Democracy in Digital Era: An Analysis of Reshaping Civic Participation After the 2014 Election in Indonesia

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Abstract: This article analizes the role of social media as a new space and framework for democratization in the information technology era on political dynamics in Indonesia, especially after the 2014 election. The rapid development of information technology in the last two decades has had significant implications for the democratization process and improved government performance, transparancy, accountability, communication and public political participation. However, on the other hand, the transformation in the implementation of values and pillars in democracy that is accelerating with the advancment of information technology, especially social media, has also cretaed a threat to the sustainability of democratization in Indonesia. Increasing pasticipation means opening up the potential for political turbulances to increase. This article uses a qualitative method with an analysis of literature reviews. This article find that the 2014 election contestation become a momentum for the transformation of a new citizens political culture and a new chapter for the journey of democracy in Indonesia. Community political participation which is facilitated unlimitedly by social media platform has increased political propaganda and manipilation from politicans, polarization of power politics, hyper-partisanship, intolerance, hate speech and hoaxes that have the potential to increase horizontal conflict. As a country with diverse social and political backgrounds, the presence of social media as a consequence of technological development has become a serious challenge for the future of democracy in Indonesia.

Keywords: Social Media; Citizens Participation; Elections; Indonesian Democracy

Introduction

The increasing of political tension in every five-year event in Indonesia since the reform was rolled out has become the strongest indication that Indonesia is a democratic country. What's more, against a backdrop of ethnic and national pluralism, political parties, organizations to interest groups, the largest people's party has also placed Indonesia in high regard by the international community because it is considered successful in carrying out the largest and most complex general elections safely (Merdeka, 2019). This international award, aside from the fact that the election process was carried out peacefully, is also based on the high level of political participation of the people. The General Election Commission (KPU) of the Republic of Indonesia noted that the number of Indonesian people participating reached 81% in the 2019 election, an increase of 10% from the 2014 election with a community participation rate of 70% (Kompas, 2019). One of the reasons for increasing the community's political participation is due to the increasing opening of social spaces to accommodate people's aspirations. The development of information technology which provides a wide space for the public through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and the like, has encouraged the public to actively participate in political life. Through the guarantee of freedom of expression, the public can freely express criticism, support, and build political movement solidarity through social media.

However, amid the guarantee of freedom of expression and participation, social media intervention in the process of democratization in Indonesia does not guarantee an increasing in political culture in society. On the other hand, political participation which is channeled through social media actually creates threatening consequences and undermines the democratization process itself. Bipolarity of community support for favored candidates actually leads to disintegration and horizontal conflict. The emergence of the terms "Cebong" and "Kampret," as well

as hate speech posted by each candidate's support base through social media freely and uncontrollably, is an indication of the threat to the stability of the Indonesian democracy in the future. The ease and cheapness of social media platforms as a means of campaigning has also encouraged the increasing practice of 'black campaign' and the exploitation of voters with a background in identity politics (BBC, 2018). The polarization of political power against a background of racial and ethnic sentiments, the war between the buzzers of each candidate's campaign team, and social friction in the midst of society becomes an undeniable reality when the process of democratization and maturation of the immature political culture in Indonesia has suddenly been confronted major transformation, namely the digitization of democracy.

Departing from the potential for social and political instability in the democratic process above, this research is proposed with the aim of analyzing the challenges of democracy in Indonesia in the midst of the information technology era or hereinafter referred to as democracy in the digital era. By looking at the high political participation of the people which is channeled through a new public space, namely social media, democracy in Indonesia is in the middle of a dilemmatic crossroads, between a more mature consolidation of democracy or the decay of democracy due to too open freedom of the people in participating and voicing their political aspirations.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study analysis design. Referring to Denzin and Lincoln's definition, a case study can be understood as an example of a phenomenon that is being or will be studied by researchers. As for Craswell, defines a case study as a qualitative research that examines the context of real or real life, one or several contemporary cases from time to time, collecting data through several sources of data or information (Kholifah and Suyadana, 2018).

In the context of this study, the focus of this research is to analyze the shift in the pattern of political participation of the Indonesian people in the digital democracy era, especially after the 2014 presidential election. This is due to the strengthening of political polarization formed through the mobilization of support for presidential candidates via the internet and social media. Political participation in the era of open information is also accompanied by an increase in identity politics and sentiments of race, religion and interest groups. The data used in this study were sourced from literature reviews such as articles, books, reports and online mass media. The data collected is then analyzed with relevant theoretical frameworks and concepts that produce research findings and conclusions.

Results and Discussion

Digital democracy: a new phase of democracy in Indonesia

In the era of information technology, the digital society movement continues to experience development. The development of this movement is in line with the existence of fast-moving information technology. Technological developments bring changes to all aspects of people's lives. Of course, this also has an impact on the spread of democratic values in countries all over the world. In other words, the internet has become a blessing for the process of consolidating democratization in countries with democratic systems. Indonesia is one of the

countries facing a situation called digitalization of democracy. The term digital democracy can be understood as the practice of democracy without time, space and other physical conditions, where information and communication technology (ICT) is the main feature that replaces the traditional features of political practice (Marta and Agustino, 2019). Furthermore, digital democracy has also encouraged new political aggregation and articulation, in which citizens have the autonomy to convey their aspirations directly through new media without depending on their political representatives. Conditions where digital democracy encourages the formation of deliberative democracy (Nuswantoro et.al. 2017).

Furthermore, in the context of digital democracy, there is a link between the democratic process and digitalization. The development of information and communication technology has influenced the democratic process anywhere and under any political conditions. For example, in the implementation of elections, the most important parts of democracy, such as political mobilization, campaign strategies and polarization of public opinion, are heavily influenced by information and communication technology platforms in the form of social media. The 2014 election, if it can be said, is a concrete example of a new phase of democracy in Indonesia, in casa that information technology has played an important role in the development of a digital election monitoring and oversight system. The Mata Massa application, which was launched by the Alliance of Indonesian Journalists (AJI) and Kawal Pemilu, which was created by an Indonesian IT expert, are two platforms that are facilities for the public to be directly involved in ensuring the holding of elections in a democratic manner. Both of these applications function as a portal to report violations that occurred during the election to find out the results of the post-election vote count quickly (Sustikarini, 2019).

In the context of digital democracy in Indonesia, other features of information and communication technology in the form of social media also play an important role in accommodating people's political participation, especially the euphoria of freedom of opinion and aspirations. This can be seen by the campaign period in the 2014 to 2019 elections which were won by Jokowi-Jusuf Kalla as well as Jokowi's second victory. It is undeniable that this victory cannot be separated from the magnitude of war of opinion in cyber space carried out by each sympathizer and supporter during the campaign period. Through the internet network which spreads widely and reaches every level of society, campaign jargons and support solidarity are accommodated and mapped. Of course, this is a new pattern that is not found in conventional democracy. Increasing public involvement in the democratic process through active participation in digital spaces has positive implications for the achievement of democratic autonomy. One of the principles of democratic autonomy that is achieved is substance of direct participation, including the statement of human rights beyond the right to vote as a representation of equal opportunities to participate according to personal preference and oversight of the political agenda (Sorensen, 2003).

The increasing of public involvement in the political agenda as a form of cultural change and political participation in the digital democracy era has implications for the position of political actors. In its development, the actor's position has been faced with political disruption era that is marked by a number of phenomena that reduce power relations between political actors and society, where political actors who have so far represented established traditional forces, are no longer the main reference in political life in Indonesia. The freedom of the people to criticize the authorities directly is a strong indicator. Traditionally, in an

established political structure, rulers are placed as the dominant and main force. They are considered the main axis of power in political life, the most important, and the most powerful (Sardini, 2018). However, in an era of political disruption, ruler of political power no longer have such privileges. In the era of digital democracy, people can easily criticize public officials or political figures openly by uploading content and messages conveyed in the comment fields on each social media platform. Of course, the criticisms conveyed can be widely accessed by anyone and are not limited in time. This change in the traditional structure of political life ultimately places political actors and authorities losing legitimacy as holders of absolute truth before the public. When compared to the period before the reform, it is impossible to criticize the performance of the authorities directly, especially in front of the public.

Furthermore, in the era of digital democracy, the people are not only positioned as objects, but with increasing demands for participation and open access to information and channels in conveying aspirations, the people also act fully as subjects. As objects, the people are just like users of information and communication technology devices. They are consumers of all democratic products contained in the form of information that is consumed every day. For all forms of information content about democracy, the people are only connoisseurs of the content that is disseminated or periodically uploaded by the media. Media is an actor who plays an important role in determining material resources in the territory of power which are produced with certain motives. At least, if the information published by the media contains positive messages, then the public's perception of the target party will also have a positive perception construction. Conversely, if the media contains negative information and tends to create polemics in society, then the public will build a negative perception of the target party (Sardini, 2018).

As for society or the people as subjects, every citizen has an increasingly strong awareness and autonomy in representing their political participation. The internet has strengthened the role of society as a subject. For those who believe that the internet has had a positive impact on democratization, their belief is based on the ability of the internet to create new, more communicative and interactive channels between the public and their representatives in the legislature. The internet also offers easier and cheaper access for each individual to increase awareness, participation and stronger ties to their political interests (Sustikarini, 2019). For example, through interactive communication features provided by social media, the public can communicate directly with the officials and authorities they follow. The public can also freely provide criticism, both related to government performance to personal matters.

Internet and political participation in the 2014 elections

The 2014 general election for the President of the Republic of Indonesia became a historic moment and a new chapter in the journey of democracy in Indonesia. Even though, Indonesia has implemented a general election system in full since 2004, the active involvement of the people in the biggest democratic party, if one might say, has formed a more dramatic pattern of participation since the 2014 general election. It is undeniable, this is a logical consequence of intervention information technology into the process of democratization in Indonesia. The significance of the role of the internet and social media on the dynamics of public involvement in politics and democracy in Indonesia has at least given birth to several more specific patterns of political participation such as the increasing number of politicians' followers on social media, changes in

campaign strategy (nature of campaigns), public demand for governance transparency, governance featured in e-government and e-budgeting features, online-based collective action, and increased involvement of young voters. In addition, the formation of polarity of political support (hyper-partisanship), hate speech, hoaxes, and racial sentiments also emerged as a new form of participation in society. In comparison, the most recent efforts to measure the degree of democracy in a society traditionally will usually be measured by the concept proposed by Dahl (1980-1988), or if this is not the case, then the measurement of the level of democracy will usually only be determined by the level of participation, competition, and practices that represent civil liberties (Sorensen, 2014). Thus, it can be concluded that the internet and social media have increased the degree of public political participation.

The 2014 election seems to have presented a portrait of political participation as described above, where political participation is not just an indicator of democratic practices, but has shifted into the mobilization of political power. Referring to Yunarto Wijaya, Executive Director of Charta Politika Indonesia, the 2014 General Election was not only the peak of political excitement, but had absorbed almost all attention and influenced the joints of people's lives into the vortex of political constellations (Kompas, 2015). In the midst of the euphoria of freedom to have aspirations, the democratic party actually became a sign of the return of primordialism in political life. The increasing issue of identity politics, religion and ethnicity which spreads uncontrollably on social media has become a phenomenon that has never happened in previous elections with the title of 'democratic'. Since then, primordial values and identity politics have strengthened and become a reference for the community to mobilize their political participation. Once again, this cannot be separated from the large role of the internet and social media as a means of reproducing identity political sentiments freely and of course cheaply.

Quoting the results of a survey released by the Indo Survey and Strategy Institute (ISS) published in Marta and Gustino's research, it was stated that ethnic, religious, racial and inter-group issues (SARA) have become popular issues and have the potential to invite public sympathy in general election events (Marta and Agustino, 2020). As a country with a diverse social identity background, the return of a primordial political culture that is thick with racial sentiments, religion and political ideology has set a bad precedent for democratic life in Indonesia. One interesting finding that is important to underline in the 2014 election is that the fanaticism of public support for the personality of political figures has shifted the existence of other political institutions. It is undeniable that the polarity of public support that is formed is more due to fanaticism towards the figures of Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto with all forms of primordial sentiments that underlie them have become a reference for society in distributing their political rights rather than the profile of the political parties supporting them. In a similar case, the victory of Donald Trump or his predecessor, Barrack Obama was also more due to the success of social media as a medium for connecting with his supporters and inflating the personality of the two figures with various personal issues, rather than how the program and vision contestation between the Republicans and Democrats at every elections in the United States.

Basically, polarization is an important instrument in a democratic system, but this is something new in the political and democratic landscape in Indonesia. Differences in views on an issue, policy or ideology create divisions in society into two opposite poles. There are two types of polarity, namely polarity among

the political elite and the masses. Elite polarity is usually more formal and leads to institutional mechanisms such as political parties or legislatures. Meanwhile, mass polarity is more individual in nature or concerns the general public (Afrimadona, 2021). In general, political polarization is a measure of political culture, attitudes of voters, parties and political elites in dealing with various issues and policies. Discourse wars and political debates among social media users in Indonesia clearly show how political polarization has been going on until now since the 2014 election rolled around. Sympathizers of each of the presidential candidates in the 2014 presidential election have maintained their side-by-side attitude until now. In fact, post-2014 election political polarization has reduced the way people represent their political involvement and participation. The sentiment of the stronghold between the 'conservative-nationalist' and 'conservative-religious' groups seems to have become the culture and standard of people's political participation. In such conditions, the process of public communication runs under the shadow of fanaticism and motivation to achieve political interests for the group alone, instead of taking advantage of advances in information and communication technology as a means of transacting ideas and building solidarity nationally.

According to Joshua A. Tucker in Social Media, Political Polarization, and Political Disinformation, political polarization can easily form due to disinformation created by political elites and spread through social media. Tucker emphasized that social media plays an important role in creating the polarization and prevalence of disinformation (Tucker, et.al, 2018). Furthermore, according to James Q Wilson, a political scientist from Harvard University, fanaticism and a strong commitment to support candidates participating in elections can influence the formation of political polarization in society (The Conversation, 2018). For example, in the 2019 presidential election, the two presidential candidates, both Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto, were proven to have buzzer teams tasked with producing discourse and engaging in discourse wars in cyberspace. The selection of terms with a tendency to sharpen polarization such as the "Cebong" and "Kampret" camps has flooded digital spaces. Even though this situation threatens the future of democracy in Indonesia, in fact, the political polarization that occurred during the 2014 presidential election has increased public participation up to 70% (The Conversation, 2018). In addition, people who are trapped directly or indirectly into this polarity eventually position them as subjects who are aware of their political rights. For example, for those who support losing candidates, they transform their participation into the process of monitoring the performance of the elected government.

The long journey of democracy in Indonesia has now entered the final years of the second half of the decade since the fall of the New Order era. Democratic institutions that were built since the beginning of reform have now experienced rapid development, also facing more complex and multidimensional challenges, including shifts in the political culture of society in the midst of an era of disruption. In the last decade, the character of political dynamics in Indonesia has been heavily influenced by the framework of information technology features. Since the 2014 election, social media has become an arena that encourages increased public political participation and creates a new political culture. Once again, this confirms that democracy in the digital era has provided various consequences, challenges and opportunities, both for strengthening democratic institutions and shifting political culture and community participation as part of the dynamics of politics and democracy in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This paper identifies that the development of information and communication technology has significantly brought changes to democratic life in Indonesia, particularly in influencing public participation in election implementation. The new phase of Indonesian democracy in the digital era has increased the aggressiveness of people's freedom in conveying their aspirations and political interests through digital space. The 2014 election should be the initial experiment that produces important breakthroughs for democratic institutions and the political culture of society in Indonesia. The polarization of political power built through digital networks has become a new orientation of political culture and the latest form of participation by Indonesian people in the era of information technology.

The biggest challenge for Indonesia's democratic life in the digital era lies in the readiness of democratic institutions in Indonesia in dealing with freedom and information disclosure that encourage active involvement of the public in responding to issues and policies. Although this indicates positive developments for substantially achieving democratic values, freedom facilitated by the internet and social media must also be understood as a serious challenge, bearing in mind that the unpreparedness of the Indonesian people in responding to the era of open information can pose a serious threat to integration of nation and the decline of democracy in Indonesia.

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