

# Strongmen of Political Party at Local Level: A Case Study on Fight between *Blater* and *Lora* Elites in Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

The study aims to describe the political party's local elite in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. Previous researchers found out that there were variation, relation and interaction among political elites at the local level. In Malang, a district of East Java Province, there are some local power of politics in practice namely *Blater elite* and *Lora elite*. *Blater* is a group of local strongmen who has strong collaboration with the elite oligarchy at the level local. Both of them have done unfair practice of nepotism in the field of politics to achieve power of Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN) at the local level. On the other hand, *Lora* elite is a group of local strongmen, working together in synergy with the democratic elite to have access to power of the political party. In short, both of the political elites have been competitive to get the power of PAN. In order to describe the dynamics of political party local elites, the requirement is to fulfill a research methodology that would result in descriptive data in the form of words or utterances from individuals or behavior being observed. Interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary data were applied. The following are the findings of the research:

1) The existence of political party strongmen shows that the capacity of individual of the elites has the authority to determine various power context of the political party; 2) In the context of power, the existence of political party strongmen can limit and reduce the implementation of the political party regulation in the internal dynamics of the local inner circle of political party; and 3) Close relations depends upon a symbiotic relationship and the expression of mutual interest between the strongmen *blater* and the oligarchy so that patron-client relation could take place.

Keyword: Political Party, Local Strongmen, Democratic Party, Authority Elite.

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan elite lokal partai politik di Malang, Jawa Timur, Indonesia. Peneliti sebelumnya menemukan bahwa ada variasi, relasi dan interaksi antar elit politik di tingkat lokal. Di Malang, sebuah kabupaten di

Provinsi Jawa Timur, ada beberapa daya lokal politik dalam prakteknya yaitu *Blater elite* and *Lora elite*. *Blater elite* merupakan sekelompok orang lokal yang memiliki jatah laborasi kuat dengan elit oligarki ditingkat lokal. Keduanya telah melakukan praktik yang tidak adil dari nepotisme dalam bidang politik untuk mencapai kekuasaan dari Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN) di tingkat lokal. Disisi lain, *Lora elite* adalah sekelompok orang kuat di lokal, bekerjasama secara sinergis dengan elit demokrasi untuk memiliki akses kekuatan partai politik, singkatnya, baik dari elit politik telah kompetitif untuk mendapatkan kekuatan PAN. Dalam rangka untuk menggambarkan dinamika partai elit politik lokal, kebutuhannya adalah untuk memenuhi metodologi penelitian yang akan menghasilkan data deskriptif berupa kata-kata atau ucapan-ucapan dari individu-individu atau perilaku yang diamati. Wawancara, diskusi kelompok dan data dokumenter yang diterapkan. Berikut ini adalah temuan dari penelitian: 1) adanya orang kuat dari partai politik yang menunjukkan bahwa kapasitas individu dari partai elit memiliki kewenangan untuk menentukan berbagai kekuatan konteks partai politik; 2) dalam konteks kekuasaan, keberadaan orang kuat partai politik dapat membatasi dan mengurangi pelaksanaan peraturan partai politik dalam dinamika internal pada lingkaran partai politik lokal; dan 3) tutup hubungan tergantung pada hubungan simbiosis dan ekspresi kepentingan bersama antara blater orang kuat dan oligarki sehingga hubungan patron-klien dapat terjadi.

Kata kunci: Partai politik, kekuatan orang lokal, Partai Demokrat, Otoritas Elite.

## INTRODUCTION

Elite as formulated by [Haryanto \(1990\)](#) refers to an individual or group with certain privileges, where the privilege allows the individual or the group to perform particular roles influential to a certain branch of life. Meanwhile, in order to identify roles of the elites in policy making, some experts such as Lasswell, [Lerner, and Mills \(2000\)](#), [Rothwell \(1952\)](#), and [Putnam \(1976\)](#) see it from various different dimensions. According to [Laswell et.al \(1952\)](#), elite is a group of individuals who achieve the highest value in the society because of their capabilities to actively participate in decision making. On the other hand, [Mills \(2000\)](#) argues that the elite has the role in policy making because they hold the highest position in their institutions, while Putnam classifies elite into two categories, the elites with direct access to policy-making process and those with non-direct access to the process.

Even though the definition of the concept of elite varies, the similarity lies in the fact that elite is a group of people who has primary position in the society and they play such pivotal role in social life. Elite superiority over the society completely depends upon their success in manipulating their environment through

symbols, goodness and actions. The elite is an organized group with political authority. The group consists of organized minorities who force their will through manipulation or violence, especially in democracy.

Related to the elite and authority, [Varma \(2001\)](#) argues that what drives the political elite and elite groups to play an active role in politics is the political theorist's statements that there (constantly) is inevitable and unavoidable humanitarian impulse to achieve some power. Politics, according to the theorists, is a game of power. Therefore, individuals involved should take some responsibilities to socialize and instill some values to find some expressions that enable the accession to power. The desire for power and effort to have more authority is the cause of political clash among elites in political arena. Several researchers revealed that in political processes privilege classes carried out competition or conflict among them to gain the authority of political groups ([Mitra, 1991](#); [Eyoh, 1998](#)).

The purpose of the study is to describe the political party's local elite, particularly in Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN) at the local level, in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The researcher found out that there are some elites of PAN who have shown conflict among them to get the power of the political party. These elites are *Blater*, *Oligarchy*, *Lora*, and *Democracy* elites. All of them have different forms of variation, relation and interaction among them. *Blater* is a group of local strongmen who has nepotism collaboration with the oligarchy elite. Both of them have done unfair practice of nepotism while *Lora* is a group of local strongmen who work together in synergy with democratic elite to obtain access to the power of the political party. These groups then apply their strategies to get, run and retain power in an organized manner in political parties democratically or not.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Elite theory assumes that there are two categories in each society; the first is a small group of individuals with capabilities

and therefore these individuals have governing positions. They are divided into two groups, authority and non-authority. The second category is a bigger group of individuals who are destined to be governed by the first group ([Varma, 2001](#)). Governing elite is relatively small in number and has capabilities and superiority to make use of power; the governing elite handle all political power and monopolize power so that they can use it for good causes for example public welfare, improvement of education, expansion of employment opportunities, and public health improvement. However, the power can also be used for negative causes such as to get more money for themselves, strengthen the position of oligarchy, get their clans or family member government job, and even join power to suppress the opposition. Non-governing elite have second-class position in elite power strata; they will substitute individuals whose position is above them in case the governing elite fail to control the government. Non-governing elite also becomes competitor of the governing elite when they are not able to perform their task to control the power.

[Putnam \(1976\)](#) analyzes the role and influence of elite from three different perspectives, position, reputation and decision-making. The differences among the three are as follows: the position's perspective supposes that: (1) an individual who has an authority among a group of elite is the one with the highest position in the formal organization; (2) power correlates fully with position in an organization; (3) analysis of position is the easiest and most commonly used technique to find out who is the person with the most authority in an organization; (4) the analysis assumes that users have got previous knowledge who the important politician is and which institutions with fake influence, and (5) position analysis is effective only when it is applied to the society or organization with uneven distribution of power, while the analysis will not be effective when it is applied to a well-balanced society or organization. In short, the assumption of the analysis is "whoever is sitting at the top of an organization has the main role and huge influence in all movement of

the organization.”

There are two theoretical frameworks commonly used to describe the phenomenon of local strongmen, the term coined by [Migdal \(1988\)](#) or *bossism*, the term coined by [Sidel \(1999\)](#). According to [Migdal \(1988\)](#), all groups of the society have leader where the leader is relatively autonomous from the government. Furthermore, each society has social capacity that enables them to set their own rules with government intervention. When the government’s capacity to control weakens (weak state), local strongmen are going to step up and show their capability for authority. Furthermore, [Migdal \(2001\)](#) mentions the triangle of accommodation strategy as the strategy strongmen use to survive. It means that the presence of strongmen is the reflection of how strong the society is.

[Migdal \(2001\)](#) argues that the reason why local strongmen can achieve success is their influence instead of the regulations made by the government using the statement “*why local strong men have, through their success at social control, often effectively captured parts of third world states.*” They are successful in getting important positions and making sure of local resource allocation due to their influence (*own rules*), and not because of rules officially designed. According to [Migdal \(2001\)](#), there are three arguments to describe successful phenomenon of local strongmen, namely:

- a. Local strongmen have resurrected web-like societies through autonomous organization owned by socially fragmented condition of the society.
- b. Local strongmen carry out social control through the distribution of components called strategies of survival from the local society. It results in the pattern of personalism, clientalism and patron-client relation.
- c. Local strongmen control state agency and resource so that policy becomes the result of compromise with local strongmen’s agenda. Local strongmen perform control and limitation on government autonomy and capacity and are

successful in reducing the dominance of the government to achieve the purpose of social change.

Based on his study on local elites in the Philippines, [Sidel \(1999\)](#) states that the concept of bossism refers to “predatory power brokers who achieve monopolistic control over both coercive and economic resources within given territorial jurisdictions or bailiwicks. The factors that guarantee the continuation of bossism in the Philippines are: (1) the structure of government institution; (2) the concentration of private capital in the local level as a part of the government policy; (3) US legacy in the form of the Philippines’ election system, and (4) government apparatus involvement in the early stages of capitalist development. [Sidel \(1999\)](#) concludes the existence and continuation of bossism is the reflection of government power. It is the opposite of Migdal’s strong society and weak states thesis. Local strongmen maintain power by collaborating with the government and government political party and carrying out stationary bandit as well as rowing bandit (criminal act).

[Migdal\(2001\)](#) also states that local strongmen can survive as long as they are willing to have collaboration with the government and government political party, and based on the collaboration triangle of accommodation is established. Ironically, the triangle allows using the national resources to support local strongmen and their organization which manages the game of conflict. Furthermore, [Migdal \(2001\)](#) argues that the local strongmen’s existence also depends upon the government authority to control them; they learn to accommodate popular leaders to attract government organizations in a lower level. [Sidel \(1999\)](#) claims that the use of coercive violence to is the strategy the Philippines’ boss use to survive.

#### STUDIES ON POLITICAL PARTY LOCAL ELITE

The word elite, in the previous explanation, can refer to an individual, for example a political party strongmen or a group of

individuals, such as elite oligarchy. They play an important role in the allocation of power sources as well as giving influence to control a political party. Their participation in local political party can be seen from three political dimensions, namely: (1) the method they use to gain control; (2) the one they use to run power, and (3) the one they use to retain power ([Varma, 2001](#); [Putnam, 1976](#); [Migdal, 1988](#), [Sidel, 1999](#)). The elaboration of the local elite of some political parties, whether he is an individual or s/he belongs to a group, is presented as follows:

**Individual Elite: Local strongmen of political party**

In the dynamics of local political party, we are going to find the party strongmen, an individual with power to determine the direction and policy of the political party. [Keller \(1991\)](#) uses the term decision maker elite to describe the individual. As an individual, the strongmen is able to express his/her influence and make sure the distribution and allocation of power sources taking place because of his/her one-of-a-kind role in the party; although she/he is not the leader of a political party, she/he has the adequate capacity to determine to the distribution and allocation of power sources, one bigger than what the other members have, which makes him or her an important individual in the political party. The strongmen can even trespass some of the boundaries set by a political party and decide the policy of the part since they have the privilege other members do not. Adopting Putnam's terminology in the analysis of the elite, such individual is called political party strongmen because they have bigger reputation and decision-making contribution compared to their position in political party ([Putnam, 1976](#)). Besides Keller's and Putnam's conception above, [Migdal \(2001\)](#), [Sidel \(1999\)](#), and [Olson's \(2004\)](#) theories about local strongmen and bossism are relevant to use to construct the conception of political party strongmen. Political party strongmen can exist due to certain privileges they have; the privilege to control and give orders can be used for positive cause but may also be used for negative ones. There are bad strongmen who influence political party negatively

and good strongmen who give positive influence to the party. Bad strongmen are people who appreciate their authorities in political party. Bad strongmen are people who appreciate their authorities in political party using non-democratic methods and do not avoid criminal acts to achieve their desire. On the other hand, good strongmen are the strongmen who implement democratic methods to appreciate their authorities and avoid violence in getting what they desire ([Pareto, 1991](#)). In the political arena, the strongmen work together with a group of individuals who unify, and have similar characteristics similar to [Pareto \(1991\)](#), [Bratton \(1994\)](#) and [Mosca \(1939\)](#) also said, "*internally, the elites are homogenous, unified and have group awareness. Individuals belong to the elite group know each other well, has similar background, value, loyalty and need.*"

#### **Elite Oligarchy: Political Party Local Elite Group**

Oligarchy is derived from the Greek word "oligarkhia" which means several and oligarchy literally means a country or political system authorized by several individuals. Oligarchy as political system was known during the Ancient Greek era in a city-country called *polis*. [Soehino \(2001\)](#) mentions Aristotle's definition of oligarchy as "is a bad form of government as the ruling faction governs solely in its own interest, disregarding those of the poor." Therefore, oligarchy is a form of government whose authority is in the hand of people who appreciate their power negatively; the power they have is violated for the sole purpose and interest of an individual or particular groups.

Elaborating Aristotle's definition on oligarchy, it is the form of government where the authority has two notorious characteristics, "negative attitudes" and "individual or group interest." Local oligarchic party is a group of individuals who rules their party purely for the sole interest of herself or his groups. These people use these methods for the reason of the following: to consider access, asset and network their parties own as their own



(political party personalization); to rule the party in authoritative manners; less openness to criticism (the absence of political control); being unconstitutional by putting aside “*fatzon*” and regulations of the party; to give no chance for individuals willing to become the elites or prohibit competitors; when they see individuals who can potentially be their competitors, they are going to take any measure to hinder or even end the individuals’ career in politics (predatory); may commit criminal act to retain power (coercive); and at last, oligarchic party is a group of individuals who attempts at taking, running, and retaining their power using any measure regardless it is considered as criminal act ([Winters, 2011](#); [Zuckerman, 1977](#); [Graham, 1999](#); [Bourguignon and Verdier, 2000](#)).

### **Democratic Elite**

In the dynamics of local politics, we are going to encounter political party elite who runs the party in democratic manner. The characteristics of democratic elite are: consider the ownership of his/her political party of the access and assets they have, and therefore think those should be managed by the regulations of the party; to involve various groups of individuals as the authorities (democratic); open to criticism and do not avoid political control; being constitutional by consistently paying attention to *fatzon*, rules and regulations of the political party; give chance for individuals willing to become the elites and treat them as partners; when they see individuals who can potentially be their competitors, democratic elites will give the individuals flexibility as well as developing their own capabilities to establish healthy competition; persuasive methods, dialogues and other non-coercive methods are carried out to retain power; and finally, democratic elites are a group of individuals who attempt at taking, running, and retaining their power by paying attention to *fatzon* and the order of the political party (for examples see Etzioni and [Halevy, 1990](#); [Steelman, 2001](#); [Sørensen, 2002](#); and [Higley and Pakulski, 2012](#)).

## METHODOLOGY

In order to describe the dynamics of political party local elites, the requirement to fulfill is a “research methodology that results in descriptive data in the form of words or utterances from individuals or behavior being observed”. Using observation as data collection method as well as documentation, the researcher was able to obtain secondary data that is relevant to the topic of the discussion. On the other hand, interview and small group discussion are the data collection methods to obtain accurate and relevant data primary data for the book. In order to get such kind of information, trustworthy individuals and understanding to the topic of the discussion are important.

The sources of information in the study are: (1) Subject 1, the current strongmen of Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java; (2) Subject 2, the former chairman of the Regional Representative Council of “Partai Amanat Nasional” in Malang, East Java; he was the chairman in the previous running year; (3) Subject 3, the chairman of the Branch Councils of Partai Amanat Nasional in Lowokwaru, Malang, East Java; (4) Subject 4, the chairman of the Branch Councils of Partai Amanat Nasional in Kedung Kandang, Malang, East Java; (5) Subject 5, the vice chairman of the Regional Representative Council of Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java; (6) Subject 6, an activist in Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java; (7) Subject 7, the vice secretary of the Regional Representative Council of Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java; (8) Subject 8, an activist in Partai Amanat Nasional who is closely related to the Komsis; and (9) Subject 9, the pioneer of Partai Amanat Nasional youth ranks in Malang, East Java.

The study utilized qualitative data analysis which according to Faisal involves: (1) note-taking that results in field note (data reduction) in the form of well-elaborated reports; the reports have certain codes that allow the researcher to trace down the sources of data; (2) coding, scoring, collecting, selecting, classifying, synthesizing, drawing conclusion and making index, and

(3) analyzing and interpreting the data, thought process by classifying the data into meaningful category, seeking and finding out patterns and relationship as well as making general findings ([Moleong, 2002](#)).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### THE LOCAL STRONGMEN ROLES OF POLITICAL PARTY

Strongmen may not be official members of formal organization and they are not part of the government structure either. If the strongmen are sitting in the formal structure of authority, they will be very powerful and respected. When they are sitting in non-formal structure of authority, strongmen will have such immense influence in policy-making and how the policy is applied. Sometimes, the strongmen are the ones behind all policies made by the official leader; the strongmen's contribution, interest and thought are involved in the policy.

The point is since the strongmen have some privileges other people around them do not have, they are given certain rights applicable in particular environment, for example the rights to implement and design certain rules, the rights to control economic resources, the rights to claim validity or decide whether a regulation and action is true or not true among the society. The privilege the strongmen have enables them to bring positive change to the society and such huge capabilities and influence can be used for positive acts. The shortcoming is the strongmen may potentially be really dominant and their roles may not show democratic roles in running their power ([Varma, 2001](#); [Putnam, 1976](#); [Migdal, 1988](#), [Sidel, 1999](#)).

In line with the strongmen's political characters, a similar phenomena has been taking place in the Regional Representative Council of Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The political party strongmen exists because they have certain privileges; the privileges are used to control and run the political party, bring positive changes to the party but may also be used to bring negative influence to the party. There are two

types of strongmen, bad strongmen and good strongmen. Bad strongmen are people who appreciate their power in Partai Amanat Nasional using non-democratic methods, uses violence to get what they desire, and are going to take any measure to achieve their goals while good strongmen are people who appreciate their power in the party using democratic methods, and avoid violence to get what they desire.

The characteristics of Partai Amanat Nasional Malang strongmen are the following: (1) individuals who are not the official chairperson of the party, but due to their strong role and influence become dominant figures in various policies of the party, for example ability to decide the chair person and secretary of the party, the board of administrators of the party, the candidates for the legislative, as well as to determine the distribution and allocation of power sources; (2) in various contexts, the individual role of the strongmen is to decide some of the policies the party has problems in terms of the collective collegiality of the board of Regional Representative Council of Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java; (3) in a particular political context, the desire of the strongmen can defeat the board of administrators' decision in the management of the organization, and (4) there is a patron-client relation between the political party strongmen and elite groups around them.

#### **THE BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL ELITES: BLATER ELITE AND LORA ELITE**

Based on the result of discussions conducted by the researcher, the researcher draws a temporary conclusion that according to his colleagues bad strongmen and good strongmen are not the suitable terminologies to identify political behavior of Komsu (he is a political elite of PAN in Malang district) and Ali Ja'far (he also is a politician elite of PAN at the local level). Since the terminologies have gotten into the area of political philosophy and ethics; the concept of good and bad in politics is vague and the most important aspect in politics is how to get power. Even though

the researcher's colleagues do not completely agree with the researcher's opinion, the researcher tried to find the most suitable references to use as a metaphor for the strongmen of Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang. It seems that the suitable document to map the strongmen of Partai Amanat Nasional is the one about *Kyai and Blater*. In this case, Komsu is a elite politician of PAN that is representative *Blater* elite while Komsu is a privilege class of PAN that is called as *Kyai elite*.

*Blater* is an individual or a group of individuals with capabilities to solve problems using physical force of *carok* the popular term to describe Madurese whiz. [Rozaki \(2004\)](#) conducted an in-depth study about the phenomenon of *Blater*. His study revealed that the local politics which has so far been identified with the role of *kyai* and *ulama*, the religious leaders is actually influenced by *blater*; the local political elites such as *klebun* or the head of the village are dominated by *blater*, and therefore both *kyai* and *blater* have strong influence and at the same time compete against each other in Madura area, mainly Bangkalan District and Sampang District, Indonesia. [Rozaki \(2006\)](#) then writes a book entitled "Menabur Kharisma Menuai Kuasa: Kiprah Kiaidan Blatersebagai rezim kembar di Madura." In one of his writings, [Rozaki \(2006\)](#) also discusses that the current regent of Bangkalan Kyai Fuad Imron is known as *Kyai Blater* because he combines two very different traditions, *Kyai* and *Blater*. The regent who came from Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa is the son of Madurese's *Kyai Cholim* however he socializes with *Blater* in Bangkalan when he was young.

*Blater* in Madura and the eastern part of East Java (Jawa Timur Province, Indonesia) including Pasuruan, Probolinggo, Lumajang, Jember, Situbondo, Bondowoso and Banyuwangi or known as *tapalkuda* area also has their own environment, community, network, relation and tradition different than those of other communities like *santri*, a group of students studying Islam. The traditions of *blater* are: (1) *remoh* or a tradition where *blater* gathers and have *tayub* as well as *tandak/ sinden*, female

dancers and singers. Alcoholic drink is a part of the tradition. The host of *tayub* will gain higher social status when more people attend the event; (2) *carok* or physical fight using *todek*, *monteng*, and *arek* to defend himself or his family's integrity. In *carok*, it does not matter whether the *blater* involved are right or wrong (Rozaki: 2005), the *blater* fights individually or in group. The

most important thing in *carok* is to be courageous and win because the winning *blater* will have higher social status and acknowledgment from the society; (c) cock fight, martial arts and bull-race are other traditions conducted when *blater* gather.

Geopolitically, Malang was once considered as *mentaraman* area which stretches from Malang to the west. *Mentaraman* area typologically is influenced by *Mataram* culture and it has a strong *abangan* society and Javanese influence as well as dominated by the nationalist party. Furthermore, Pasuruan to the East until Banyuwangi are the areas with a Moslem majority who are influenced by the tradition of *santri* and the dominant party is the Islamic party. Based on the researcher's observation, the eastern part of Malang is not categorized as *mentaraman* area. However,

religiopolitically, the area has similar characteristics to the *tapalkuda* area since it has strong *santri* culture and Madurese is the dominant ethnic group in the area. Therefore, the researcher feels that he needs to mention Madurese culture and the tradition of *keblateran* in the east of Malang which becomes the regional setting of the study because the existence of the culture and tradition can still be traced back until now.

In the *tapalkuda* areas, there is a legend about *blater* who until now is still considered as *tuturtinular* called *Sakerah*. *Sakerah* is a *blater* from Pasuruan known for his struggle to fight against the Dutch Army who treats the sugar cane farmer violently; he is famous for wearing his loose shirt, white-and-red stripes t-shirt, *udeng* or a traditional head piece and *clurit*, Madurese traditional weapon. *Sakerah* is the manifestation of local heroic figure that relies on his physical ability *carokto*, to defend justice and re-

spect. He is the role model of those having the *blater* tradition.

Based on the observations, the researcher found out that the existence of *blater* in the political events in Malang is solely as political accessory. They become security person, *pengandel* or people showing courage, mass getter, as well as showing their physical abilities in martial arts as the attraction in various campaigns or events. Therefore in political context, *blater* functions as: (1) political bumper which means by working together with *blater*, political party, candidates of the legislative, mayors or vice mayors feel that they have security groups that can protect them from any disturbance from their competitors since *blater* can display their physical abilities and *carok* can act as bumper in the case of sudden physical contact; (2) *pengandel* which means by working together with a group of *blater*, political party, candidates of the legislative, mayors or vice mayors feel that they have support groups so that they are more courageous to move further in answering various sudden, unpredicted political challenge and risks; (3) mass and vote getter which means with the relation they have, *blater* has pretty stable environment, community, as well as social, economic and political network. Therefore, using *blater* is actually similar to taking advantage of them and all entities they have to get mass and voters; (4) political accessories which means the ability of *blater* in martial arts, and other traditional arts such as *bantengan*, *kuda lumping*, *tunil* and many others help in reducing the tension of political situation which sometimes is heated and full of intrinsic sand competitions.

Not only is the strongmen *blater* become the focus of the study political accessory, but they can also conduct the penetration of power, dominate political party and appreciate authority with the capacities they have; however they can also turn into antagonistic elites who bring conflict to the political party. In context of political party conflict, they are usually composed of people with divergent interests and orientations. *Komsil* based on the character is similar to people with the culture of *blater*. He was born as Madurese and he was once the

leader of a region and has been fond of physical violence as problem solving method since his younger age. He has some influence in *blateran* area in Kedungkandang (a sub district of Malang area) which can sometimes be mobilized by Komsu. Kedungkandang is an area located in the eastern part of Malang. In the past, Madurese was the dominant ethnic group in the area and according to an informant, *blater* is a familiar terminology for individuals living in the area. In fact, the origin of Madurese people in the area can be traced to Bangkalan and Sampang in which both of them are Madurese area.

In Madura, according [Wiyata \(2006\)](#) there are three social strata in Madurese Islamic boarding schools: firstly, *Keyae*, who refers to religious leaders with vast amount of religious knowledge; secondly, *bhindhara*, who refers to individuals that have graduated from Islamic boarding schools but their knowledge about Islam is not as much as one of the *keyae*, and thirdly, *santri* who are students of Islamic boarding schools who also stay in the schools.

Different from Wiyata's explanation, three people from Sumenep, Madura Ira, Imam and Syaiful (three of them are key informants of this research) have mentioned the social strata in Madurese Islamic boarding schools and therefore can be illustrated in the form of the following pyramid, namely: (1) *Kyai* is the owner, educator and manager of Islamic boarding schools. *Kyai* is responsible for transforming Islamic knowledge such as jurisprudence, hadith and tafsir or known as the yellow book to his students; (2) *Lora* has several definitions namely: (a) the sons of *kyai* ([Rozaki: 2005](#)) or *Gus* in the tradition of Javanese Islamic boarding schools; (b) the sons of *kyai* who have yet become or want to become *kyai*; (c) anyone, either he is the son of *kyai* or not, whose responsibility is to manage Islamic boarding schools for instance build some constructions, expand the area of the schools, establish network with other Islamic boarding schools, facilitate *kyai* and his families, synergize components of the schools and many others, and (d) individuals who gain the trust



of *kyai* or his aides who always obeys him and his orders; (3) *bindere* or senior students of Islamic boarding school whose responsibilities are to study Islam as well as assisting *kyai* in teaching their juniors, and (4) *santre* is student of Islamic boarding school who stays in the school for certain period of time in order to study the yellow book. Islamic boarding schools have their own tradition and environment, but they can also influence the social environment of the society around them.

In Madura, areas of Islamic boarding schools have strong religio-political influence and people living around the schools are influenced by any religion and political party thus becoming the affiliation of the schools. It means when *kyai* has an affiliation with particular political party, automatically his students as well as people living around the school will follow what he has been doing. The following political party strongman, Ali Ja'far, has almost the same characteristics as individuals with the culture of *lora* in the tradition of Madurese Islamic boarding schools. He is the leader of Munawarroh, an Islamic boarding school in Kedungkandang and when he was younger, he went to an Islamic boarding school in Sidogiri, Pasuruan. He likes to build and expand Islamic boarding schools, is extremely obedient to *kyai*, and able to synergize various components of Islamic boarding schools. In short, Ali Ja'far has established a strong tradition among the students in Islamic boarding schools. The following problem that emerged was how *Komsis* as *blater* and *Ali Ja'far* as *lora* can transform their experiences about life into the dynamics of political party, especially Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java.

#### OLIGARCHY VERSUS DEMOCRATIC ELITE OF "PARTAI AMANAT NASIONAL" MALANG

In addition to *blater* and *lora* elites as described above, there are other elites of PAN that apply pivotal and strong power in PAN that is an oligarchy and democratic elite. In PAN at the local level in Malang, elite oligarchy can be defined as a group of

individuals with power and therefore attempts at retaining the power they have. The methods of the elite oligarchy uses to maintain their power are (a) increase solidarity among the elite oligarchy of “Partai Amanat Nasional,” (b) give smaller room and power circle for new elite who wants to be involved in the oligarchy, (c) eliminate potential elites and competitors so that they will not become such threats, (d) eliminate individual, groups and force in the political party whom they consider as the embezzlers for their power through intimidation, pressure, character murder, sabotage, quarrel and physical abuse. In which case, oligarchy is a part of government whose power is in the hand of people who appreciate their power negatively; the power they have is violated for the sole purpose and interest of an individual or particular groups ([Soehino, 2001](#); [Winters, 2011](#); [Zuckerman, 1977](#); [Graham, 1999](#); [Bourguignon and Verdier, 2000](#)).

In contrast, based on the result of indepth interview with some elites of PAN, democratic elite of the political party also attempts at maintaining their power and some of the methods they use are (1) improve their leadership capacity so that it is in line with that of the party and the dynamics of the interest of the constituency, (b) improve the network capacity of the party both vertically and horizontally because when the political party gains more popularity, their popularity will also be increased as well, (c) carry out the agenda of the political party that ensure the development of the party, and (d) carry out healthy competition to get and retain power in the party. In this regard, the characteristics of democratic elite are considered as beneficial for the political field as mentioned by [Etzioni and Halevy, 1990](#); [Steelman, 2001](#); [Sørensen, 2002](#); and [Higley and Pakulski, 2012](#).

#### BLATER AND OLIGARCHY ELITES IN TOP POWER OF PAN: BAD POLITICS MANAGEMENT

The existence of political party strongmen shows capacity of an individual who has the authority to determine various context of authority in political party. A democratic party proposes

its leaders collective collegiality to determine the various contexts of the party. Therefore, the existence of the strongmen in a political party like “Partai Amanat Nasional” in Malang becomes problematic. Because of the involvement of the strongmen in the political party, the issues that arise are (1) Initially, the role of the strongmen “blater” in the party are as mass and vote getters, bumpers, and “*pengandel*” when the party has to have an encounter with the external sides of the party. It has been mentioned previously that “blater” as both an individual and groups has pretty stable environment, community as well as economic and politic social network so the existence of the strongmen in the party is going to add more value to increase the constituency of “Partai Amanat Nasional.”

However, when “blater” dominates the political party with such massive advantage, the party is going to lose much sympathy from its constituency; (2) the existence of the political party strongmen has some weaknesses; one of them is that the elites who have some desire to get as much power as possible without having to go through a fair competition will make use of the strongmen’s individual authorization in policy-making as a bumper. Such elites are going depend upon the relation and the close relationship the strongmen have to get the distribution and allocation of power sources, for example the 1999 and 2004 election. In short, the involvement of the strongmen in political party can limit as well as reduce the implementation of political party regulation in the dynamics of the local political party’s internal sides.

Such close relation is a symbiotic relationship and an expression of mutual interest between the strongmen “blater” and oligarchic party results in a patron-client relationship. The relationship is the recipe for success for the Regional Representative Council of “Partai Amanat Nasional” in several contexts of authorities, such as (1) the party’s success in introducing presidium leadership and eliminating the legitimate leadership of the Regional Representative Council; (2) its success to secure its candi-

dacy by placing an individual from their circle as the secretary of the Committee of Regional Election region II (“Panitia Pemilihan Daerah II”) of which role is to carry out the election in Malang, (3) its success to place four individuals they are close to in the local parliament of Malang from 1999 to 2004; (4) its success in conducting the first regional discussion of “Partai Amanat Nasional” in 2001 by positioning “Ucik” and “Manaf”. Both of them are mentioned as blater elite and as chairman and secretary of the Regional Representative Council, (5) it success in supporting Sulton Amin as the chairman in the East Java provincial discussion of “Partai Amanat Nasional” in 2001. Unfortunately, their success in appreciating the authority through nativism has contributed to a negative impact to public impression of the political party.

In general, the results of the discussions the researcher had with some informants showed some implications of the authority appreciation between the strongmen “blater” and oligarchic party. Some examples of the implications are a) the change in operational system and mechanism of the party, b) the decrease in the collective roles of the chairman of the party, c) the limitation of control from the structure of organization from the Regional Representative Council, d) the limitation of the implementation of regulations of the party, e) the elimination of control and aspiration network from the Branch Representative Council.

Some of the consequences of the authority appreciation between “blater” and oligarchic party in the Regional Representative Council of “Partai Amanat Nasional” from the year 1999 to 2004 are: (a) the system and party mechanism does not run normally; (b) the collective collegiality in the management of the party is substituted by the dominant individual from the strongmen; (c) the East Java Regional Representative Council of “Partai Amanat Nasional” is not capable to overcome the situation; (d) the candidates for the members of the legislative are not selected based on the procedures and regulations of the party,

instead the selection relies on the decision of the strongmen; (e) the implementation of power sources such as finance, facilities, position is carried out in an exclusive, non-transparent method; (f) there is no room to develop healthy competition for individuals who have willingness to be the elites; (g) a number of elites and vote-getters are no longer the members of “Partai Amanat Nasional.”

In short, nativism or the appreciation of power between the strongmen “blater” and the oligarchic party results in a “decline” at various dimension of the political party namely the temporary stop in the system and mechanism of the party, the conflict between the elites and the board of administration, and the decline in the number of votes. However, no matter how strong the elite’s effort in their attempt to retain power is, they will eventually be substituted by other elites with the actual capability. The strongmen “blater” who gain, appreciate and retain their power using violent method will be forced to give up their positions through violent method as well.

#### **THE POWER OF BLATER MOVE TO THE LORA ELITES: DEMOCRATIC POLITICS MANAGEMENT**

Political party elite circulation can be classified into two possibilities; the first is the turnover happens through violent, coercive, and non-democratic acts. Some of the impacts of the non-democratic methods are (1) the harmonious relationship among the internal parts of the party is disturbed; (2) there is a radical change in the mechanism of the political party from democratic to non-democratic. The second possibility is the turnover in the political party elite occurs through persuasive and democratic acts. Some of the implications are (1) the political party experiences gradual change; (2) the harmonious relationship among the internal parts of the party remains stable; (3) the democratic mechanism of the party can be maintained. In conclusion, the influence of political party elite turnover towards the change in system and the political party mechanism depends on (1) the

methods use in the turnover and (2) the new elite who substituted the previous one.

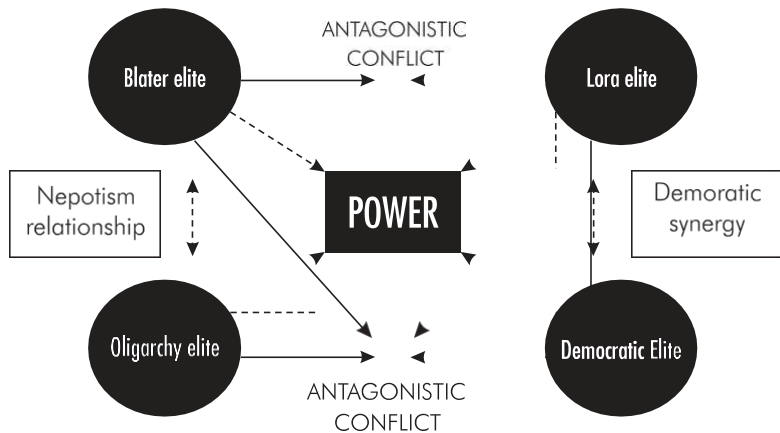
The turnover from the strongmen “blater” to the strongmen “lora” in the top of “Partai Amanat Nasional” pyramid of authority occurs because the first group of strongmen has lost their power to rule and control the party, while at the opposite the latter group of strongmen has gotten only one. Ali has more capacity to take advantage of the authority than Komsu as the result of political contest among the conflicting elites in the political party. Elite circulation from the strongmen “blater” to “lora” has grown some motivation to have democratic consolidation in the internal parts of the party. The background character of the political party strongmen is an egalitarian that is open-minded, polite, non-violent, and extremely obedient to “kyai” or other respected leaders. With the capacity s/he has, the strongmen are capable of creating the synergy and influence the elites around them to be more open-minded about the democratic behavior, particularly in the management of the political party. The change of behavior gives some limelight to change the work ethic of the Regional Representative Council of “Partai Amanat Nasional” to be better.

The changes the strongmen “lora” did with the inner circle of “Partai Amanat Nasional” Malang are (1) changing discourse and violent acts into persuasive political process in the form of dialogue, (2) expanding the capacity of both internal and external political network, (3) conducting internal consolidation in the Regional Representative Council of “Partai Amanat Nasional” so that the party is getting more solid, (4) conducting political education program to change the behavior of the party elite so that they have democratic behavior, and (5) giving discretion to the political party elite to compete for power. The change in discourse and action is carried out so that “Partai Amanat Nasional” becomes more open to the idea of the democratic party so as to avoid conflicts, with the expectation that the party can be more appalling to plural society in Malang. One important thing to

highlight is the strongmen “lora” have implemented non-violent politics since 2004 to the present.

Without having to carry out any violent act, the strongmen “lora” have been successful in numerous cases, such as (1) Ali Musallam Mahri has been successfully elected as the chairman of the Regional Representative Council of “Partai Amanat Nasional” to substitute Oetojo Sardjito who resigned from the position without the extraordinary regional deliberation; (2) four individuals who have close relationship to the strongmen “lora” have been successfully elected as the members of the legislative in Malang between the years 2004 to 2009; (3) Mohan and Pujianto have been elected as the chairman and secretary of “Partai Amanat Nasional” Malang, East Java. In general, they are also called as democratic elites of PAN.

In summary, all of the discussions above show that there is a framework in the political relationship among elites of PAN and that is to get or to keep the power and authority among them. In brief, form of the partnership and interaction among elites in PAN at the local level, in Malang district, can be concluded as follows.



Based on the picture, (1) the main goal of political contest among political party local elites is power; (2) political contest to take power in political parties involve good strongmen, bad

strongmen, democratic elite and elite oligarchy; (3) democratic elite has synergic relationship with good strongmen (*lora elites*), while elite oligarchy and bad strongmen (*blater elites*) carry out the act of nepotism, (4) these two groups have conflicting behavior and both have desire for power dominance so that antagonistic relation and inter-relation appear as the consequences.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, the lesson learned from the case of this research as revealed above are: *firstly*, the existence of political party strongmen shows the capacity of individuals who have the authority to determine various contexts of power; *secondly*, in the context of power, the existence of political party strongmen can limit as well as reduce the implementation of the political party regulation in the internal dynamics of the local inner circle of political party; and *thirdly*, close relations depends upon a symbiotic relationship and the expression of mutual interest among elites of PAN.

Regarding with the relationship among elites of PAN, blater has nepotism interaction with oligarchy elites. They are successful in various power contexts in the Regional Representative Council in Partai Amanat Nasional Malang, from 1999 to 2004. However, the relationship had been build based on nepotism politics between blater and oligarchy elite. Therefore, the nepotism had created a bad politics management in PAN. On the other hand, the strongmen *lora* has a good relationship with democratic elites of PAN. Both of the elites had been successful in controlling the political party and support people they are closer with to become the members of the local legislatives using non-violent acts. In fact, *lora* introduces non-violence when they and people they are close to dominate the political party.

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