The Patronage Loop

Five steps, cited at every arrow. Why a decent person sells a vote, in one page.

1. Poverty and vulnerability

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Arrow A · contingency

> Allen Hicken (2011), "Clientelism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 14: contingency, the exchange only pays out if the voter delivers, is the element that defines clientelism. Scale: Pulse Asia via Transparency International found 22 percent of Filipinos were offered money or goods for their vote in May 2016, and 76 percent of those offered accepted.

2. Contingent loyalty

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Arrow B · incumbency lock-in

> Julien Labonne (2013), *Journal of Development Economics*: incumbent vote share ran 26 percentage points higher in villages fully covered by the 4Ps conditional cash program. Labonne's own caution: such programs "might have nefarious long-term consequences by preventing replacements of local incumbents."

3. Dynasty entrenchment

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Arrow C · extraction

> Mendoza, Beja, Venida and Yap (2016), *Oxford Development Studies*: poverty entrenches dynasties, with less evidence that dynasties worsen poverty overall. The course states the weaker, better-supported claim. Mendoza, Yap et al. (2022), *World Development Perspectives*: dynasties with construction-sector links rose from 19 to 29 percent of all dynasties between 1988 and 2019.

4. Extractive use of public resources

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> Concrete and current: the Priority Development Assistance Fund scam, exposed 2013, struck down in *Belgica v. Ochoa*; the 2025 Department of Public Works and Highways audit confirming 421 ghost flood-control projects out of roughly 8,000 audited. Both live and unresolved while this course is being written; confirm citation details before narration.

5. Weak public services

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closes the loop

> Back to Step 1. The loop closes on the absence of alternatives, not on bad character. A household with no savings and no state floor is choosing between contingent help that arrives and a public service that has never arrived.

The tools this lesson borrows

Douglass North (1990): institutions are "the rules of the game in a society." Acemoglu and Robinson (2012): extractive institutions extract value from the many for the few; inclusive institutions do not. Both are tools inside this lesson, not lessons of their own.

What this loop is not

The loop is a statement about incentives facing households in aggregate. It is not a verdict on any individual voter you have in mind, and it does not tell you how a specific person voted or why.