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## Gaetano Mosca And "The Rulling Class" Analysis of Elite Group Domination in the Government System in Indonesia

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### Abstract

The main focus of this article is to analyze the role and dominance of elites in the government system in Indonesia in the light of Gaetano Mosca's concept of the "ruling class". The current government situation in Indonesia is dominated by elite groups. The role of elites in determining policy is very dominant. Various policies and decisions are determined by elites who have important status and roles in the government arena. This phenomenon has an impact on the reality of people who do not have a role in government. Thus, it is the elite who dominate or have power. This is exactly what Gaetano Mosca, an Italian-born sociologist and philosopher who pays attention to politics, calls for. In order to overcome problems arising from the domination of elite groups, there needs to be a reform mechanism. The mechanism is carried out through democratic processes such as elections or through social and political pressure from the masses. Effective reform can bring in more competent individuals into the ruling class, while overthrow can stop the cycle of oppression that is detrimental to the state. The aim of this research is to analyze the role of elites in government in Indonesia, and to see how elites maintain and utilize their power. The method used is literature study using Gaetano Mosca's *The Ruling Class* as a primary source. This research finds that the dominance of political elites in Indonesia plays a central role in policy formation and determining decisions taken in the government system.

**Keywords:** Gaetano Mosca, Elite Domination, Indonesia, Government, Politics.

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### INTRODUCTION

Since the birth of the democratic system in Indonesia, from the guided democracy era (1959) to the reform era (1998-2024), the dream of building a healthy and quality democracy has accompanied the journey of democracy in Indonesia. The dream of creating a healthy and quality democracy will be realized when the political communication system is implemented proportionally. Therefore, it is important for all Indonesian people to realize that understanding healthy and quality political communication should not stop only at democratic celebrations, such as; During the presidential election, legislative elections and regional elections. A healthy and good quality political communication system between political elites and the people should continue continuously. Political elites as communicators have a role in educating the public about democratic and political values that must be upheld both by the elites themselves and by the public as part of the country's citizens. By establishing political communication like this, sooner or later the public will truly understand the essential values of democracy and politics in Indonesia.

The reality is that even today, the dream of establishing healthy and quality communication is often dashed and has never been realized. A series of problems experienced accompany the ideals of a healthy and quality democracy. Political elites often stray outside the corridors of being politicians. This fact has given rise to many questions and assumptions from the people. The public's perception that political elites prioritize personal and group interests over the interests of the people is based on an unbalanced and momentary political communication process. The crisis of confidence in the elite is also based on disappointment with the promises made by the elite during the pre-election campaign and regional elections. This is marked by the birth of a democratic culture that distrusts each other, insults each other, ridicules each other, and prioritizes the group's ego over the interests of the people and the State.

The above phenomena trigger the emergence of inequality in society, namely between society itself and the elite group that serves as the government. The elite and their own groups use the authority and rights they have to rule and propagate society. Meanwhile, people who only have relatively little access to government inevitably submit and obey the orders of the elite. Gaetano Mosca also experienced a situation like this. Mosca is an Italian-born sociologist and philosopher who is interested in politics and democracy (Etzioni, 1997). Mosca suspects that in society there is a small group that is powerful and holds power. This group is called Mosca as an elite who is able to control large and large masses. The dominance of elite groups is very significant in the decision-making process and determining every policy in government. Elite groups, which are smaller in number than the masses, can be well organized because they consist of people who have the skills and resources to lead the entire society. The elite, which Mosca calls the ruling class, has access to resources and has the ability to make various important policies and decisions to influence the entire mass. In Mosca's observations, political history in all countries, no matter how democratic the country is, is always marked by dynamics of oppression, where elite groups continuously maintain their power and role in suppressing the masses. This does not mean that all elites act evil or corrupt, but rather that the action of pressure here is more directed

towards a gradual power structure that tends to produce a dynamic where elites, in order to maintain their position and power, often sacrifice the public interest (Mosca, 1884). In Mosca's view, dynamics like this still exist and occur repeatedly in every form of government, whether monarchy, oligarchy or democracy.

A similar situation also occurs in the government system in Indonesia. Indonesia is one of the countries with the 4th largest population in the world and its political problems have been very complex since the era of independence until now. In Indonesia, the role of the elite is very visible in every government system that has existed to date. The discourse regarding the domination of elite groups is a topic that is often discussed in political and social studies. The elite group, which includes leading political, economic, military and intellectual elites, has a significant role in shaping policy and the direction of state government. On this basis, through this research, the author will describe the influence of elite groups in various aspects and government systems in Indonesia. This research limits itself to a study of the concept of "the ruling class" from Gaetano Mosca in analyzing the dominance of elites in the government system in Indonesia. This research is a descriptive analysis, therefore this research is truly open to suggestions and input that support the author in explaining more deeply the ideas Mosca to analyze the dominance of the elite in Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

This article uses a qualitative approach, namely literature study, especially critical reading of Gaetano Mosca's works such as his book entitled "The Ruling Class" which is the primary source for this article. Various secondary sources that support research data come from Mosca's works as well as various scientific articles and journals that directly relate to the themes of this article. Data collection was carried out first starting by discussing Gaetano Mosca's concept of the ruling class, then analyzing various data from primary sources to elaborate on Gaetano Mosca's concept of the ruling class. This article is also equipped with the author's skills in exploring Gaetano Mosca's theory of "The Ruling Class" as a basic framework for analyzing the dominance of elite groups in Indonesia. This approach helps the author to understand the dominance of elite groups in the government system in Indonesia.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A Glimpse into Getting to Know Gaetano Mosca**

Gaetano Mosca is a sociologist and political scientist from Italy who has contributed to elite theory and political thought. He was born on April 1, 1858 in Palermo, Sicily, Italy. He died on 8 November 1941 in Rome. One of his most famous works is "elementi di Scienza Politica" (Elements of Political Science). In this work, Mosca expands his thoughts on elite theory. According to him, in society, consciously or not, power is effectively held by an elite minority group. The concept of elite power created by Mosca makes an important contribution to us, especially in understanding the dynamics of power in society.

### **Mosca's concept of "The Ruling Class"**

In his famous work *The Ruling Elite*, Mosca observed that every society is always divided into two parts; a minority that controls the government and a majority that is ruled by a minority. Mosca emphasized:

"Although in every society there are elites and ruling class; some qualities, superiorities and functions that characterize the members of elites or ruling class can differ from one society to another. For instance, in some societies where physical strength is important then physically powerful people organize the elite group. In some other societies, economic functions are important determinant; therefore owners of important companies constitute the ruling class (Mosca, 1969)"

Mosca's statement above is intended to illustrate that in society there are two prominent classes, namely the ruling class or in Mosca's language, "the elite" and the ruled class. The first class controls the political function, namely the monopoly of power and control of its results. The second class on the other hand, those who are from a large group, but have no political power or function, they are directed and controlled by the first class in certain ways. Mosca, as quoted by Edward Paul, provides an example of a situation of dominance between these two classes;

"Mosca gives some examples for explaining such superiorities of ruling class. According to him, becoming a member of ruling class happens through the use of violent means. Thus, coercion is the most common way to become a ruler. In advanced societies, intellectual capacities, and a perceived concern for the state's interest can also lead individuals to ruling positions (Edward Paul, 1967)"

Regarding this, Mosca further explained that the first class (in power) usually consists of people who are educated and have potential in various fields. The small number makes this group easy to organize. They implement all political functions, monopolize power by enjoying all the benefits of their position as holders of power. The second class (controlled), consists of many people (masses) who are directed and controlled by the first class, in a more legal, arbitrary or violent way. The second class provides the means to live and survive, as well as other things that are very important for the political organism. The ruling class (elite power) according to Mosca is a result of the irrefutable characteristics of human social character. It goes on to say that a political class that is not adaptable to the times will not be able to defend itself. Meanwhile, other elites will be formed from among the governed and over time will take over power, albeit through violence (Wawan Gunawan, 2019).

From Mosca's ideas, it is very clear that there is a system of domination carried out by the minority class over the majority class. The phrase domination as found in the popular scientific dictionary refers to mastery, placement in a good and strong position, and great influence (Agustin, 1994: 89). In his work *The Ruling Class*, Mosca assumes that

every society is divided into two parts, namely the minority who control the government and the majority who are ruled by the majority. Mosca emphasized;

"In every politically organized society there is an organized minority that rules and influences the majority. The minority can rule the majority since it consists of superior people who have organization capability and create organizations of elites with similar talents. Additionally, since it is a small group it can be organized (Mosca, 1939).

According to Mosca, this condition occurs for two reasons. First, minority groups can organize themselves rather than the majority. Mosca says:

"A hundred people who have a common understanding when acting together at a concert, always win over thousands of disorganized people (Mosca and Biliminin, 2005)

Second, members of a governing minority have influential attributes in the eyes of the society in which they live. Each ruling class thus developed what Mosca calls a political formula. Political formulas are justifications that they are worthy of governing a population (Yetkin, 2008: 21). Each elite also carries out propaganda to promote and preserve political formulas in order to gain legitimacy. The political formula used by elites is not only a means of gaining legitimacy, but on the one hand the political formula is also used to overthrow other elites. Regarding this, Poernomo said:

"Political formulas are also used when one elite tries to overthrow another elite, which is often done within a certain period. Although the ruling class has the opportunity to transfer the political formula to its children and grandchildren, history proves that there is often a shift in political power from one class to another. "Also, there are a number of causal factors that make a political formula no longer have legitimacy" (Purnomo, 2021).

According to him, in every politically organized society, there is a group of minorities who are organized and influence the majority. The minority can rule the majority because it consists of superior people who have organizational abilities and create elite organizations with similar abilities. In addition, because it is a small group, it can be organized. Thus, Mosca has an organizational approach in which elites are organized according to their capacity and rule the entire society because they are superior, few in number, and organized. With minorities, he said;

"I believe, to those few who constitute the ruling class. All elites can influence and rule a society but the ruling class is more powerful group in decision-making process (Mosca, 1939.)"

For Mosca, although in every society there are elites and ruling classes; some of the qualities, advantages, and functions that characterize members of an elite or ruling class may vary from one society to another. For example, in some societies where physical strength is important, physically strong people organize elite groups. In some other societies, economic function is an important determinant; therefore, the owners of important companies form the ruling class. Mosca provides several examples to explain the superiority of the ruling class.

Mosca wrote:

"Becoming a member of ruling class happens through the use of violent means. Thus, coercion is the most common way to become a ruler. In advanced societies, intellectual capacities, and a perceived concern for the state's interest can also lead individuals to ruling positions (Mosca, 1971).

As a result, it can be said that for Mosca being part of the ruling class requires qualities (skills or talents) that are different from other people, who are part of the majority class. Mosca makes an analogy like this:

"If fishing is the best way to sustain oneself in a particular society, then fishing expertise might provide necessary conditions in that society. However, if one of social forces -which is dominant in a society- declines (i.e. fishing or religion), then 'the section of the ruling class whose position was dependent upon control of religion likewise, over a period, declines'" (Mosca and Bilimin, 2005).

A decline in power causes the elite or ruling class to turn if the latter does not increase its talents. Finally, in contrast to the idea of classical Marxism where roughly economic organization leads the ruling class to grow, Mosca argues that the ruling class can also grow from different qualities, functions, or talents other than economic organization. For example, in modern society, according to Mosca, the majority of the ruling class always consists of bureaucrats who are salaried officials and who come from an organized bureaucracy related to the 'administration of political, economic and social life machines' (Mosca in Manuela, 2018.).

Mosca thinks that some people have organizational abilities and come together based on abilities that are seen as valuable in society. They are organized because there are few of them. However, he did not explain his ideas about organization in depth. Moreover, both Pareto and Mosca maintained that in all societies, there are groups that rule and

those who are ruled. However, there is a significant difference: In Pareto elite theory, there is a simple conflict between government elites who have power and non-elites who do not have power. Gaetano Mosca borrowed this conflict and made a systematic distinction between the elite and the masses in terms of elite power, influence, and organization. Furthermore, Mosca explained:

“The people who hold and exercise state power are always a minority group, and beneath them lie many classes of society who never participate in any real sense in government, and are subject to the will of the ruler; we can call them as dominated people” (Mosca & Norberto, 1932).”

It becomes clear that if we follow Mosca's line of thought about who governs/leads in a government system, then it is easy if we can answer clearly that those who lead a government agency (state) are those (individuals) who have disproportionate resources. Needed in the process of power. Furthermore, Mosca argues that even real democratic electoral practices are manipulated by elites: ‘those who have the will, and in particular, have the moral, intellectual and material means to impose their will on others, will lead and govern them (Mosca, 1932).

### **Elites and the Domination of Elites in Government**

Starting from its basic meaning, the term elite is a general terminology used to refer to a group in society that has special qualifications or occupies the highest position in a layer of society (Sudrajat. 1993:78). The reality in society shows that the elite group is a group consisting of various groups, such as; political, military, socio-economic and cultural. Furthermore, the basis for classifying someone in the elite group category also shows different methods, it could be based on heredity (birth), wealth or education-knowledge. In a sociological and political sense, the elite is the ruling class, a group that holds power both formally and informally in a social stratum. With their position, they can influence the development of society in a reciprocal relationship. Thus, it can be said that the elite is a product of its society. Relationships between elites are always maintained so that creations are established and the spirit of one generation is continued or translated into new forms by the next generation.

Giorgio suspects that elitism rests on the assumption that in every society there are minorities who hold large amounts of existing resources. Giorgio wrote:

“Elitism rests on the assumption that in every society a minority of people holds the greatest amount of existing resources and, consequently, power in its various forms, by virtue of which it dominates the rest of the population. From this assumption, it follows that all types of government are oligarchies and that political ideologies represent the changing rational justifications of the concrete power relationships that have always characterized the life of all societies (Giorgio Volpe, 2021).”

Of the elite groups in society, it is certain that the political elite group is the class that receives a lot of attention. This does not mean at all that we want to deny (ignore) other elite groups. The political elite is in the spotlight in the eyes of the public because the political elite group and the government system, the two have a close and inseparable relationship. Between members of elite groups and the power they have, as well as the roles they play, are closely related to problems in the political field in a region.

It can be said that the existence of political elites in a region and in a government system has a very significant influence, especially in decision making. Their prominence in government is mainly because they are the ones who are able to control and hold the reins of power (Sudrajat, 1993: 84-85). Elite and power in a society are like two sides of a coin that cannot be separated. The existence of power presupposes and ensures the role of elite groups in it, on the other hand, elite groups will always require a power structure to formulate their ideas and policies. This fact can ultimately be concluded that the political elite group plays a very important role in a government system.

How big the influence of elite groups is in government chess can be seen from a number of concepts that have developed around this issue. For example, with the theory of political elites which relies on the reality found in every society, namely that there are two categories that remain between, the first; a small group of people who rule and the second; a large number of the masses were ruled, as expressed by Mosca. These two categories are recognized as a reality that binds all human life. The problem does not fall into two large categories as explained above, but what is at issue is the role played by a small elite group towards the large masses.

As mentioned at the beginning, the ruling class or a group of individuals who have power, capital and considerable influence in government play an important role in the process of government. Starting from this understanding, it can be seen that their role and dominance is very visible in making decisions and determining the policies taken.

Mosca emphasized:

"The ruling class is able to maintain its power because it has greater resources and organization than the governed class. The ruling class also has the support of the military and police, which it uses to suppress dissent (Mosca, 1949: 56)."

Here, Mosca argues that the ruling class is not always benevolent and often uses its power to exploit the class being ruled.

According to Mosca, the ruling class, whether aristocratic, bureaucratic, or capitalist, maintains its dominance through a combination of coercion and consent. Mosca emphasizes that social and political stability depends on the ability of the ruling class to maintain its position of power effectively (Battomore, 1993). Mosca's theory of rulers highlights the role of political parties in mediating relations between the ruling class and the wider population. Abdil Mughis Mudhoffir and Husain Pontoh in their work "Oligarchy: Criticism and Theory" citing Mosca, emphasized that political parties function as instruments through which the ruling class can compete for power and maintain control over the masses (Mudhoffir and Pontoh, 2021).

The influence of elites in the government system is very dominant and determines the direction of policy and stability of a country. Mosca suspects that political dynamics in all countries, no matter how democratic the system is, often contain cycles of oppression. In Mosca's observations, this is very visible where the ruling class, which he calls the elite, continuously maintains their position and power by suppressing the masses. This does not mean that all elites are evil or corrupt, but power structures tend to produce dynamics in which elite groups, in order to maintain their position, often sacrifice the public interest. In Mosca's eyes, this kind of cycle applies to all forms of government, whether monarchy, oligarchy or democracy.

### **The Presence of Elites in the Government System in Indonesia**

The influence of elite group dynamics in the government system in Indonesia began during the leadership of President Ir. Soekarno (1945-1966). The wheels of the Indonesian government during President Soekarno's leadership were colored and influenced by the elite groups around him. Some of them that are worth mentioning are the military elite, political elite, economic elite and intellectual elite. However, during the Old Order era (1945-1966) the elite group whose influence was quite strong was the military and political elite. The presence of political elites such as the two major parties at that time; The Indonesian National Party (PNI), the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), each of which had a large mass, played an important role as a counterweight to the power and policies issued by Soekarno. Elite in the context of government refers to a group of people who are small in number, but have a strong enough influence in determining the policies taken and in the implementation of the government itself. In the context of government in Indonesia, the involvement of elite groups is very visible in political, economic and social decision making. It cannot be denied that their presence gives its own color to every policy issued. Because they are influential people in government, also at various levels of power. This group controls society according to its influence capabilities, so that society spontaneously obeys the elites. Therefore, people who are influential in society can be categorized as political elites. The presence of elite groups in the government system in Indonesia has changed from time to time. One of the significant ones is the dominance of oligarchs in political and economic processes. The series of cases raised by the author in this article are a small part of the widespread phenomenon of elite group domination in Indonesia.

*First*, the election of Regional Heads (Pilkada). As the author observed and read information from various local media, in several regional head elections, the involvement of political and economic elite groups was very visible and clear. It is worth mentioning that in the 2017 regional head elections held in DKI Jakarta province, in the process before and up to election day, the role of big businessmen and dominant political parties was very strong in supporting one particular candidate. Political campaigns are funded by large donations from entrepreneurs, who are then expected to receive rewards in the form of government projects or policies that benefit their businesses.

*Second*, mining and natural resources policies. Until now, of course, control over natural resources by a small number of political and economic elites is still clearly rampant in Indonesia. For example, in the coal mining and palm oil sectors which have also recently filled social media homepages. Many permits were given to large companies with strong connections to government officials. This kind of policy often ignores the rights and voices of indigenous and local communities and has a negative impact on destroying the environment where people live.

The cases above reflect how the dominance of elites in government systems and public policies often sacrifices the interests of the people at large in order to realize the interests of the elites themselves. Whether we realize it or not, the dominance of elite groups in Indonesian governance has had various impacts on society at large. This kind of reality has previously been read in the analysis carried out by Mosca. Mosca does not live in a democratic political culture as prevails in Indonesia, but the political analysis outlined by Mosca goes hand in hand with the phenomena that occur in Indonesia. Mosca, in developing the concept of elitism in his political analysis, outlined several impacts of the presence of the ruling class in government and politics.

For Mosca, the presence of elite groups in society has a strong impact and really affects the stability of the government. The same thing is happening in Indonesia today. Some of the impacts that are felt most closely related to the dominance of the elite include;

*There is Political Domination.* In the democratic event in Indonesia, there is an elite group that will naturally dominate politics. This group has control over important political and economic resources, such as wealth, power, and access to political institutions. They play a key role in political decision making and policy setting.

*Class Divide.* Political domination by elite groups will slowly lead to class divisions in society. Society will be divided into two main classes: the ruling elite and the ruled majority. The ruling class has superior access to political power, while the majority has limited influence in the political process. This creates the political inequality that is characteristic of elite-dominated political structures.

*Political Inequality.* According to Mosca, the main impact of the presence of the ruling class is the creation of political inequality in society. The ruling class has disproportionate access to political power and wealth, which can lead to injustice in political decision-making and policy implementation. This can produce social tension and dissatisfaction among the ruled majority. In Mosca's perspective, the presence of a ruling class is a common and inevitable phenomenon in the political structure of society. However, understanding their role and impact is important in

designing more inclusive and just political systems. Mosca also emphasized the importance of monitoring political elites and protecting the political rights of the wider community as steps to prevent abuse of power by elite groups.

### **Contributions of Gaetano Mosca's Thoughts to the Indonesian Government.**

Gaetano Mosca's political ideas and analysis contribute to government in Indonesia, especially in the current context. Mosca's ideas, especially his concepts related to elite theory, can provide several insights that are relevant to the current government situation in Indonesia, including;

*Understanding elite dominance.* Mosca emphasized that in every society a small group of elites will emerge who control political power. In the Indonesian context, understanding the existence and influence of political elites can help in identifying who has control over the decision-making process and how power is distributed within the government.

*The Importance of Monitoring Power.* One important aspect of Mosca's thinking is the need to monitor the power held by political elites. This is relevant for Indonesia, where monitoring corruption, nepotism and collusion are frequent problems. By understanding this concept, the government and society can further strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

*The Role of Institutions in the Maintenance of Power.* Mosca's ideas are in line with those echoed by Nanat Fatah Natzir who also highlighted the role of institutions in maintaining and legitimizing power. Natzir sees that in the Indonesian context, this emphasizes the importance of institutions such as the judiciary, the Supreme Audit Agency (BPK), and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in maintaining the balance of power and preventing abuse of power by political elites (Natzir, 2012).

*Reformation and overthrow.* Mosca believes that to overcome problems arising from the incompetence of elite groups, there needs to be a mechanism for their reform or overthrow. This can be through democratic processes such as elections or through social and political pressure from the masses. Effective reform can bring in more competent individuals into the ruling class, while overthrow can stop the cycle of oppression that is detrimental to the state. Apart from voicing reform and the overthrow of elite groups, the need to monitor power is also a form of contextualization of Mosca's thoughts in relation to ruling group theory. One important aspect of Mosca's concept is the need to monitor the power held by political elites. In Indonesia, the problems of corruption, nepotism and collusion (KKN) are still prevalent and have become a major concern. Thus, efforts to monitor and enforce the law against the behavior of corrupt political elites are important to maintain the integrity of the political system. Strengthening the role of institutions in maintaining power. Mosca's thinking also highlights the important role of institutions in maintaining and legitimizing political power. In the Indonesian context, strengthening institutions such as the judiciary, the Supreme Audit Agency (BPK), the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), and other supervisory institutions is key to maintaining the balance of power and preventing abuse of power by elites.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The Ruling Class concept from Gaetano Mosca about making a huge contribution to society, government and political practices of his time. The concept of the ruling class created by Mosca is also truly relevant to the current situation in Indonesia, specifically related to the political situation and the role of the ruling class in the government system in Indonesia. The domination of the elite has the impact of dividing society into two large parts, namely the group that rules and the group that is ruled. Mosca's ideas are able to bring new insights in understanding and reading the current political and governmental situation. By studying the Mosca concept, readers are invited to be more critical and astute in reading existing situations. Utilizing existing media to voice criticism and the importance of awareness and involvement in politics, as well as criticizing the policies and domination of those in power, is the right step to bring this country to a clean and healthy government system.

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