each other, and of course mutually beneficial. Social exchanges are sometimes even pragmatic for a momentary purpose.

There are many cases where regional head candidates are not cadres of political parties, so political parties merely become political vehicles for regional head candidates. At the same time, voters have no close relationship with political parties. This situation is, in principle, a strategic situation for the political elite to utilize in maximizing social exchange strategies to achieve victory.



By observing the problems raised in the previous chapter, there are at least three main issues that need to analyze, such as the process of elite social exchange; the influence of elites on the management of political parties in determining regional leader candidates, and the sociological impact of elite social exchanges on voters.

The social exchange relations of political elites are the connection of political elites (candidates for regional leaders), political parties, and voters in a strategic situation that is interdependent, mutually needy, and mutually beneficial as well as an effort to consolidate power to achieve electability/victory in momentum regional leader elections.

The pattern of social exchange is based on several potential elite resource ownership both in terms of figure, financial, and social strength which are considered by political parties in determining and giving the party's blessing/recommendation to the regional head candidates.

The strategy of social exchange is how the political elite uses and maximize their resources to achieve victory in the regional election contestation.

The sociological implication is how social and political interaction exists in people's lives after the election of regional leader candidates. Is the community fragmented, causing friction and how to reduce its potential?

In Gorontalo Province, there is a practice of social exchange between political parties in determining regional leader candidates related to political, sociological aspects and by considering regional and environmental risks aspect.

Gorontalo Province has 1 (one) City and 5 (five) districts which from the 2005 local elections to 2017 strongly indicated the practice of social exchange in the political elite.

In the process of succession of regional leaders, political parties utilize the figure of candidate pairs to strengthen their political influence to gain support from the public (voters).

Regional leader paired candidates, voters, and political parties do not have close relations both ideologically and sociologically.

The political paradigm between regional leader candidates, voters, and political parties is oriented to the use of pragmatic strategic situations to achieve instantaneous goals.

## V. CONCLUSION

Political recruitment systems for political office in various countries that embrace democracy have different levels of diversity. In Indonesia, the political recruitment system by political parties is implemented to attract candidates for party members, prospective regional and central legislative candidates, regional leader candidates (governors; regents; mayors), as well as presidential and vice-presidential candidates (*Undang-Undang Nomor 2 Tahun 2008*). In this context, political parties are meaning of political education not only for their members but also for society in the context of absorbing and disseminating the political aspirations of the people to bind political policies carried out by the state.

Political recruitment is a partially institutionalized system defence process. Marvick (2008) argues that opportunities in politics are almost inevitably characterized by co-optation elements. According to him, aspirants of political careers cross the boundary that is not edged when they are seriously considered in handling certain jobs by those who control the political resources that are important to get and maintain it. In the end, the process of political recruitment has less impact on many interpersonal influences, but when such influences come when a person can demonstrate certain skills, he can mobilize followers, can include the knowledge he has or conversely affect his colleagues. The meaning is that political recruitment is based on personal integrity and capability.

Political recruitment not only has consequences for political mechanisms but also for economic aspects. In reality, political recruitment is difficult to do without the economic contribution of recruited candidates, especially regional head candidates. The greater the economic contribution is given to political parties, the greater the party's recommendations for participating in regional elections. As for legislative candidates, for example, the economic contribution was valid after winning the election and succeeded in holding the legislative position.

The economic contribution of regional leaders to political parties in the current political system is still considered necessary, because political parties do not actually have operational costs and instead have only received subsidies from the government, and even then only in small amounts at the central level. At the same time, it caused political costs to be expensive and the implications for the rise of the arrest of political actors due to involvement in the vortex of corruption.

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