

Under family control: The trend of sole candidate elections in Indonesia

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Abstract

The rise of sole candidates in various local head elections in Indonesia has been the subject of many scholarly critical analyses. Most of the analyses perceive the phenomenon as a symptom of incumbency advantages, weak electoral systems, and poor institutionalization of political parties. This article proposes a new argument with the family-based elite perspective controlling the sole candidates' emergence process. We compared two regions in South Sulawesi province, explaining the political family networks that dominate the political competition by limiting candidature. The sole candidate elections can be understood by looking at family-based elite networks scattered in business networks, bureaucracy, political parties, aristocrats, and grassroots mass organizations. The families use an oligarchic elite network at the national level or a plural elite network at the grassroots level. The two types of family institutions are centralized and dispersed structures: Makassar has an oligarchy, while Gowa has relatively equal elite power. The family network's power has closed or hijacked the electoral political competition, establishing control over local elections by creating monopolistic political networks. Political family control is essential in understanding the rise of sole candidate elections in political practices.

Keywords

Sole candidate, local head election, family politics, elite network, Indonesia

Introduction

This article aims to explain the new trend of local head elections in Indonesia, identified by a sole candidate's emergence. We present arguments that differ from the mainstream account, concluding that sole candidates are caused by the incumbent's strong position, the electoral systems, and political parties' weakness. In contrast, we argue that a sole candidate results from substantial control by the political family networks that dominate the political competition. From the top to the

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