POLITICAL COERCION IN THE REFORMATION ERA IN BULELENG REGENCY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

During the reformation era much political coercion took place in Buleleng Regency, Bali. Such political coercion occured repeatedly in the general election referred to as *Pemilu* conducted in 1999 and 2004, and in the election conducted to directly vote for district heads referred to as *Pilkada* in 2007. It is interesting to investigate this phenomenon. The problems in this study are formulated as follows: (1) what factors causing political coercion to take place in the general election and in the election conducted to directly vote for district heads; (2) how it took place; and 3) what ideology leading to it and what implications it had on the socio-culture of the people living in Buleleng Regency?

The practical theory, the theory of coercion and the theory of ideology were eclectically adopted to establish and analyze concepts. Qualitative method is employed and the data needed were collected by observation, in-depth interview, and documentation study.

The results of the study show: *first*, the factors causing political coercion to take place varied; *second*, six cases of political coercion in Buleleng Regency did not take place suddenly, but through processes and were related to the cultural coercion inherent within local individuals and groups; *third*, they took place through semiologic deconstruction related to the meaningfulness provided by the common people and political elites to the '*pemilu* and *pilkada*'. Thus, the ideologies responsible for political coercion were paternalism, binary opposition , pragmatism and '*premanisme*' (the broker of coercion) ; *fourth*, the implications the cases of political coercion had on the people in Buleleng Regency were: the pattern of kinship became broken, the culture of physical coercion shifted to the culture of symbolic and economic coercion; a new consensus was established.

The conclusions withdrawn in this study show that the characteristics of the political coercion taking place in Buleleng Regency during the reformation era were related to the local cultural values and the pragmatic global cultural values. Such characteristics had wide implications on the existence of national political cultural system.

INTRODUCTION

Since reformation started in May 1998, various forms of coercion have taken place. They have occurred not only in the big cities like Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya and Medan, but also in Bali (2009: 2). According to the information recorded by *Polda* Bali, 98 different cases of coercion took place from 1997 to 2007 in Bali with various causes. This has been extremely frightening. It is stated that national and local political problems were responsible for 14 cases, 12 of which took place in Buleleng Regency and six of them were related to the general election (*Pemilu = Pemiluhan Umum*) and election conducted to vote for district heads (*Pilkada = Pemilihan Kepala Daerah).* Therefore, it is interesting to explore Buleleng Regency.

What has made it interesting to be explored is not only the quantity but also the quality. Since the New Order government fell in May 1998 and reformation era started, many cases of political coercion such as Sukasada case, Banjar case, Padangbulia case and the massive violence resulting from the failure of Megawati to be the president of the Republic of Indonesia, Petandakan case and the case resulting from the election conducted to directly vote for district heads (*Pilkada*)   took place until 2007 in Buleleng Regency.

From the cultural and structural diminutions, Balinese people in general and the people living in Buleleng Regency in particular are rich enough in cultural concepts and media as the local genius for strengthening relationship among them such as *Tri Hita Karana*, *tat twam asi*, *karma pala, menyaba-braya, paras-paros, sagilik-saguluk, selunglung-sabayantaka, desa adat* (traditional village), *subak* (farmers' traditional organization), *banjar* (the smallest neighborhood after a (traditional) village), *sekaa* (traditional groups), and *dadia* (big families of traditional social groups) (Geertz, 1992; Geria, 1993; Astra, 2004; Duija, 2006). However, in fact, such concepts cannot be fully implemented. This can be proved by the many forms of conflicts and coercion taking place in Buleleng Regency related to the general election and the election conducted to directly vote for district heads (*Pilkada*).

The cases of political coercion were not only related to the segment of 'context' and to the factors responsible for them and to the segment of 'events', but also to insights, motives or ideologies.

Based on the background described above, three main problems are formulated in this study. *First*, what factors leading to the cases of political coercion, especially those related to the *Pemilu* and the *pilkada* in Buleleng Regency, in the reformation era?; *second*, how they took place and what they were like; *third*, what ideologies leading to them and what implications they had on the socio-cultural life of the people living in Buleleng Regency?

METHOD

Qualitative method highlighting holistic, emic and ethical description is adopted in this study. As a qualitative type of research, the results of the study are represented in a narrative way in which the aspects related to the cases of political coercion in the general elections conducted in 1999 and 2004 and the election conducted to directly vote for district heads in 2007 are described. The data used in this study were obtained from the primary and secondary data sources. The primary data were directly obtained through observation and in-depth interview. And the secondary data were obtained from documents such as books, scientific magazines, official files and documents, photographs and so forth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The New Order government fell in May 1998, after which reformation era started. Since the general election was conducted in 2004 and 207 and the *Pilkada* was conducted in 2007, many cases of political coercion took place in Buleleng Regency. The political movement and resistance shown by those who supported the pro-Megawati PDI in Bueleng Regency marked this and the accumulated disappointment in the discriminative and repressive political attitude of the national leaders was responsible for this. Such political movement and resistance led to a series of cases of political coercion such as Sukasada case, Banjar case, Padangbulia case,

massive violence resulting from the Megawati's failure to become the president of the Republic of Indonesia, Petandakan case and the cases related to the *Pilkada*.

The basic question is that what caused political coercion to take place repeatedly? The people living in Buleleng Regency should have learned from their previous experiences in such a way that such cases would not never occur any more. According to Renier (1997: 9), one of the functions of history is to make people wiser so that coercion will not occur any more.

Referring to the question above, three problems are discussed in this study. The factors which led to such numerous problems are (1) the uncontrolled political desire of the political elites to have power, which tended to provoke political conflicts and coercion; (2) economic capital in the forms of funds and other precious things was available for maintaining the power; which basically caused political coercion to take place in Buleleng Regency; as can typically seen from the general election conducted in 2004 and the *pilkada* conducted in 2007; (3) there was strong competition among the political elites in fighting for and maintaining the power; causing the social capital available to be getting scarce. In turn, this caused the social relationship, which was based on the ideology of 'kekitaan' (being in the in-group) and 'kemerekaan' (being in the out-group) to be getting sharper; (4) the habitus of the people living in Buleleng Regency was developing as far as historical revenge is concerned; language and mythology, as cultural capitals, can be employed to legitimate the political coercion taking place in the general election and the *pilkada* conducted in Buleleng Regency; (5) in the transitional era from the New Order government to the reformation era, the State dominance and hegemony were getting weaker as far as political and economic policies and law enforcement were concerned. This caused the cases of political coercion to take place in Buleleng Regency; and (6) there was instinctiveness and a social frustration; which were related to the feelings being loyal to, being possessed by and being strictly adhered to the political parties the people belonged to. The attributes of the political parties which were being damaged and the disappointment of the political parties' members and their leaders in injustice illustrated this.

The cases of political coercion taking place in Buleleng Regency in the general election and the *pilkada* conducted in the reformation era did not occur suddenly but through a series of processes and were related to the culture of creating coercion within individuals and groups. The

process started from the latent condition to the manifest condition; the next process started from the manifest condition to the critical condition; and the last process started from the critical condition to the latent condition.

Based on the semiologic deconstruction related to the meaningfulness provided by the people in the lower level and the political elites in the general election and the *pilkada* conducted, the ideologies responsible for the cases of political coercion were paternalism system, binary opposition, pragmatism and 'premanisme' (the broker of coercion). The implications of the cases of political coercion taking place in Buleleng Regency are that the kinship relationship became broken, the culture of physical coercion shifted to economic and symbolic coercion; and a new consensus was established.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions which can be withdrawn from this study are (1) although the factors leading to the cases of political coercion in the general election and the *pilkada* conducted in Buleleng Regency were complex, they were interrelated and the dominant factors in one case were different from those in the other cases; (2) the dynamics of conflict and political coercion previously and currently taking place, as can be seen from what happened in the general election conducted in 1999, dominantly resulted from historical revenge using the system of local political culture as the cultural capital. However, the factors causing those to take place in the general election conducted in 2004 and the *pilkada* conducted in 2007 were getting more complex and were tending to adopt the system of global political culture, the game of economic capital and intellectual capital. The complexity of the factors causing political coercion to take place in Buleleng Regency implicated the system of the current national political culture, especially when the general election and the *pilkada* were conducted; (3) the relationship between the actor and ideology was also responsible for the cases of political coercion; such a relationship was in the forms of paternalism related to patron-client culture referred to as *dana bakti*; binary opposition mainly related to the difference in ideology referred to the sate of being '*kekitaan*' (the in-group) and '*kemerekaan*' (the out-group); pragmatism related to the appearance of money politics; and '*premanism*' related to the broker of coercion.

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SUGGESTION

It is expected that the results of the study are academically and practically used as the reference by the government in general and the decision maker in particular. It is necessary for the government, political elites, academicians and the community leaders to simultaneously coordinate to socialize the values and the democratic principles to the young generation as an early process of political education. This is highly important so that Buleleng termed as *bumi panas* is not denotatively meant to express that the people living in Buleleng Regency are instantly getting emotional. Instead, *bumi panas* is connotatively used to express Buleleng which is developed, peaceful and prosperous.

These forms of symbolic coercion will disappear if the government is able to make its people prosperous by preparing sufficient job opportunities. The limitations in this study make it necessary to conduct further, deeper and more comprehensive research.

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