

The Development of Political Patronage Behinds The Social-Welfare State Policy

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Abstract

This article points out the fundamental of the political patronage in the context of Malaysian Studies. Through the analysis of a case study in the state of Sabah, it is firstly shown how the formal state institutions change into an 'informal' logic of competing political camps. The development of political patronage, have adversed the social-welfare state policy and programs, specifically in eradicating the poverty. As the system profound impact on how the government programs are delivered, it largely reflects the performance of the government. Although the government intent helping the poorest, however, the public expects the state to serve only their political camp' or network, not everyone else.

Keywords: Economics, Patronage, Politics, Poverty, Sabah,

INTRODUCTION

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The literature on the political patronage relies on the relationship between patron and client (Gomez, 1999; Bayart, 2009; Kaarsholm & Hultin, 2002; Bardhan, 1984; Puthuchearry & Othman, 2005; Titeca, 2006; Orlando, 2021). Scholars argue the political patronage synonym of seeing the economy as determining culture and politics (Gramsci, 1978). In other words, politics and economy organised in relationship of mutual exchange with one another, a constantly circulating and shifting network of influence (Gramsci, 1978; Jones, 2007). It defined traditionally as the distribution of selective benefits to individuals or group in exchange for political support and economic sustainability (Katz, 1986; Piattoni, 2001; Hopkin, & Mastropaolo, 2001; Hopkin, 2006; Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Brown, 2020). The analysts urge the political patronage works between patron (political elites), client (public/voters) and assist by the broker (political party/organisation). In this sense, the exchange takes the form of resource allocation and access, i.e., from parties to voters and the electoral support, from the voters to parties (Ghergina & Volintiru, 2017; Brown, 2020). Patron-network typically focuses on distributing the benefits to the poor, who may be responsive to the material inducements in a way where the state fails to provide a social safety net (Scott, 1969; O'Donnell, 1996; Stokes, 2005). Patron-network recognised widely not only in the developing countries, but also in several developed countries such as Austria, Italy, and Japan (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Nyblade & Reed, 2008; Piattoni, 2001)

The Rules of The Game & Political Patronage

Rules of the game commonly refer as ‘humanly devised constraints’ in which the human behavior shapes by the institutional constraints (North, 1990; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992; Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; North, 2005). Institutions classify into formal which is said to be written and proposed by the political agents and informal classified as a behavior come into existence spontaneously (North, 1990; Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). The institutions seek to explore the political and outcomes, according to how the organisation work and put the rules and regulations in daily acts, but at the end the organisation sought to win the game in all forms often bypassing a rule and leaving aside formal to move into informal corruption (North, 1991; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992).

Rules of the game, political patronage are linked to the poverty (Orlando, 2021). Poverty programs demanded by the policy makers both at unicameral and bicameral levels, which concerns about public problems. However, solving the poverty in the state level involves the participation from many parties because of this circumstance, the conflict of interest among parties involves in contesting their own interest through the mobilising of the opportunities (Orlando, 2021). The qualitative data findings indicate the transferring of poverty programs involves several parties include of the ruling political elites, members of state legislative assembly, parliamentarian, politically linked individually, and the collusion (Orlando, 2021). This resulted the occurrence of serious leakage and affected the implementation of poverty programs (Orlando, 2021). To put it simply *‘the government try to provide more to the poor, but if they do so, it will not do anyone good’*

As a result of serious leakage, the poor (people) remains poor, meanwhile the elites continue to have access to political power in order to secure their own hold on wealth. Evidently, the data showed that, the government contracts and projects, regarded to the anti-poverty programs awarded to the crony and families with the existence of politico-bureaucratic, only those who have the access may entitle to get the benefits from the poverty programs (Orlando, 2021). The data shown, the unequal distribution of the poverty programs occurred, since the actor who propose, implement and determine the poverty program compromise with those who in controls over the state resources (Orlando, 2021).

The analysts critically debated the patronage as the main reason for the poverty (World Bank, 1997, Deflem, 1995; Hopkins, 2002; Godfrey & Yu, 2015; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2017; Brown, 2020; Momoh, 2022). Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson (2001) argued the complexities of patronage set up for the extractive institutions. In which, the government has leeway to expropriate client's wealth, is seen as a major obstacle in poverty reduction and at the same time encouraged by the lack of political freedom in the decision making (Orlando, 2021). Consequently, patron-client networks play an ambiguous role in fighting against poverty (Orlando, 2021). As a federalism country, the distribution of power between the three levels of government is unequal (Orlando, 2021). This is clearly seen with power to make decisions is centralised at the federal government in Putrajaya (Suffian, 2019 cited in Orlando, 2021). In addition, in spite of anti-poverty programs implemented at the state level, the power to coordinate and decision making still lies in the hands of the federal government (Orlando, 2021). As the extent of federal government control over the state resources and government programs has increased, the bases of power of those in control of the government have expanded (Orlando, 2021). At this point, the political elites treated the public resources as their own (Orlando, 2021). The qualitative data indicated the seepage exist caused by uncontrolled political power among the political practitioner.

Shaping of Political Patronage, Informality Behind The Poverty Programs In The State of Sabah

'Racialism' in the development of social policy in Malaysia regards to the path-dependency (Orlando, 2021). Which economist and the social scientist refer to the processes where past events or decisions constrain later events or decisions (North, 1991; Hall & Taylor, 1996; Suffian, 2019). Following on the first and second Bumiputera Congress held in 1965 and 1968 by the Malays elites calls the government to interfere in the economy and the development of policy as the inequality expanded (Gomez, 1990). The UMNO, dominant political party in Alliance, made several modification of policies more in favor of Malays as they believed the Chinese economic hegemony responsible for Malay economic underdevelopment, although in the late 1960s, the commanding heights of the Malaysian economy were still primarily dominated by foreign (mainly British) investors (Gomez, 1990). On the other hand, many non-Malays believed the UMNO-led Malay-dominated Alliance government to be responsible for official government discrimination against them. Therefore, this

contributed to the circumstance culminating in the 13 May 1969 inter-ethnic strife (Gomez, 1990; Orlando & Suffian, 2020).

After the 1969 election results and the subsequent riots, the UMNO dominance of the ruling coalition became more pronounced as it co-opted most opposition parties, which were also largely based on ethnicity, although they mobilised less explicitly along ethnic lines, unlike the parties in the ruling coalition (Orlando, 2021). It is generally agreed that Malaysian economic policy making changed rather drastically in the aftermath of the race riots associated with 13 May 1969 (Gomez, 1990; Jomo, 2004). While the government policy before the era of NEP relies on *laissez-faire*, and responsive to, as well as supportive of, both foreign and domestic (predominantly Chinese) private sector interests, however, in the early of 1970s were characterised by growing state intervention, primarily in favor of the emerging Malay elite (Jomo, 2004).

Dominant Malays political elites in the ruling coalition and the development of government policies and programs enable the country to reduce the national poverty to 17 percent from 49.3 percent (Jomo, 1990; Jomo, 2004; Aun, 2021). However, it's different from the context of Sabah politics. Sabah (former known as North Borneo) joined the formation of Malaysia in September 1963, the Sabah Alliance became the state government of Sabah led by Tun Mustapha Datuk Harun as the Yang Dipertua Negara (Head of the State) and Tun Fuad Stephen headed the Sabah State Cabinet as Chief Minister together with eight other State Ministers. The first cabinet under Tun Fuad Stephen lasted until January 1965 due to the crises on June and December 1964 on the contestation of power between UPKO and USNO in Sabah Alliance which rocked the cabinet. Meanwhile Tun Fuad Stephen step down as Sabah Chief Minister, he took up the appointment as Federal Minister of Sabah Affairs and Civil Defense in January 1965, and Dato Peter Lo from Sabah Chinese Association (SCA) appointed as Sabah Chief Minister appointed effectively until the first direct state election in April 1967 (Institute Development for Sabah Studies, 1985).

In the state election of 1967, USNO won 14 seats, UPKO had 12 seats, SCA won 5 seats while Yap Pak Leong won as independent by defeating the former Chief Minister, Peter Lo (Institute for Sabah Development Studies, 1986). Whichever party won a clear majority was entitled to nominate another six assembly member according to the Sabah State Constitution. USNO for its part moved swiftly to gain upper hand. It succeeded in getting support of the five SCA Assembly members and thus achieved a

clear majority of 19 out of 32 Assembly seats. Tun Mustapha the proceeded to form his Cabinet after he was sworn in as Chief Minister by the Yang DiPertua Negara, Tun Ahmad Raffae.

Under Tun Mustapha tenure, the eradication of poverty was actively carried out by using a devised unique system to distribute the state wealth through the establishment of the Sabah Foundation in 1967 (Mat Kib, 2012). The Sabah Foundation set up the Tun Haji Mustapha's Trust Fund to collect the state revenue (Orlando, 2021) which came from the logging activities in which the share awarded to each Malaysian adult resident permanently in Sabah (Orlando, 2021). Concerned with the rural poverty and development, the USNO government converted the self-sufficiency economic into commercialise economic agriculture based (Orlando, 2021). Resulted, the establishment of Sabah Paddy Board in 1967, Sabah Land Development Board 1969 and Lembaga Tabung Getah Sabah (LGTS) established under the ordinance 1950 given roles in ensuring that the income of rubber tappers was guaranteed. As a result, the first rubber scrap factory was set up in 1969 and provided more job opportunities to Sabahans (Orlando, 2021). Encourage the sped up the development of industry, commerce, economy promoted the NEP besides invited the native elite to participate in the corporate sector, Sabah Economic Development Corporation (SEDCO) established in 1971 under the Malaysian Plan 1971-1975.

On the other hand, eradication of the state poverty required the need of education (Orlando, 2021). Since 1966, the Sabah Foundation assigned to the task of improving the state education as passed in the Enactment No.8 of Sabah Foundation Enactment as authorised by the State Legislative Assembly on May 1966 (Long, 1978; Mat Kib, 2012). At the end of 1966, the education grant up to one million allocated through the Sabah Foundation commenced its programs by awarding Daily Scholarship to secondary school students in the whole of Sabah at the rate of \$130.00 annually (Mat Kib, 2012). In addition, the foundation provides the programs to lower the burden of parents paying a student's exam fees through providing textbooks on loan, the cow milk, hostel facilities internal scholarship and school uniform programs (Mat Kib, 2012).

The government's transition in 1976 witnessed the Parti Bersatu Rakyat Jelata Sabah (BERJAYA) led by Tun Fuad Stephen, elected as leader of the state government in 1976 after winning the state election. Following on the death of Tun Fuad Stephen in

the double six incidents, the poverty reduction at the state level assigned by Tan Sri Harris Salleh leadership (Institute for Sabah Development Studies, 1986). In the era of BERJAYA, the anti-poverty performance at a satisfactory level as far the state poverty rate dropped from 58.3 percent in 1976 to 41.1 percent in 1979 and 29.2 percent 1982 (Abdullah, Hadi & Mustapha, 1986). Several of the anti-programs introduced by the state government as such, the educational scheme for tertiary level, welfare assistant for those 60 years old and above eligible for \$60 per month implemented under the Minister of State Welfare (Institute Development for Sabah Studies, 1986). Concern with the rural poverty, the state government concentrated more on the development projects focusing on the rural areas, required up to 46.15 percent of the development expenditure includes projects of water supply, electricity and the roads specifically in rural areas (Third Malaysian Plan Report, 1976; Lamdah, 1981).

The Politics for Staying Poor

Because the process of eradicating poverty involves politics, good governance and empowerment it undermined the accountable use of resources in pursuit of development (Mamdani, 1996; Kauffman, 2002; Hickey & Bracking, 2003). The serious concerns regarding the adequacy, uncovering and indicate that the politics and power relations becomes instrument use to determine the interaction between the state and public within the formation and implementation of poverty programs (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2001).

After the State Legislative Assembly dissolved due to the political unprecedented and controversial in 1985 the BERJAYA succeeded by the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) led by the *Huguon Siou*, Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan (Orlando, 2021). The PBS had a difficult time during its one-year term in office from April 1985 to May 1986. Become the opposition ruling political party, PBS has no choice to face biasness from the federal government (Puyok, 2011). As the state development fund depends on the federal government, it was an opportunity for federal to suppress the state by reducing the per capita development allocation under the Sixth Malaysian Plan (Sixth Malaysian, Plan, 1996). Despite the allocation of RM 2.307 billion to Sabah, it marked an increase of RM 50 Million compared to RM 2.253 billion under the previous Malaysian Plan, however the percentage considered as change of minus 1.8 percent indicated a significant reduction vis-à-vis the 13 states and Federal Territory (Puyok,

2011). The RM 2.307 billion made up about 6.45 percent of the total federal allocation of RM 35.757 billion not including the amount of interstate projects. Based on Figure 1, it showed that the state incidence of poverty is the highest in Malaysia in 1984 after Perlis, Kedah and Kelantan. The per capita during that time RM 1,638 the lowest among the less developed state of Perlis (RM 2,808), Kedah (RM 2,085), Sarawak (RM 2,014) and Kelantan (RM 1,791).

The Fifth Malaysian Plan (1986-1990) figures showed a significant reduction in the incidence of the state poverty from 58.3 % in 1976 to 33.1 % by 1984. The Data shown the state of Sabah merged to reduce the state poverty incidence. However, following on the continual pressure from the federal government, the PBS leaders charged with corruption, and detained under the International Security Act (ISA) with the allegation to split Sabah from Malaysia (Gill, 2010). Consequently, the state confronts the difficulty to develop because of the political conflict recognised between the federal and state government.

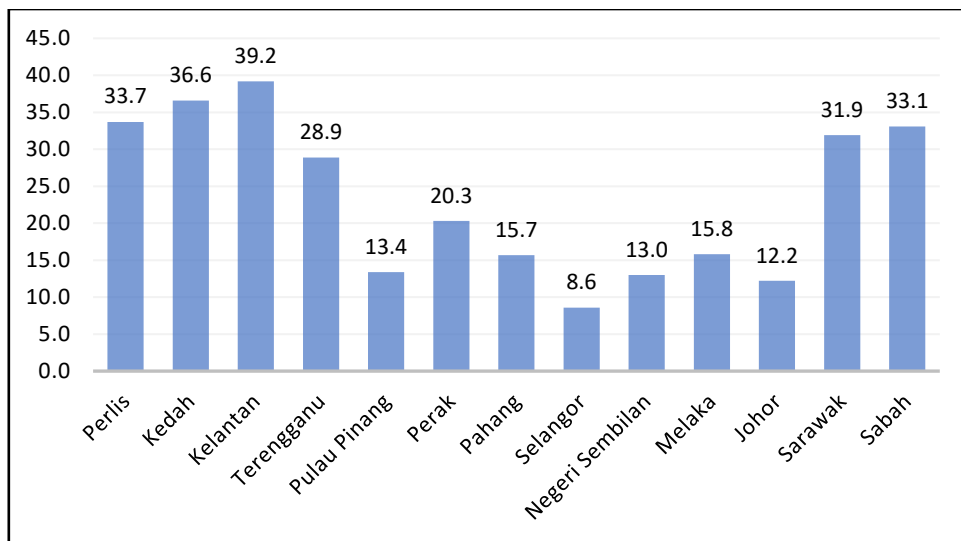


Figure 1 Incidence of Poverty by State, 1984 (%)

The ousted of Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) by the Barisan Nasional (BN) in 1994 as a ruling political party at the state level brought the state into a new political atmosphere

in which the state controlled by the federal government (Orlando, 2021). The issue relates to the state poverty obscure after the state experience of two-years of the rotation based system, i.e. the position of Chief Minister assigned for every two years instructed by the federal government (Orlando, 2021). The unequal power distribution between the federal and the state government affected the state development and the alleviation of the poverty since state failed to make its own decision (Orlando, 2021). In other words, the state development and poverty reduction stagnate as the poverty programs and activities running slowly (Orlando, 2021). This circumstance force states political elites seeking rent from the federal government demanding on the state interest (Orlando, 2021).

The changes of the political atmosphere in Sabah largely influence the state development as debated by the analysts, the need of political intervention significant to develop the state, however the uncontrolled of political interference undermine the state development as the extractive political and economic institutions inheritance (Orlando, 2021). Resulted, stagnate, collapsed and the political patronage changes into a culture in the complex of societies (Orlando, 2021).

Because of the its emphasis on values and norms, the poverty should be seen as an inherent attribute of the functioning of certain kinds of social system. Poverty is not an accident, it is inherent and crucial and feature of society whose economic structure is grounded in class and exploitation as it is linked with the powerful and privileged actors who have an active interest in maintaining poverty (Orlando, 2021). The political condition used for solving problems of poverty mainly, involves trying convince people that certain kinds of programs are necessary and will work (Orlando, 2021).

Conclusion

To reduce the poverty, it is compulsory to confront the biggest challenges includes the unequal distribution of powers, specifically linked to the interest of the elites. Therefore, this phenomenon leads to the dichotomy of formal and informal institutions of the state. As the informal institutions and political patronage practices among the political elites and the top bureaucrat in the hierarchy of society, therefore the state intervention bringing about the imbalance of development and social inequality.

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Conflict of interest

We have no conflicts of Interest to disclose

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