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Making It Personal: The Campaign Battle on Social Media in Indonesia's 2019 Presidential Election

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Ranked fourth in the number of Facebook users in the world in 2018, Indonesia has witnessed increasing social media usage as a strategic platform for political campaigns since the third direct presidential election in 2014.
- Due to their accessibility and relatively low cost, social media platforms are extensively used by both the Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto camps to broadcast short and punchy messages directly to voters. Prabowo sees social media as the means to offset the incumbent president's advantage of having favourable coverage by the mainstream media. Nevertheless, Widodo still has an edge over Prabowo in the number of online supporters.
- Reflecting the general nature of Indonesian politics and election campaign dynamics, the social media campaigning by both camps have focused on personal attacks against their opponents while highlighting their own candidates' personal appeal. There is hardly room for meaningful policy discourse; in any case, policy-related postings draw little enthusiasm from the netizens.

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INTRODUCTION

On 10 December 2018, Indonesia's leading news magazine *Tempo* (English edition) opted for a pun in the title 'Word War II' for the reports on the state of political campaigns in the upcoming presidential election.¹ The *Tempo* editor characterized the presidential campaigns as an "unruly slanging match" since both the camps of Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo and Prabowo Subianto "are hurling insults at each other on a daily level."

With over 350 million mobile subscriptions in the country², social media has become a platform that allow both camps to launch bold statements and to counter the contender's statements – often through a hashtag³ war on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Although Indonesia continues to deal with a digital divide⁴ problem, with merely 54.6 percent Internet penetration,⁵ Indonesians are the second most regular users of social media in the region: the average person here spends 3 hours and 23 minutes on social media per day, behind only their Filipino counterparts who spend 3 hours and 57 minutes handling their phones. Furthermore, 130 million Indonesians are active Facebook users, accounting for 36 percent of the total Southeast Asian users (360 million).⁶ However, the purpose of social media usage is far from singular and each social media platform has different characteristics of users.

This paper focuses on political campaigns on social media in Indonesia's 2019 presidential election. In particular, it examines the contents of the campaigns on social media and how social media have shaped the nature of mediated debates between the presidential candidates. It argues that while both candidates employ social media extensively in their political campaigns, in order to directly reach out to their sympathizers and voters, they tend to delve into personal matters rather than engage in robust debates on proposed policies with a distinctive ideological framework.⁷ Moreover, hoaxes or misinformation have tainted political campaigns, which may affect the quality of political contest and lead to ill-informed voters deciding on polling day.

SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN INDONESIA

Indonesia has witnessed a steadily increasing number of Internet users. In 1998, there were only 500,000 Internet users in Indonesia but nineteen years later, the number of users has reached 143.26 million out of a total population of 262 million.⁸ Given that there is such a huge number of Internet users, Indonesia can be considered one of the highest in Asia and Pacific despite its 54.6 percent of Internet penetration over its huge territory. Indeed, there is a gap of Internet penetration⁹ where 72.41 percent of urban dwellers have Internet access while only 40.25 percent have access in the rural areas¹⁰, where 46.7 percent of the total population lives.¹¹

With the steady increase of Internet penetration in Indonesia, access to social media has widened since social media are operated through the Internet connection. According to the 2018 Global Digital Report released by We Are Social and Hootsuite, the most active social media platform in Indonesia is YouTube (43 percent) followed by Facebook (41 percent), while the text-messaging application (WhatsApp) occupies third position (40 percent). The highest percentage of Facebook users (16 percent) is those aged 18 to 24, while the lowest

percentage (0.10 percent) belongs to age 55 to 64. In other words, young people are unexpectedly the most social media savvy in Indonesia.

While Instagram is becoming more popular (38 percent),¹² particularly among young people, Twitter (27 percent) is an important social media platform as well. In particular, politicians in Indonesia use Twitter to maintain connection with their constituents, almost on a daily basis. Artists and celebrities have huge numbers of Twitter followers, but Joko Widodo with 11.1 million followers is among one of the politicians with the highest number of conversations in 2018.¹³

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN BATTLEGROUND

Social media has been deployed as a channel for political campaigns since Indonesia's third direct presidential elections in 2014¹⁴. *The Australian* dubbed the 2014 presidential election as the first-ever 'Twitter election' for Indonesia, though Twitter boosters have made similar claims since Obama's re-election in 2012. It was reported by *The Australian* that the ground-level rallying capability of social media in the last week of campaigning helped to boost the supports for Joko Widodo in 2014. Furthermore, according to SMRC research director Djayadi Hanan, SMRC exit polls show 11 percent of people made up their minds only during the four days before the polling day.

Since the mainstream media tend to be favourable to the incumbent¹⁵, social media is arguably more important for opposition candidates. However, the incumbent Jokowi is still dominating on Twitter with 11.1 million followers while Prabowo has only a third of the figure at 3.7 million. Jokowi, a regular vlogger with the hashtag #JKWVLOG, has more than 863,322 followers and 328 videos on his YouTube channel, while a search showed that Sandiaga has 4 million followers on Instagram and a million followers each on Facebook and Twitter. Ma'ruf only has 50,900 Instagram followers and no verified Twitter account. The higher number of Sandiaga's followers on Instagram than on his Twitter account shows his popularity among young people.

Both presidential candidates have paid serious attention to social media by forming an 'underground team' (unregistered with the election commission) for monitoring social media, and formulating a strategic online action plan. For instance, the Jokowi's 'Awan' (cloud) team is tasked to analyze social media content and then to process it into strategies to be executed by the 'land' (field) team such as 'Cakra' team led by Andi Widjajanto, a former Cabinet Secretary (2014-2015). In the case of the *tawhid* flag (associated with banned Indonesian Hizbut Tahrir) burning by the two members of Nahdlatul Ulama's paramilitary in Garut (West Java) on October 2018, the Awan team created a hashtag #KompakdamaiIndonesiaku (united and peaceful Indonesia) where they instructed Cakra team members in 20 provinces to help in promoting the hashtag. Meanwhile, Prabowo's camp formed 'Pride' (Prabowo-Sandi Digital Team) which evolved from the digital team of Anies Baswedan-Sandiaga Uno in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election. Helmed by Anthony Leong (digital marketing expert)¹⁶, this team is responsible for producing contents for social media campaigning and mapping social media accounts, which potentially launch attack Prabowo-Sandiaga.¹⁷

One example of the intense online battle between the two presidential candidates emerged two months before the official announcement of the presidential nominations on 10 August 2018. At that time, the ‘2019ChangePresident’ hashtag (#2019GantiPresident)¹⁸ had been widely circulated through social media. The PKS politician Mardani Ali Sera was an initiator of this campaign. This “change president” campaign quickly became viral on social media perhaps because it seems to unite all political spectrums in the opposition camp. In short, the hashtag has built a momentum for the opposition and helped pave the way for the nomination of Prabowo Subianto.

Soon after presidential nominations on 10 August 2018; the ‘*jenderal kardus*’ (cardboard general) hashtag dominated the Twittersphere. This hashtag was derived from the thread of a vice-secretary general of Demokrat Party, Andi Arief who expressed his disappointment regarding the nomination of Sandiaga Uno (Gerindra politician) instead of Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono as Prabowo’s running mate. Andi called Prabowo “jenderal kardus” (cardboard general)¹⁹ referring to the notion that Prabowo always ask for ‘political dowry’ (*mahar politik*) from the candidate who will run with him, rather than prioritizing popularity or other political factors. As a counter to #jenderalkardus, Prabowo’s supporters spread #jenderalbaper (mawkish general)²⁰ referring to Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who ambitiously promotes his politically inexperienced son Agus Yudhoyono to be a vice-president candidate and frequently expresses his complaints emotionally through the social media.

In the early three months of the social media campaign, both the Jokowi-Ma’ruf and Prabowo-Sandiaga camps tended to capitalize on their rival’s mistakes. For instance, when making a speech in Boyolali (Central Java), Prabowo called the poor having a “*tampang Boyolali*” (Boyolali face) being barred from entering a fancy international hotel in Jakarta. This derogative statement provoked a mass rally in Boyolali regent and triggered a hashtag #SaveTampangBoyolali which became viral on social media.²¹ Similarly, while visiting the tomb of one of the founders of Nahdlatul Ulama (Kyai Bisri Syansuri) in Jombang in October 2018, Sadiaga stepped over the tomb, behavior taken to be disrespect for the NU founder. The video of the incident went viral on social media and incited criticisms, including from PBNU Executive Board official Nasyirul Fallah Amru.²²

Meanwhile, at the end of October 2018, Jokowi coined the phrase “*politikus sontoloyo*” (imbecile politicians)²³ attributing to the politicians who wished to fool the people. Furthermore, countering the pessimistic tone and apocalyptic outlook of Indonesia in Prabowo’s campaigns, Jokowi launched the phrase “*politik genderuWO*” (the politics of ‘ogre’—the last syllable a reference to Prabowo) referring to the politician who stirs unfounded fears among people in order to gain political support. After Jokowi made the ‘*genderuwo politics*’ statement, Prabowo’s campaign team counterattacked with hashtag #EkonomiGenderuwo, criticizing economic problems during Jokowi’s presidency. It seemed that both camps are waiting for the opponent to slip up, and the supporters of both sympathizers are also launching counterattacks on their opponent. Here social media plays a crucial role in deepening the emotional rather than rational act of the users.

MAKING MATTERS PERSONAL ON SOCIAL MEDIA

As the campaign evolved, the posts by the presidential and vice-presidential candidates on social media that attract the most responses (such as likes, comments or shares) from users are related to personal matters rather than to policies. In other words, personal images and messages resonate the most instead of programmes or policies. For instance, Jokowi's posts on his activity with his wife (Iriana) and grandson (Jan Ethes) gained more than 30,000 likes on Twitter and more than 1,3 million on Instagram, while posts on his government policies only received less than 15,000 responses on Twitter. The non-political posts of Jokowi seemed to be deliberately designed by the campaign team to contrast with Prabowo, who is divorced and remains single.

To contrast with the humble origins of Jokowi, Prabowo's campaign team posted several old family photographs on Instagram to show his grandfather and father showing that he is a descendant of an elite and respected family. For instance, a photograph of his mother meeting Queen Elizabeth received 201,422 likes and 3,193 comments. Indeed, most comments from Prabowo's supporters on Instagram admire his elite family lineage while doubting Jokowi's family lineage. However, this may create a backlash for Prabowo since most Indonesians aspire to have a leader who is close to ordinary people (*merakyat*).

Meanwhile, the campaign team of Ma'ruf posted various religion-related activities on social media as part of his campaign to highlight his identity as a senior and respected *ulama* and that he is still agile at the age of 75. Moreover, Ma'ruf always wears black *peci* (rimless cap) and sarong in both religious and non-religious events. He was photographed delivering *tausiyah* (admonition) in front of his mass supporters. Moreover, Ma'ruf's posts on social media show him greeting and welcoming some leaders of social organizations as well as celebrities visiting his house in Central Jakarta and expressing their support.

In order to create a contrasting image against Ma'ruf, Sandiaga's posts on Twitter and Instagram sometimes show him doing being athletic with his team or supporters—running, swimming, playing basketball. Furthermore, some posts also show Sandiaga's close relationship with young people and *emak-emak* (housewives or mothers) in various occasions. Previously, Sandiaga became viral on social media due his flippant comments during his campaign such as “tempeh as thin as an ATM card;” “the expensive price of chicken rice in Jakarta compared to Singapore,” and “the value of one hundred thousand rupiah only for purchasing chilies and red onions.” Despite his flippant comments, Sandiaga was captured on camera with his frivolous manners such as putting *petai* (bitter bean) on his head mimicking Afro-American hair in front of *emak-emak* when he visited traditional market in Sukamelang, Subang (West Java) on 14 October 2018.²⁴

Clearly, personal (non-political) matters of presidential and vice presidential candidates posts have been appealing to social media users. Unsurprisingly, the campaign team and sympathizers of Jokowi promoted him as a ‘good man’ (*orangnya baik*), friendly and patient (*ramah dan sabar*), and ‘close to ordinary people’ (*merakyat*) through hashtags on social media. Meanwhile, the opponent supporters dubbed Prabowo ‘nationalist’ (*nasionalis*) and ‘patriotic’ (*patriotis*). By making presidential candidates to be more personal, social media simply are playing a role deepening the culture of ‘economy of attention’²⁵ that persuasively captures the voters’ attention to the positive image of the candidates.

HOAXES, MISINFORMATION AND SATIRICAL MEMES

Similar to the 2014 presidential election, the repercussions of hoaxes or misinformation have tainted campaign dynamics. Hoaxes or misinformation are mostly used as a weapon to downgrade the credibility or integrity of the presidential and vice presidential candidates. For instance, the first hoax and slander that emerged were the extra-marital affairs of vice-presidential candidate Sandiaga Uno. Started from the dubious news website (www.skandalsandiaga.com), the hoax widely spread through social media platforms.²⁶ Although the Ministry of Communication and Information finally took down the website, many who do not pay attention to the clarification of Sandiaga's campaign team may still believe that Sandiaga has an extra-marital relationship with multiple women due to his attractive appearance.

Meanwhile, on various occasions, Jokowi has complained that hoaxes have attacked him for being "a closer member of the long defunct Indonesian Communist Party (PKI)," "Christian and half-Chinese," "anti-Islam" and "criminalizing *ulama*." Although some of the hoaxes began when Jokowi first ran for the presidential election in 2014, they are still widespread in his re-election bid particularly among voters living in the rural areas. While some hoaxes attack Jokowi's economic policies as "pro-Chinese (foreign) capitalists" (*asing* and *aseng*) and "pro-Chinese foreign workers," most hoaxes question Jokowi's Islamic credentials and his anti-Islam policies despite having conservative Muslim cleric Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate.²⁷

The most popular hoax during the presidential campaign is the 'Ratna Sarumpaet²⁸ saga.' As an outspoken antigovernment critic and member of Prabowo campaign team, Sarumpaet fabricated an account of assault by unknown assailants against her at the Husein Sastranegara Airport in Bandung (West Java), where she claimed that she was attending an international conference on 21 September 2018. Before Sarumpaet admitted that she lied about the assault (in fact she had cosmetic surgery) and claimed to be 'the best hoax creator,' Prabowo and his supporters held a media conference and condemned Sarumpaet's alleged assault as the 'clear violation of human rights' and could be a 'threat to democracy.' Prabowo's camp broadcast their condemning statements, discrediting Jokowi as a regime that suppresses the opposition.²⁹

Amidst the tensions between the two presidential camps³⁰, social media users were surprised yet amused by a satirical meme³¹ of fictional presidential and vice-presidential candidates on Instagram. The account of pair candidates Nurhadi and Aldo—abbreviated "Dildo"—is known for posting sexual innuendo-filled campaign materials while openly talking serious issues (such as human rights, environment, minority) and promoting some leftist politics. Unsurprisingly, when the account was temporary suspended, there was speculation that the suspension was due to its critical content. Some opined that the popular Nurhadi-Aldo's Instagram account might encourage voting abstention (*golongan putih/golput*)³², particularly among young people. This is because Nurhadi-Aldo's memes are critical towards both presidential candidates for their flat and uninspiring campaigns.

DOES SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT PUBLIC OPINION?

Television continues to reach a wider audience across Indonesia than social media. The 2019 national survey by Indikator Politik Indonesia indicated that 42 percent of their respondents follow political news through television on a daily basis, while only 22 percent accesses news on the Internet.³³ Furthermore, social media users often use a particular television programme, such as speeches of candidates, televised debates, talk shows and news reports, where are edited versions, as content for their posts. Social media users often provide the links to the online news in order to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of their contents. At the same time, most viral phenomena on social media are covered by mainstream media. Therefore, the effect of social media cannot be isolated from the conventional (mainstream) media where they are operating.

Although Jokowi attributed the decline of his electability in March 2019 to the spread of hoaxes and disinformation in West Java, in fact he still enjoyed support from social media users, surpassing his rival Prabowo. A recent survey conducted by Political Wave indicates that Jokowi-Ma'ruf dominated 56.41 percent of conversations on social media with 69 percent of that expressing positive sentiments, while Prabowo-Sandi occupied 43.9 percent of social media conversations, with 67 percent of positive sentiment.³⁴ Meanwhile, according to Indikator Politik Indonesia's survey, hoaxes of Jokowi's parents as Chinese and Christian do not affect both Jokowi's and Prabowo's supporters.³⁵ Moreover, the effect of social media upon public opinion is only limited to voters in the urban area who have access to the Internet or a social media account, spend most of their time on social media and, most importantly, are interested in political affairs. There are less than 35 percent of social media users who are interested in political affairs, while most of them prefer non-political contents³⁶.

It should be noted that the problem for digital campaign is the difficulty in ensuring the number of 'real supporters' for the candidates due to the role of bots (robots)³⁷ to boost the trending topics as well as the popularity of hashtags. The effect of trending hashtags cannot be automatically attributed to the huge number of mentions on social media; one has also to look at the level of interactivity or engagement between the candidates and voters (supporters), as well as among social media users. Therefore, the great support for particular candidates on social media cannot be directly translated into electability that guarantees their victory in the election.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Political campaigns through social media by the pairs of Jokowi-Ma'ruf and Prabowo-Sandiaga tend to delve into personal matters rather than carry out robust policies debates. This perhaps reflects the nature of Indonesian politics and campaign dynamics which are characterized by personality-oriented politics and the personalization of the campaign without strong policy differentiation between candidates and parties. Thus, leading Indonesians tend to vote for personalities rather than issues in presidential election. This phenomenon is also inseparable from the nature of social media, which allow the presidential candidates to directly communicate, bypassing the gatekeeping role of the conventional media and maintain their network with the electorates. However, on social

media, the presidential candidates are less engaging in utilizing interactive tools, but rather prefer conducting one-way communication with the supporters or sympathizers.

While social media can be a platform for the presidential candidates to keep the public informed of their programmes and activities, they also can be used as an effective platform to spread hoaxes and misinformation, especially since the digital illiteracy and digital divide are still persistent problems in Indonesia. In the tense political climate, ‘cyber armies’ (anonymous or identified) perpetuate hoaxes or misinformation against the character of opponents by questioning their religious (Islamic) credentials and other personal traits. Meanwhile, young people’s disillusion with campaigns imbued with the distaste of polarizing political contestation has helped raise the popularity of satirical memes of fictional presidential candidates. The spread of this attitude might lead to abstention (*golput*) in the elections

Indeed, social media do not stand apart as an autonomous force that influence the outcome of the presidential election campaigns, since they are part and parcel of the socio-political landscape. Therefore, the future role of social media in political participation and democratic contestation in Indonesia is neither certain nor predetermined.

¹ ‘Unruly Slanging Match,’ *Tempo*, December 10, 2018, p.11.

² We are Social, Q1 2019.

³ A *hashtag* is a word or abbreviation (designed in a tweet by the “#” sign) that can be search on Twitter’s website. The tweets of anyone who includes that hashtag are grouped together on Twitter.

⁴ According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2005:15), ‘digital divide’ refers to the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas that have comprehensive access to information and communication technology and those that do not, owing to the difference in socio-economic level, demography, geography and the like, see <https://www.oecd.org/sti/1888451.pdf>, accessed 15 November 2018.

⁵ Indonesia Internet Service Provider Association (APJII), *Survey Penetrasi & Perilaku Pengguna Internet Indonesia 2017* [Survey on Indonesia’s Internet Penetration and Internet User Behaviors].

⁶ We are Social and Hootsuite, *The 2018 Global Digital Report*.

⁷ For an analysis of the shallowness policy and ideological discourse in the Indonesia’s presidential election, see Max Lane, “An Empty Start to the 2019 Election Campaign,” ISEAS Perspective, 28 November 2018; and, “Contending Rhetoric in Indonesia’s Presidential Elections: An Analysis,” ISEAS Perspective, 25 January 2019.

⁸ Indonesia Internet Service Provider Association (APJII), *Survey Penetrasi & Perilaku Pengguna Internet Indonesia 2017* [Survey on Indonesia’s Internet Penetration and Behaviors of Internet Users].

⁹ For a detailed discussion on some of the efforts made by the Indonesian government and community to provide better Internet access to rural areas and villages, see Uno W Purbo, ‘Narrowing the Digital Divide,’ in Edwin Jurriens and RossTapsell (eds.), *Digital Indonesia: Connectivity and Diverge* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2017), pp.75-92.

¹⁰ Indonesia Internet Service Provider Association (APJII), *Survey Penetrasi & Perilaku Pengguna Internet Indonesia 2017* [Survey on Indonesia’s Internet Penetration and Behaviors of Internet Users].

¹¹ Indonesian Statistics Bureau (BPS), ‘Persentase penduduk daerah perkotaan menurut provinsi, 2010-2035 [Percentage of urban population by province, 2010-2035]. Accessed 15 November 2018.

¹² We are Social and Hootsuite, *The 2018 Global Digital Report*.

¹³ “Sepuluh Akun Yang Banyak Dibicarakan di Twitter Indonesia, 5 di Antaranya Politisi, “ [Of the 10 Most Talked About Twitter Accounts in Indonesia, 5 Are Politician’s Accounts], <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/12/06/08533021/10-akun-paling-banyak-dibicarakan-di-twitter-indonesia-5-di-antaranya>, accessed 10 December 2018. This news did not reveal the number of conversations on Twitter, but it ranked Twitter accounts based on the number of conversations.

¹⁴ For an analysis of the role of social media in the 2014 Presidential election, see Holmes, D.C. and Sulistyanto (2017), “Understanding Indonesia Mediapolis: The Role of Social Media During the 2014 Presidential Election,” *Communication, Politics and Culture*, 49(2), pp.50-81.

¹⁵ Many media tycoons are part of Jokowi’s coalition such as Surya Paloh (Media Group), Hary Tanoesoedibjo (Global Mediacom), Aburizal Bakrie (Visi Media Asia) and Erick Thohir (Mahaka Media): ‘8 Konglomerat Media di Indonesia Via Jalur Media TV & Cetak’ (‘8 Indonesian Conglomerate Media Through Print Media and Television’), <https://tirto.id/8-konglomerat-media-di-indonesia-via-jalur-media-tv-amp-cetak-cEv7>, accessed 10 February 2018.

¹⁶ Leong tweeted a false accusation of Jokowi wearing an “invisible earpiece” during the first televised debate in January which became viral on social media, see, “Militansi Pasukan Siber Prabowo-Sandi” [The Militancy of Prabowo-Sandi’s Cyber Army], <https://tirto.id/militansi-pasukan-siber-prabowo-sandiaga-nbsp-dihL>, accessed 6 March 2019.

¹⁷ ‘Backstage Actors,’ *Tempo*, November 5, 2018, p.24.

¹⁸ It should be noted that hashtags have political value because political leaders, or anyone else, can spark dialogue on an issue by giving the issue a hashtag in their tweets. Twitter users can search the hashtag, see what has been said about the issue, and they can also contribute to the conversation.

¹⁹ Andi Arief’s tweet instantly became a viral with the hashtag ‘jenderal kardus’ created various memes with funny images of the cardboard general.

²⁰ Margaret S. Aritonang; Margruiete Afra Syapiie; Devina Haryanto, “#Jenderal Kardus vs. #Jenderal Baper, Twitterati Mock Prabowo, SBY in Upset Fallout,” <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/08/09/jenderalkardus-vs-jenderalbaper-twitterati-mock-prabowo-sby-in-upset-fallout.html>, accessed 13 August 2018.

²¹ According to Drone Emprit, there were 84,341 conversations on Twitter related to #SaveMukaBoyolali from 28 September to 28 November 2018, “Cyberspace War,” *Tempo*, December 10, 2018, pp. 20-21.

²² “Sandiaga Apologizes for Stepping Over Tomb of NU Founder,” <https://en.tempo.co/read/923407/sandiaga-apologizes-for-stepping-over-tomb-of-nu-founder>, accessed 15 November 2018.

²³ The term ‘sontoloyo’ used by Sukarno (before he became president) in his article entitled “Islam Sontoloyo” to refer to a Muslim who manipulates Islamic teachings for his own interest by justifying sinful acts through Islamic law (*fiqih*). See, Sukarno, *Dibawah Bendera Revolusi*, Jilid Pertama, Cetakan Kedua, Jakarta: Panitia Dibawah Bendera Revolusi, 1963, pp.493-500.

²⁴ “Gaya Rambut ‘Petai’ Sandiaga Saat Kunjungi Pasar di Subang” [Sandiaga ‘Petai’ Hairstyle When He Visited a Market in Subang], <https://news.detik.com/berita-jawa-barat/d-4255804/gaya-rambut-petai-sandiaga-saat-kunjungi-pasar-di-subang>, accessed 15 October 2018.

²⁵ This term is also known as ‘attention economy’ as coined by Columbia law professor and technology scholar Tim Wu who wrote *The Attention Merchants* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2016). Attention economy can be understood as the business sector that makes money gathering consumers’ attention and then repackaging and selling it to advertisers.

²⁶ ‘Scandal’ Website Portrays Sandiaga Uno as Womanizer, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/09/25/scandal-website-portrays-sandiaga-uno-as-womanizer.html>, accessed 27 September 2018.

²⁷ Deputy Chairperson of the National Campaign Team of Jokowi-Ma’ruf, Abdul Kadir Karding, admitted that it was difficult to handle hoax news aimed at Jokowi. The SMRC survey on 24

February-5 March 2019 indicated that 6 percent of respondents believed Jokowi was a descendant or member of Indonesian Communist Party, while 10 percent respondents agreed that Jokowi was a Chinese accomplice and 6 percent respondents agreed that Jokowi was anti-Islam, see “Jokowi Campaign Team Says They’re Overwhelmed by Hoaxes”,

<https://en.tempo.co/read/1186254/jokowi-campaign-team-says-theyre-overwhelmed-by-hoaxes> , accessed 19 March 2019.

²⁸ Ratna Sarumpaet is well known as an Indonesian human right activist, theatrical producer, actress and writer. She started her career in theatre (drama) before founding a theatre troupe *Satu Merah Panggung* that did mostly adaptation foreign plays. Inspired by the killing of worker activist Marsinah, she wrote an original stage play and performed it. She became a pro-democracy activist resisting the Suharto’s New Order regime. In 2009, based on her a stage play, Sarumpaet directed a critically acclaimed film *Jamila and the President* (Jamila dan Sang Presiden, 2009) that tells the story of a prostitute sentenced to death for killing a government minister. One year later, she wrote her first novel on an interreligious romance set in the sectarian conflict in the Moluccas entitled *Maluku, Kobaran Cintaku* (Maluku, My Flame of Love). In the 2012 Jakarta gubernatorial election, she supported the Joko Widodo (Jokowi)-Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) pair who won the election. However, in the 2016 Jakarta gubernatorial election, she opposed the re-election bid of the Basuki Tjahaja Purnama-Djarot Saiful Hidayat pair and supported the Anies Baswedan-Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno pair who won the election after the fierce competition tainted by blasphemous accusation and voters mobilization driven by identity politics. Since then Sarumpaet had supported Prabowo Subianto-Hatta Rajasa in the 2014 Presidential Election. On 2 December 2016, Sarumpaet was arrested in a Jakarta hotel on suspicion of being part of a group allegedly plotting a coup against the government of President Joko Widodo, but was released the following day.

²⁹ After Sarumpaet’s confession in front of the media, there were debates on social media whether the fake news was truly unrecognized by the Prabowo camp since Sarumpaet was part of his campaign team and had previously created many fake news regarding the new Indonesian banknote, the acquisition of state-own company by Chinese corporation, and the like. Using a Netlytic software, I found 15,031 posts under the #HoaxRatnaSarumpaet hashtag on 10 October 2018 which can be considered the highest post during the Ratna Sarumpaet Saga. Meanwhile Drone Emprit found 717,345 posts related to the Ratna Sarumpaet hoax from 28 September to 28 November 2018, “Cyberspace War,” *Tempo*, December 10, 2018, pp. 20.

³⁰ Australian scholar Ross Tapsell (2018) states, “[I]ssues of race, religious, ethnicity are further polarizing online and social media ‘bubbles,’ all encouraged by political campaigning which aims to influence micro target groups in order to win election campaign.” See, Ross Tapsell, ‘Echo Chambers and a Sectarian Public Sphere in Southeast Asia,’ *ASEAN Focus*, Issue 5, October 2018.

³¹ Memes are cultural artifacts that spread, usually with alteration, from one person to another through Internet and social media.

³² *Golput* is slang in Indonesia for abstention. This is practically a guerilla movement, which started as a protest against rigged elections during former Suharto’s New Order regime, urging citizens then to spoil their ballot papers or abstain from voting for candidate or political party. The issue of abstention always overshadows Indonesian elections, and has grown since the 1998 political reform. While administrative matters might cause someone lose his/her right to vote, the restriction for more open competition through presidential threshold, which makes it almost impossible for an independent candidate to win, can be a crucial reason for the abstention in the elections, see *Tempo* magazine report, “Alarming Abstention,” February 11, 2019.

³³ Indikator Politik Indonesia (2019), “Media Sosial, Hoaks dan Sikap Partisan Dalam Pipres 2019: Temuan Survei Nasional 16-26 Desember” [Social Media, Hoaxes and Partisanship in the 2019 Presidential Election: National Survey 16-26 December].

³⁴ PoliticalWave.Com (2019), “President Candidate Based on Netizen Choice (1-28 February).”

³⁵ 87 percent of Jokowi’s supporters did not believe that Jokowi’s parents are Christian, while 39 percent of Prabowo’s supporters did not believe the hoax, see Indikator Politik Indonesia (2019),

“Media Sosial, Hoaks dan Sikap Partisan Dalam Pilpres 2019: Temuan Survei Nasional 16-26 Desember.” [Social Media, Hoaxes and Partisanship in the 2019 Presidential Election: National Survey 16-26 December].

³⁶ “Media Sosial, Hoaks dan Sikap Partisan Dalam Pilpres 2019: Temuan Survei Nasional 16-26 Desember.” [Social Media, Hoaxes and Partisanship in the 2019 Presidential Election: National Survey 16-26 December].

³⁷ Despite Indonesia being the fifth-largest Twitter-using country in the world (estimated 24.34 active accounts) in 2017, 15 percent of total users are ‘robots’ (bots) accounts, which are not managed by human. According to the collaborative study conducted by the University Southern California and Indiana University, there may be 48 million Twitter bots, see Herman and Donny Mononibar, “Indonesia Fifth-Largest Country in Terms of Twitter Users,”

<https://jakartaglobe.id/context/indonesia-fifth-largest-country-in-terms-of-twitter-users>, accessed 15 December 2018.

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