

Book Review: Kramer, E. A. (2022). *The Candidate's Dilemma. Anticorruptionism and Money Politics in Indonesian Election Campaigns.*

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Despite the fact that Indonesia has seen a substantial shift away from authoritarian control and a democratic reform process over the past 20 years, the issues of money politics and corruption still persist. In 1998, Indonesia entered into a process of democratization and political reform, professionalizing the military and courts, and ensuring free and fair elections every five years, following the end of 32 years of New Order authoritarian control. A decade later, Indonesia emerged as the most extensive Muslim democracy globally, serving as a model for a prosperous democratic shift in Asia. However, since the New Order, corruption remains a persistent issue in this nation (Hadiz, 2005). Substantial political changes have been implemented in Indonesia to guarantee robust anti-corruption laws and agencies, law enforcement, as well as checks and balances. To guarantee competitive elections, Indonesia has also changed its political structure. But this competitive political system also means that elections are expensive for candidates, which brings up another widespread issue, this is, money politics, or the doling out of substantial sums of money to voters in advance of elections through a variety of tactics. Former Vice President Mohamad Hatta asserted that corruption has been deeply ingrained in Indonesia since the 1970s (Lubis, 1982; Materay, 2022). After the New Order collapsed, it became clear that corrupt officials were given sanctuary. Apart from the ascent of populism and the rise of religious identity politics, there is ample documentation of the presence of money politics, political corruption, and vote buying in Indonesian elections (Juwono, 2018; Winters, 2011). Numerous studies have examined the mechanisms of money in politics, their clientelist roots, and their efficacy as a vote-buying tactic (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016; Indrayana, 2017; Hadiz, 2012; Hidayat, 2009; Mukti & Rodiyah, 2020).

In her book, Elisabeth Kramer examines how candidates in Indonesia's 2014 legislative elections navigated the tension between the public demand for clean politics and the entrenched practices of vote buying and patronage. The author

uses Erving Goffman's (1959, 1970) theory of dramaturgy and strategic interaction to analyze how the candidates presented themselves to different audiences and managed their impressions. Goffman's theory of dramaturgy compares social interactions to theatrical performances, where actors play different roles and use various props, costumes, and scripts to create impressions on their audiences. Goffman's theory of strategic interaction focuses on how actors use information, communication, and deception to achieve their goals in situations of uncertainty and conflict. This theory is aptly applied to politics, as politicians are also actors who perform for different audiences, such as voters, party members, donors, media, civil society, etc. Politicians also face uncertainty and conflict in their political environment, such as competition, regulation, accountability, etc.

Using detailed ethnographic data from three different campaigns, Kramer discusses how three candidates, who all see themselves as anti-corruption politicians, faced a dilemma when they came across the deeply rooted customs and procedures of vote-buying and money politics. The author explains how they handled this dilemma and the pressure to participate in Indonesia's pervasive practice of using money in order to buy votes. Kramer shows how institutional contexts, campaign norms, key issues, resources available, and the candidate's own identity and ideals all contribute to the candidate's particular experience on the campaign trail.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the historical and institutional background of Indonesia's electoral system, party system, and campaign regulations. The author shows how the transition to democracy, decentralization, and direct elections have increased the competitiveness and costliness of elections, creating incentives for candidates to engage in money politics. She also discusses how civil society and media have raised awareness and pressure on corruption issues, creating opportunities for candidates to adopt an anti-corruption discourse.

In the second chapter, Kramer examines how candidates define and frame corruption and anti-corruption in their campaigns. She finds that candidates use various strategies to justify, rationalize, or deny their involvement in money politics, such as claiming that it is a form of social obligation, service delivery, or empowerment. She also finds that some candidates use anti-corruption as a rhetorical tool to differentiate themselves from their competitors, appeal to certain voters, or deflect criticism.

In Chapter 3, Kramer presents a case study of a candidate who refused to engage in money politics and ran a clean campaign based on his personal integrity and professional reputation. She analyzes how he managed his front-stage and back-stage performances, how he dealt with the challenges and risks of his strategy, and how he achieved a surprising victory. Finally, Kramer shows how he used Goffman's concepts of impression management and face work to maintain his consistency and credibility.

Chapter 4 presents a case study of a candidate who initially adopted an anti-corruption stance but later succumbed to the pressure of money politics. Kramer analyzes here how he changed his front-stage and back-stage performances, how he rationalized his decision, and how he faced the consequences of his strategy. Also here, the author shows how the candidate used what Goffman conceptualized as impression management and face work to justify his actions.

Chapter 5 deals with a case study of a candidate who had a long political career and a pragmatic approach to money politics. Kramer analyzes how the candidate

balanced his front-stage and back-stage performances, how he used money politics as a strategic tool to mobilize support, and how he maintained his credibility and legitimacy. As in the previous chapters, the author shows how the candidate used Goffman's concepts of impression management and face work to adapt to different situations and audiences.

In Chapter 6, Kramer compares and contrasts the three case studies and draws general conclusions about the factors that shape the candidates' campaign behavior and outcomes. She argues that candidates' strategies are influenced by their personal characteristics, party affiliation, constituency characteristics, campaign resources, voter preferences, media exposure, civil society activism, and enforcement mechanisms. She also discusses the implications of money politics and anti-corruptionism for Indonesia's democracy.

In the conclusion, Kramer summarizes the main findings and contributions of her book. She argues that the candidates' dilemma reflects broader tensions and contradictions in Indonesia's political system, where democratic institutions coexist with patronage networks, where corruption is pervasive but also contested, and where voters are both cynical and hopeful. She also suggests directions for future research on money politics and anti-corruption in Indonesia.

In her three accounts of Indonesian anti-corruption politicians in the 2014 election, Kramer eloquently clarifies the political predicaments that confront all Indonesian politicians. The conundrum arises when a candidate actively uses anti-corruption rhetoric in front of the altar of electoral politics, but at the same time contends in an expensive campaign marked by money politics. Kramer points out that during the 2014 campaign, two of the three candidates chose to distribute large amounts of money and other incentives, while only one candidate remained true to his pledge to not buy votes. In the first chapter, Kramer categorizes several strategies a candidate may employ to decide whether to utilize vote-buying or not. According to Kramer, the main forces behind this classification are "the candidates' personal commitment to rejecting money politics and the perceived benefits of an anti-corruption identity" (pp. 15-16). Vote buying is more likely to happen if a candidate has a low degree of perceived benefits from running as an anti-corruption candidate and a low level of personal commitment to opposing money politics or vote buying. Candidates who lack dedication but believe that being clean and campaigning against corruption is helpful can employ vote buying in their campaigns. Kramer found that the percentage of vote buying in Indonesia increased from 10% in 2009 to 33% in 2014. By pointing out that just one of the three candidates truly fulfilled the description of being against corruption, Kramer highlights the strong incentive to participate in vote buying.

The overall objective of Kramer's book is to promote qualitative and ethnographic research methods in the research fields of money politics and political corruption. Kramer asserts that "in the fight against quantitative gatekeeping, ... political ethnography has much to offer in the study of politics, power relations, and decision-making and can make a meaningful contribution to efforts to understand the world of politics" (pp. 17-18). Kramer's work deftly illustrates political ethnography's advantages, as it succinctly and thoroughly outlines the conflict between idealism and pragmatism, which resulted in disparate election outcomes for each candidate.

The fundamental idea of Kramer's book is that corruption in Indonesia is not an unsolvable issue that needs to be addressed immediately. This is also the author's starting point in the case studies. Kramer argues that, by presenting themselves as an anti-corruption candidate and rejecting transactional politics, candidates may be able to draw in voters. Kramer uses the Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, PKS) and the Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrat*, PD) as examples. Both parties ran on anti-corruption platforms to win elections, but once their leaders were found involved in significant scandals, the parties imploded and lost support.

The book's best feature, I conclude, is the author's ability to capture the nuances and contradictions between anti-corruption rhetoric, the attraction of money politics, and election campaigns. This book shows how, while having similar institutional constraints and voter pragmatism, the three candidates under consideration were able to develop unique solutions and results. This book is a great resource for anyone with even a passing interest in the study of clientelist comparative politics or Indonesian politics.



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