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Social Media and General Elections in Malaysia 2018 and Indonesia 2019

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Abstract
In 2018 and 2019, Malaysian and Indonesian eligible voters cast their ballots for prime minister and president and vice president respectively. Especially in Indonesia, the eligible voters also elected members of the Regional Representative Council, the House of Representatives, Provincial Legislative Council and District/Municipal Legislative Council. Prior to the polls, the issue of who would run for presidency and vice presidency had become a hot and interesting topic of conversation among Indonesian citizens, with many of them using social media to express it. However, when the society talked too much about politics on the cyber media, the problem is whether they could come up with constructive rather than destructive content of discussion without destroying democracy. The methodology of this research is library research in which the author collected a number of library materials containing in-depth study of a subject, and found relevant keywords in the catalogs, indexes, search engines, and various scientific journals. The newer the sources, the more up-to-date references and quotations will be. To search a database effectively, the author started the search by finding keywords, seeking relevant records, and then narrowing the keywords to focus on the search. The author later evaluated carefully each source found.
Keywords: Society, Social Media, Cyber Space, General Election, Indonesia - Malaysia

Abstrak
Pada tahun 2018 dan 2019 warga negara Malaysia dan Indonesia yang memiliki hak pilih, memilih siapa yang akan mengisi pemerintahan baru yaitu Perdana Menteri untuk Malaysia dan Presiden serta Wakil Presiden bagi Indonesia. Mereka juga menentukan siapa saja yang akan menduduki parlemen dan senator pada level provinsi dan kota/kabupaten. Berkaitan dengan situasi tersebut, khusus di Indonesia diskusi mengenai kandidat Presiden dan Wakil Presiden menjadi hal yang menarik untuk dibicarakan oleh setiap warga negara, serta banyak diantara mereka mengekspresikannya di media sosial. Yang menjadi masalah adalah ketika masyarakat banyak memperbincangkan masalah politik di ruang siber. Apakah mereka mampu menampilkan isi pembicaraan yang bersifat konstruktif dan bukan sesuatu yang bersifat destruktif serta merusak demokrasi? Metode penelitian ini adalah penelitian pustaka, yakni mencari bahan pustaka berisi kajian mendalam pada sebuah subyek, mencari kata kunci yang relevan dalam katalog, indeks, mesin pencari, dan berbagai jurnal ilmiah. Semakin baru sumbernya, semakin banyak referensi dan kutipan terkini. Untuk mencari basis data secara efektif, dimulai dengan melakukan pencarian kata kunci, menemukan catatan yang relevan, mempersempit kata kunci untuk memfokuskan pencarian, serta berhati-hati dalam mengevaluasi setiap sumber yang ditemukan.

Introduction

Social media plays an important role as a platform and application that enable users to create and share information and knowledge with other people (Nur Nadhirah, 2018: 276-277). People around the world communicate and share knowledge around the world through social media. It is also increasingly popular and emerging as important information sources (Kim et al, 2012). In this way, social media serves as a critical means for people to use in communicating information and knowledge.

The phenomenon of social media began in the new millennium around 2003 starting with the MySpace. The Other Social media lie facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and else. At this time, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp are the most popular and top social media that has been used by people in the world specially in Southeast Asia Countries. After all, the fast development of social media has caused major changes pertaining to the way people find the group of individuals who have the same interest, obtain information or knowledge and share the ideas.

This paper reviews the usage of social media and its impacts on election landscape in Malaysia in 2018 and Indonesia in 2019 general election commenced recently. The goal of this review is to highlight the role of information disseminated through social media and its impact on Malaysia's and Indonesia's Election Landscape. This paper discusses information and knowledge dissemination using social media in the election in Malaysia and Indonesia. Through this highlight, readers will be capable of acknowledging and considering the role of information and knowledge channeled by social media in larger setting.

Theoretical Framework

There are a lot of information domains that can be communicated and spread out using social media. Healthcare and beauty are one of the domains that are widely shared through social media (Forbes, 2016; Neiger et al. 2012). Tourism is another domain extensively uses social media (Xiang & Gretzel 2010; Munar & Jacobsen 2014). Social media is also utilized to share family matters (O'Keeffe, & Clarke-Pearson 2011; Jelenchick, Eickhoff & Moreno, 2013). The financial issues and management is another topic mostly shared using social media (Aral, Dellarocas & Godes, 2013; Sul, Dennis & Yuan, 2014). Another popular domain that regularly communicated using social media is about politics and election (Muniandy & Muniandy, 2013; Shirky, 2011; Murwani, 2018, Ritonga, 2019). On top of these domains, many other information domains are shared using social media as now social media penetrates all dimensions of human life.

With respect to politics and election, social media plays a very critical role and gives a big impact to the users. This is because in influencing readers, function of social media as propagates the information (Bakshy, E., Rosenn, I., Marlow, C., & Adamic, L., 2012). As reported by Ye, S., & Wu, S. F. (2010) social media influences the public with issues posted by originator. Based on the previous studies, the influences of social media play a very significant role in election.

Therefore, as cited by Saraswati (2018: 53), unlike television audiences, social media users are consumers of social media *as well as* producers and consumers of social media contents. Social media users as consumers of the technologies are generally not required to pay for using the sites. Likewise, they are not required to pay for the majority of *social media contents they* consume. However, the consumption of both social media and social media contents are in fact not entirely free. To be able to consume social media and its pertaining contents, social media users are required to provide the electronic devices such as smart phones or mobile devices that enable users to get access to the social media as well as the Internet data services to connect with the social media services. These social media users may be anyone from common teenagers, employees to citizens (or voters), politicians and election campaign professionals. Thus, social media contents produced by the users may be literally anything, from spontaneous daily talks to crafted commercial messages to deliberated political messages.

Saraswati has shown that the commodification of social media by the political campaign industry played important roles in facilitating political elite's use of social media in election campaigns. Social media has enabled exchange value production of election information by turning election-related information into marketable commodity in election campaigns. In addition, this form of commodity has triggered the production of a new commodity by name of social

media monitoring as seen in the establishment and growth of social media monitoring business.

The use of social media in election campaigns was shaped by both market pressures, which were represented by the increasing number of social media users, and political cultures within the context of post-authoritarian state. The commodification of social media in election campaigns should be seen as a logical consequence of the general economic, social and political transformation after the end of the authoritarian period.

The social media-enabled commodification of election information reached a new height with the intensified works of social media users management and the establishment of new social media monitoring companies. Social media could then be seen for enabling election information to be made a commodity, financially paid for by the politician, consumed and produced by voters, organized and shaped by the social media entrepreneurs or practitioners (Saraswati, 2018: 61-62).

As cited by Murwani (2018: 114) candidates who were struggling for their position were very much aware of the use of social media. Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram were used to communicate with their constituents, particularly the teenagers as first-time voters. The three candidates had seriously prepared the utilization of social media as one of the tools of campaign.

Owing to the crucial and strategic role of social media as a means of political communication, the three pairs of candidates and their supporters had assembled their own special team to deal with the social media competition. There are two main reasons why they use social media. *First,* to publicize the ideas, visions, missions, and programs which are executed by the campaign team. *Second,* to multiply the news published by the other parties outside the campaign team, whether they are created by the campaign team itself, the supporters of the candidates, or their competitors. *Third,* to respond (against) the news related to regional head election *(Pilkada)* produced by social media actors, either individually or collectively in groups.

Material and Methodology

The methodology of this research is library research. A research library is a library which contains an in-depth collection of material on one or several subjects (Young, 1983:188). A research library will generally include primary sources as well as secondary sources.

Library research involves the step-by-step process used to gather information in order to write a paper, create a presentation, or complete a project. As you progress from one step to the next, it is commonly necessary to back up, revise, add additional material or even change your topic completely. This will depend on what you discover during your research. There are many reasons for adjusting your plan. For example, you may find that your topic is too broad and needs to be narrowed, sufficient information resources may not be available, what you learn may not support your thesis, or the size of the project does not fit the requirements.

The research process itself involves identifying and locating relevant information, analyzing what you found, and then developing and expressing your ideas. These are the same skills you will need on the job when you write a report or proposal.

Primary sources are original works. These sources represent original thinking, report on discoveries, or share new information. Usually these represent the first formal appearance of original research. Primary sources include statistical data, manuscripts, surveys, speeches, biographies/autobiographies, diaries, oral histories, interviews, works or art and literature, research reports, government documents, computer programs, original documents.

Secondary sources are studies by other researchers. They describe, analyze, and/or evaluate information found in primary sources. By repackaging information, secondary sources make information more accessible. A few examples of secondary sources are books, journal and magazine articles, encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, periodical indexes, and reviews, etc.

Result and Discussion
1. Malaysia Mass Media in General Election 2018

As cited by The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH 2.0) (2018: 42-43) There was little improvement in the media landscape between General Election 2013 and General Election 2018. The Report of the People's Tribunal on Malaysia's 13th General Elections found that in 2013, "Malaysian mainstream print and electronic media are clearly biased against opposition parties."

Ownership of the media by political parties remained a factor in General Election 2018. Mainstream newspapers such as The Star and Utusan

Malaysia remained in the control of Barisan Nasional component parties, including MCA and UMNO. Government television and radio stations also remained under the tight control of the Home Ministry and gave overwhelmingly positive coverage to the ruling coalition between 2013 and 2018.

Alternative online media that gave focus to the 1MDB scandal faced harassment and intimidation. Various websites reporting on the 1MDB scandal, including Sarawak Report and The Malaysian Insider, were blocked by the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). The Edge Daily and The Edge Financial Daily were suspended under the Printing Presses and Publications Act for three months in 2015 for their coverage of the 1MDB story. Also, in 2015, The Edge's publisher Ho Kay Tat, The Malaysian Insider's chief executive officer Jahabar Sadiq and editors Lionel Morais, Amin Iskandar and Zulkifli Sulong were arrested under the Sedition Act.

On 2 April 2018, the Anti-Fake News Bill was passed through the Dewan Rakyat and the Dewan Negara passed the Bill the following day. The Anti- Fake News Act received Royal assent and was published in the Gazette on 11 April 2018. The Deputy Communications and Multimedia Minister, Jailani Johari stated that any information on 1MDB that had not been verified by the Government would be considered 'fake news'.

The Malaysian Bar raised concerns that the Act does not have any definition of what should be considered 'false' news and therefore would stifle freedom of expression. During the campaign period, a number of Pakatan Harapan politicians were investigated under this Act, including PH leader Mahathir Mohamad and candidate for Bentong Wong Tack.

The controls on media freedom inevitably had a chilling effect on coverage of the 14th General Elections, especially when covering the 1MDB corruption scandal. On the night of 9 May, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) ordered internet service providers to block independent news portal *Malaysiakini* and their live results websites, www.undi.info and live.undi.info. This was allegedly due to the portal publishing 'inaccurate' results, but no evidence was provided for this and all accounts show the results by *Malaysiakini* were in fact accurate.

2. #Bersih in Malaysia Social Media During General Election 2018

As cited by Merlyna Lim (2016: 4-5) #Bersih had embraced digital media since it was established in 2006. Over ensuing years, however, its digital media operations have undergone an evolution. At the beginning of its development, Bersih made use of websites, blogging, and YouTube as its main tools for deliberation and mobilization, with intermittent uses of Flickr. Blogging was a natural choice as Bersih was formed during the peak of Malaysian political blogging. The incorporation of YouTube and Flickr in 2006, as well as Facebook in 2008 and Twitter in 2011, unsurprisingly, followed the surfacing and popularity of these tools among Malaysians, especially the Malaysian youth.

In #Bersih movement these platforms were generally used as placeholders-though most popular YouTube videos could generate voluminous comments for videos and photos, some of which were subsequently disseminated through blogs, Facebook, and Twitter.

Bersih is an alliance of non-governmental organizations seeking to reform the national electoral system The call of *Bersih* can be summarized in eight points: clean the electoral roll to be free from irregularities; reform postal ballot system to ensure that all citizens are able to exercise their right to vote; use of indelible ink; free and fair access to media; 21 days minimum campaign period; strengthen and reform public institutions to act independently, uphold laws, and protect human rights; stop corruption; and stop dirty politics.

Bersih's focus on electoral reform is largely related to the fact that in the last forty years Malaysia has been ruled by the National Front or *Barisan National* (BN), the world's longest ruling coalition, led by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the world's longest ruling party. Under BN's leadership, Malaysia's economic development had been outstanding and the middle-class population is growing rapidly. Its economic development, however, is not followed by political change (Rodan, 2005).

BN bases its political legitimacy upon outstanding economic performance and popular sovereignty gained from winning the majority of electoral votes, even though multiparty elections were far from fully free or fair (Weiss, 2012). Until the 2008 Elections, BN's performance had been strong where in every single election it always gained about two third (or more) of the popular votes. For

Bersih, consequently, electoral reform is seen as a pathway toward changes in politics and society.

The long domination of BN cannot be separated from the issue of race and ethnicity. As a multiracial society, Malaysia is divided along racial lines. BN was originally conceptualized as a confederation political parties-the United Malays National Organization, the Malaysian Chinese Association, and the Malaysian Indian Congress-representing three main ethnic groups in Malaysia, namely Malays, Chinese, and Indians. BN adapted the colonial practice of racial politics, 'divide-and-rule', to keep apart various ethnic groups politically, economically, and socially and to justify its image as the guardian of social and racial harmony (Leong, 2012).

The racial riot of 1969 haunts the Malaysian psyche and it is frequently used in general elections to discourage people from exercising their electoral choice. In the official record, the Sino-Malay sectarian violence that broke out on 13 May 1969, occurred in the aftermath of the 1969 general election where the opposition parties won against the ruling coalition Alliance Party, a former name of BN.

While *Bersih* defines itself as a non-partisan civil society movement, its prime supporters are the three main Malaysian oppositional political parties-Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), Democratic Action Party (DAP) and *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR), which together formed the opposition coalition Pakatan Rakyat (PR), meaning 'People's Pact' or 'People's Alliance'. *Bersih*'s development, in some ways, goes hand in hand with the emergence and trajectory of PR. Arguably, *Bersih*'s relatively successful multi-ethic mobilization cannot be separated from the involvement of PR. While the movement itself has not been successful in ushering Malaysia to a post racial era, *Bersih* leaders and activists continuously attempted to go beyond a racial division in mobilizing their supporters.

In the face of government's crackdowns and criminalization, the movement turned out to be increasingly popular and became a significant social and political force in Malaysia. More than just a movement for electoral reforms, *Bersih* also contributed to the increase levels of political participation among young urban Malaysians, as reflected in the 2013 General Election's voter turnout. More importantly, even though BN secured a majority of seats (60%) to form the federal government, it gained a mere 47.4% of the popular vote while the oppositional coalition, PR, won 50.9%. For BN, this was the worst election result since 1969.

With such restrictions, mobilizing public protest was extremely discouraged. Due to limitations and barriers from using physical space, *Bersih* activists turned to digital space for planning and mobilizing the rallies as well as expanding and sustaining the movement.

3. Indonesia Mass Media in Election 2019

As cited by Margynata (2017), in Indonesia we have two different media organizations, Metro TV and TV One. *First*, TV One and Metro TV are owned by the two leaders of political parties in Indonesia; *Second*, TV One and Metro TV during the last presidential election (2014), are two television stations which carries two different candidates for president and vice president, i.e. TV One supported Parabowo Subianto and Hatta Rajasa pair, and Metro TV supported Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla pair; *Third*, that political interests are still in progress, only this time, the competition seems to appear in the content related to the programs and policies of the current government.

TV One and Metro TV have different agenda and point of view. It looks from the gesture, setting, and semantic of the guests as well as the communication attitude of TV One Host who shows its role as a government watchdog (watchdog role). Moreover, the host and the guest became the government evaluator for the daring to express incorrect attitude towards government.

It is undeniable that media in democracy is the hope to act as watchdog. This means that the media can be a watchdog of the ruler dominance in the news, but the television did not have the competence to judge the government and sole discretion. Metro TV has different attitude with TV One, where Metro TV is more cooperative and accommodative with the government and policy of President Joko Widodo. So, Metro TV gave an impression that it does not act as a watchdog, and the evaluator, but it only plays role as a disseminator or reporter.

4. #2019GantiPresiden in Indonesia Social Media during General Election 2019

As cited by Ross Tapsell (2019) In this election both Prabowo and Jokowi have clearly had "buzzer" teams working on shaping online discourse, as well as countering—and even creating—"black campaign" material. The language of war is often used when describing the digital public sphere—

Indonesia is said to be seeing a "weaponisation" of "online armies" and "cyber warriors". Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that some Indonesians describe the situation as a "hoax emergency". Most notable was Jokowi's comment about Russian-style propaganda: "They don't care whether it would cause divisiveness in society, whether it would disturb peace, whether it would worry the public," he said, describing the propaganda as a systematic drive to "produce non-stop slander, lies and hoaxes that confuse the people".

Citing some extraordinary cases, local experts have warned that social media can easily cause conflict, because of low literacy levels. Many Indonesians are still irrational and tend to be emotional when it comes to different opinions in politics, leading them to think politics is a "one way to heaven issue or a fight between good and evil". The social media discourse in Indonesia colloquially describes Jokowi's online supporters as "tadpoles" (cebong) and Prabowo's online followers as "bats" (kampret).

So social media is creating an artificial atmosphere of polarisation, which in turn gives politicians the excuse to avoid having serious policy or ideological contestations in the name of avoiding adding to that supposed polarization. Perhaps scarred by the previous elections of 2014 and 2017, many politicians and Indonesian citizens are quite happy to see a stable—even boring—election where the incumbent president is re-elected easily. But if using contested social media discourse is clearly a way for politicians to reduce opposition and limit direct contestation, things aren't so great either.

This hashtag war is nothing new during the 2019 presidential election. The residual political division from when Jokowi and Prabowo competed in the 2014 presidential election has once again gained momentum as the two figures face off in the 2019 election. It's not rare for fanatical supporters of both figures to attack each other. Netizens don't just share facts about their favorite politicians, but also misinformation, or fake news.

Several months before Election Day, a hashtag war between supporters of both candidates is already being waged on Twitter and Facebook. Jokowi's opponents use the hashtag #2019gantipresiden (#2019changepresident) to drum up support for Prabowo. The president's supporters have responded with #diasibukkerja (#heisbusyworking) and #2019tetapjokowi (#2019stilljokowi).

#2019ChangePresident rallies have been systematically organised in several parts of Indonesia. The #2019ChangePresident team has been quite successful in promoting the anti-Jokowi sentiment from Jakarta into the outlying regions. Some issues it has used effectively during its rallies are the criminalization of ulama (religious leaders); the increasing prices of staple food; and the failure to maintain social cohesion by using the examples of mosque burning in Aceh and discrimination of Muslims in numerous policy deliberations in Jakarta.

The antagonistic message of this movement is targeted with precision: do not vote for President Joko Widodo for the 2019 presidential election unless the people want to suffer more in the next five years. Ultimately, the campaign seeks to build and consolidate political power, to identify a common enemy, and to destroy Jokowi's political image.

With the recent rallies organised by the #2019GantiPresiden movement, social segregation will possibly be dichotomised into pro-Jokowi and anti-Jokowi forces. This situation is more likely to cause social friction whereby pro-Jokowi voters will be accused of being anti-Islam and those who opposed him would be considered as pro-Islam.

Through the middle of 2018, #2019GantiPresiden organisers received frequent reports that police were confiscating merchandise from sellers and intimidating people displaying the hashtag. Following the police disbandment of some events, Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security Luhut Pandjaitan argued that #2019GantiPresiden activities should indeed be banned, so as to avert social discord and clashes between pro-government and opposition demonstrators. The Indonesian Solidarity Party (Partai Solidaritas Indonesia/PSI), which seeks to present itself as a new force for progressive, democratic politics, also supported the movement's suppression on the grounds it was "directing hatred at the president".

At the national level, the political signal is clear: Jokowi is likely to face strong opposition from the group during the upcoming 2019 election campaign. The support from major political parties, such as PDI-P, Golkar, NasDem, Hanura and others, does not necessarily ensure Jokowi's victory in the presidential race. Rather, whoever influences public opinion at the grassroots level is likely to decide the election outcome.

Conclusion

Is social media undermining democracy in Southeast Asia? Looking at two large countries in the region, Malaysia and Indonesia, we get three very

different answers. Perhaps, then, social media are not necessarily a tool for authoritarianism, but rather a tool for undermining any political system.

In 2018, for the first time ever, Malaysia's 'electoral authoritarian' regime led by the Barisan Nasional ruling party was defeated. Rather than functioning as a tool for enabling a dwindling and unpopular regime led by a corrupt and nepotistic autocrat, Najib Razak, social media platforms instead functioned as key spaces for civil society to push its claims and for anti-government messages to spread.

The messenger platform Whatsapp is central here. Whatsapp was crucial in spreading messages about the corruption involving Prime Minister Najib and his wife in Malaysia. Rather, it seems that social media (and Whatsapp in particular) were key enablers in undermining the existing regime which had lasted for sixty years.

Indonesia, the region's most complex case, suggests a trend of social media promoting authoritarianism rather than democracy. As Indonesia's 2019 presidential election campaign gets under way, buzzers use style of trolls for citing not for suggests. Indonesia's social media citizen is not to look like Malaysia's civil society activist space. Government crack-downs on social media dissenters also represents a recent trend, suggesting an 'authoritarian turn' from President Joko Widodo.

Southeast Asia's rapidly changing information society is having enormous implications for politics. Social media are central to 'underground' election campaigns, promoting discourse which encourages citizens to fall into enclaves of identity politics. Campaign professionals sell themselves as being able to manipulate this digital sphere in order to bring electoral success to their fund donor.

Social media have the ability to undermine mainstream media content, usurp official and government-sponsored output, and promote anti-establishment messages. Governments and political parties have thus responded in kind. Trolls, cybertroopers and buzzers are prominent fixtures in contemporary elections in Southeast Asia. However, the case of Malaysia might make us pause in concluding that social media use inherently undermines democracy in the region, as citizens begin to understand how the digital sphere is manipulated. Furthermore, Indonesia's civil society is resilient, innovative and kaleidoscopic, and will find ways to adapt to recent trends of buzzing, fake news, and a president who has largely disappointed them.

Precisely how civil society adapts to new forms of digital media, in particular the looming threat of privacy breaches via 'big data' campaigning, will be a key to determining what happens next for politics and democracy in the region. A conclusion contains the main points of the article. It should not replicate the abstract, but might elaborate the significant results, possible applications and extensions of the work.

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