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Abstract

Does social media have the potential to influence the political process more in certain countries? How do political actors and citizens use social media to participate in the political process? This paper analyzes these questions in the context of contemporary Indonesia, a country with a young democracy and a vibrant emerging economy. First, the relationships between traditional and social media and politics are discussed. Then, the current situation in Indonesia's traditional media industry and how it may have helped drive the popularity of social media in Indonesia is analyzed. Finally, the paper discusses social media in today's Indonesia and provides examples of how political actors and citizens use social media in the political process.

JEL Classifications: D72; L82

Keywords: Indonesia; Social media; Media; Politics; Democratic process; Political process; Media industry

1 Introduction

The use and popularity of social networking sites online has increased dramatically over the last decade. In a recent study by the Pew Research Center (2015), it was reported that 65 percent of all adults in the United States use some form of social media, a ten times increase from 2005 to 2015. An astounding 90 percent of young adults (ages 18 to 29) utilize social media. While young adults use social media the most, people who are 65 or older have closed the gap to young adults significantly during the last five years. As reported by We Are Social (2016), the picture in Indonesia is similar. Out of a population close to 260 million, approximately 88.1 million had access to the internet in the beginning of 2016. Out of these, an astounding 79 million people or close to 90 percent were active social media users. This represented a 10 percent increase from the year before. The average use of social media on any type of device is close to three hours per day, significantly more than the average daily time spent on watching television. While some Asian countries (e.g. China and Vietnam) have their own domestic social media platforms, social media users in Indonesia tend to use international networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, to communicate. Moreover, it is predominantly the young part of the population that uses social media. For example, 44 percent of the total number of people who used Facebook during the last year were between 20 and 29 years old.

The growing use of different types of social media has important implications for the political process in most countries around the world. For example, it has been argued that the emergence of the so-called “Arab Spring”, originating in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011 and spreading across the Middle East and North Africa, to a large extent was made

possible through the use of social media. Initial research on these events suggests that social media indeed played an important role in overthrowing governments in Egypt and Tunisia (Iskander, 2011; Kavanugh et al., 2011; Khamis and Vaughn, 2011). Events such as these have resulted in an increased interest in the potential importance of social media (e.g. Howard and Hussein, 2011; Howard et al., 2011). While social media has most likely played a significant role in these historical developments, it also represents an important change in the political process in democracies around the world. This holds true not only for typical Western democracies, but also for young democracies that can be characterized by relatively weak institutions, such as Indonesia. Democracy as a political system is typically characterized by the notion that the people exercise sovereignty through a republican form of governance (Gainous and Wagner, 2014, p. 1). It is often argued that the dissemination of information plays a vital role in that process, as citizens need access to information to make decisions. As noted in a number of studies on social media and politics, the emergence and rapid expansion of social media represent a paradigm shift in the role information communication plays in the political process. Traditional forms of media, while still constituting an important element in the political process, have some fundamental limitations. Printed media has never reached all citizens in any country. Radio, and especially television, have had an important impact on politics, as they are more easily digested. However, these forms of media have traditionally been controlled by their producers. There are at least three fundamental differences between traditional and social media that affect the relationship between media and politics. First, social media allows for political actors such as politicians and parties to shape content the way they want without having it go through the publication process used in various forms of traditional media.

Second, citizens are able to select the content, which means that they can avoid information and sources that they disagree with (Gainous and Wagner, 2014, p. 1). Third, it allows for citizens themselves to both create and publish their own content without having to face prohibitively high costs and allows them to communicate with and comment directly on political actors.

This study aims to explore the role of social media in contemporary Indonesian politics. To do this, it builds on previous research on traditional and new media and politics and discuss these issues in the context of Indonesia, a country characterized by a young democracy and a political landscape in which a select number of powerful individuals (oligarchs) and families still play a major role in national politics. It can be said that the media industry in many countries around the world has consolidated over the last decades, a development that has had a potential impact on the role of traditional media in politics. However, traditional media in Indonesia is perhaps especially consolidated as control of it remains in the hands of a limited number of powerful individuals and families (e.g. Winters, 2014). One implication of this is that traditional media in Indonesia has the potential to play a very biased role in the political process. I conjecture that the fact that social media brings with it a much higher degree of freedom when it comes to the general dissemination of information is one important reason for why social media is so popular in developing countries such as Indonesia and many of its neighbors, including the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand. Building on this conjecture, I also hypothesize that a direct implication of the importance of information communication in the political process and the fact that traditional media to large extent is captured, social media potentially has an even greater

role to play in Indonesian politics. I then bring up several examples of how political actors as well as citizens have used social media in Indonesia in the political process.

Up until now, there are very few studies on social media and politics in Indonesia. This study complements my current work on the use of social media during elections in Indonesia (Johansson, 2016). That study is based on a unique and manually collected data set on political candidates' use of Twitter during the period running up to the national legislative election in April 2014. In a related paper, Chen and Priamarizki (2014) explore how new media has enabled the electorate with greater leverage over their political choice during the period running up to the 2014 legislative and presidential elections. Similarly, Nugroho and Syarief's (2012) study on new media and the political process in Indonesia provides an interesting discussion with a focus on civil society. In a related study, Lim (2013) discusses social media activism in Indonesia. This paper builds on previous research by providing a more comprehensive theoretical and historical framework for the analysis of social media and politics in Indonesia. In addition, it gives examples of how social media has been used by political actors in an attempt to shed light on the role of social media in recent political developments. It also discusses several important questions for future studies on social media and politics in Indonesia, including the need of more empirical studies, the changing nature of social media use, and the debate on control of online content.

The rest of this study is organized as follows: Section 2 introduces and discusses research on media and politics. It begins with an overview of traditional media in politics and then discusses how the emergence and spread of social media is changing how media influences the political process. Section 3 provides a detailed overview of the media

landscape in Indonesia going back to the early days of independence. Section 4 provides a brief introduction to the use of social media in contemporary Indonesia. Section 5 discusses social media and politics in Indonesia and provides a series of cases of how social media has been used by political actors and citizens in the political process. Section 6 concludes the paper with a discussion on the current situation and reflections on potential venues for future research on the topic of social media and politics in Indonesia.

2 Media and Politics

This section discusses the relationship between media and politics. It begins with an overview of the literature on traditional media forms and their potential impact on the democratic process. The focus is primarily on the potential positive effects of media on the political process and issues that may affect such positive effects, including media capture and media industry concentration. This is followed by a detailed discussion on how new media in general, and social media in particular, is altering the relationship between media and politics.

2.1 *Traditional Media and Politics*

There are two alternative views on the role that media plays in the democratic process (Strömberg, 2015). A prevalent opinion is that media matters because it provides valuable information to voters, a process which improves political selection and political accountability.² An improved political accountability brings with it an overall better quality of policies and welfare. This in turn implies that information communication through media plays a vital role as citizens need access to information to make political decisions.

² Research has also shown that media exposure on voter turnout and that it may have a positive long-term effect on political interest (Gentzkow, 2006; Gerber et al., 2009).

There is empirical evidence supporting the argument that media access brings with it better policies (e.g. Strömberg, 2004; Besley and Burgess, 2002). This view is thus primarily positive in that it focuses on the positive effect that media has on the democratic process. The other view is that media matters, but primarily as a channel that can be used for propaganda and manipulation. Studies that support this view typically refer to a set of theories, including media agenda setting, framing, and priming (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). Media agenda setting means that media can be used to promote a certain issue, thus increasing the importance of that issue relative to others. Framing focuses on the way news can be presented and thereby changing the response of the consumers of the news (Scheufele, 1999; Chong and Druckman, 2007). Priming, on the other hand, is the notion that media coverage can promote issues that in turn change the standards that citizens use as reference points when evaluating politicians (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987, p. 57). A common theme in these theories is that political actors use media to influence people during the political decision process. Naturally, we cannot assume that this use of media in politics automatically results in an overall increase in the quality of policies and welfare.

As Strömberg (2015) notes, there are “possibilities of cross-fertilization between these literatures”. Indeed, an approach that incorporates both these views seems to be more complete and may allow for a more realistic analysis of how media affects politics in the real world. For example, elite capture, constituting an important part of the literature on media framing, a phenomenon which can be found in many countries around the world, may decrease or even nullify the positive effects media can have on the democratic process. It should be noted that elite capture does not only occur in countries characterized by weak institutions or the existence of an unusually strong oligarchy. For example, Qian and

Yanagizawa (2009) analyze whether the US government can systematically influence news coverage. They find that the US Department of State reports fewer human rights offenses for a country once that country obtains a seat on the UN Security Council, and that the same patterns is found in six independently owned US newspapers. They are thus able to identify media capture in what is commonly regarded as a highly competitive media market (Strömberg, 2015). However, it is not farfetched to conjecture that the level of elite capture is directly related to institutional and socioeconomic features in different countries. Supporting this, Petrova (2008) shows that media capture by the wealthy is more likely to occur if a country has a more skewed income distribution. Media capture can have a crucial impact on the democratic process. For example, Yanagizawa-Drott (2014) finds that radio broadcasts calling for the extermination of the Tutsi minority in Rwanda increased participation in the killings. In another study, Adena et al. (2015) analyze radio broadcasting in Nazi Germany. They find that the capture of radio by the Nazi after Hitler was named chancellor of Germany reversed the previous negative effect radio had on Nazi electoral support. While these cases may come across as extreme examples, they still highlight how media can be exploited and how control of media by a powerful few can have direct negative effects on the overall welfare in a country.

Closely related to the concept of media capture is that of media concentration. It is commonly argued that a wider range of information sources can reduce bias (e.g. Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2004). It has even been noted that if a media consumer is exposed to a larger number of information sources, he or she will be able to form accurate beliefs even if each of the underlying sources are biased (Mullainathan and Shleifer, 2005). More generally, competition can decrease the risk of media capture by the government or powerful

individuals (Besley and Prat, 2006; Corneo, 2006; Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2008). Going back to the two alternative views on how media affects politics, a sufficiently competitive media market thus helps push the overall impact of media on politics towards the first view. That is, a more competitive media industry would affect the democratic process positively and lead to a higher quality of policies and welfare. On the other side of the spectrum, a highly concentrated media industry would decrease the number of independent sources and thereby increase the risk of bias in the information that is disseminated to the people.

2.2 Social Media and Politics

2.2.1 A Brief Introduction to Social Media

Since the birth of the earliest forms of online social networking³, different forms of social media have rapidly come to play an increasingly important role in the everyday life of most people that are connected to the internet. Traditional forms of media such as newspapers and radio and television broadcasting are models of monologic transmissions, in which a single source is distributing information to different recipients. Social media, on the other hand, are models of dialogic transmissions systems, that is, many sources provide information, thoughts, and ideas to many receivers. Well-known international social media networks include Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube, Google+, Snapchat, Line, WhatsApp, and WeChat. In some countries, indigenous social media platforms have evolved, often as a result of regulatory practices prohibiting international social media networks to enter the market. China is a typical example of this phenomenon as the Chinese government has taken extensive measures to prohibit international social media

³ For a detailed discussion on the emergence of Web 2.0 and social media, see Van Dijk (2013, pp. 3-23).

platforms to enter the market. As a result, a wide range of domestic Chinese networks has been added to the social media landscape, including Weibo, WeChat, Ren Ren, and Youku. Today's social media universe offers a diverse set of communication modes, including individual walls and posts (such as Facebook), microblogging (Twitter and Weibo), picture sharing (Instagram), video sharing (YouTube), real-time picture and video sharing (Snapchat), real-time video sharing (Periscope).

An important feature of different forms of social media is that they represent an expression of participatory culture. A participatory culture is a culture that consumers of new content are invited to participate actively in the creation and circulation of that content (Jenkins, 2008, p. 331). In addition, and a feature that has come to be synonymous with social media, participants can interact directly with each other (Fuchs, 2014, p. 54; Jenkins, 2008, p. 256). Instead of a focus on outright ownership as found in the traditional media industry, participatory cultures are characterized by membership, sharing, and different types of collaborative activities (Jenkins et al., 2009).

Another important characteristic of the social media landscape is that it is under constant change, both in terms of technology and user demographics. Most different social platforms are more or less dynamic objects that are tweaked by their operators in response to objectives of their owners, needs of their users, and emergence and changes among their competitors (Van Dijk, 2013, p. 7). As social platforms change, so do the types of users. For example, younger social media users are moving a significant portion of their activities away from the early networks such as Facebook to newer (and often more private) platforms, such as Snapchat. This does not mean that the early platforms in the social media space are becoming redundant, many of those who migrate to new platforms early

on tend to maintain a presence on the earlier networks. Instead, it means that the landscape is shifting and expanding as new forms of channels open up. In addition, as a response to features found in new networks, existing networks broaden their services as well. For example, Facebook now offers a real-time video sharing service which resembles that of Snapchat.

2.2.2 No Gatekeeper and Two-Way Communication – What Social Media Means for Politics

One important feature that sets social media apart from traditional media is the fact that it fundamentally changes how information is being distributed. As noted by Gainous and Wagner (2014, p.10), there is a significant difference between “who operated and now operates the levers”. Political actors wanting to reach out to potential voters through media have faced at least two crucial challenges. First, journalists act as intermediaries or even gatekeepers between political actors and the people (Gainous and Wagner, p. 10). As such, they, or the newspaper, radio, or television station they work for have a significant influence on what type of news are presented and how it is presented to the public. For example, numerous studies have identified conservative or liberal biases in American media (e.g. Alterman, 2000; Gitlin, 2000; Goldberg, 2001). Turner (2007) provides empirical evidence suggesting that the perception of televised media bias in the U.S. is so strong that it directly affects how television viewers perceive what is broadcasted. In his words, “the messenger does appear to be overwhelming the message”. Second, and as discussed in Section 2.1, how the media industry is composed may have a significant impact on what is being reported and how it is presented to media consumers. Media concentration and straight out media capture bring with it an increased risk for media bias. Intermediaries, gatekeepers, and media ownership thus constitute a challenge to the media

acting as an objective information channel. For political actors, this means that it may be difficult to communicate their message to the people, at least for those without relevant ties to media outlets.

In contrast to traditional media, content can be provided over social media platforms by anyone at a very low cost even though there is an owner of the social network platform itself as long as that content follows the general rules for that specific platform. As pointed out by Gainous and Wagner (2014, p. 11), the process of obtaining and distribute information, ideas and opinions over social media is in the hand of each individual. How large an individual's network is will have a direct effect on how well that person's posts will be disseminated. As many politicians (alongside actors, singers, and other popular people) have large social media networks, they can affectively reach a large number of people through their posts over popular networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Similarly, commentators and other types of key influencers contribute to the political discourse through social media. The traditional function of media companies and journalists acting as gatekeepers is no longer as crucial as it used to be.

In addition to there being much lower barriers to making one's voice heard across social media compared to traditional media, the potential for a much richer political discourse over social media is evident. As consumers of information, ideas and opinions can follow up and engage directly with what is being said, political actors and other involved in the discourse can get feedback and additional information in direct dialogue with their readers. Social media thus offers a hitherto unprecedented possibility to interact and connect with key audiences without many of the limitations of traditional mass media (Svensson et al., 2015, p. 28).

3 Traditional Media in Indonesia

3.1 Media from Independence to the New Order

Indonesia declared its independence in 1945, but had to undergo a long revolutionary struggle when the Dutch colonizers refused to recognize that independence. The Dutch finally ceded in 1949, and new Indonesian constitutions that strengthened parliamentary democracy were introduced in 1949 and 1950. During the 1950s a liberal form of democracy evolved, leading to the establishment of many political parties. There were also conflicts between ethnic, religious and other ideological lines, leading to a myriad of political groupings. As described by Romano (2003, p. 6), journalism at the time reflected the emerging pluralistic political life, with a number of newspapers being established, almost all of which could be classified as related to a specific party. It was widely understood that journalism was far from neutral during this period. For example, vice-president Hatta complained about the fact that newspapers had become the 'voice of particular political parties' (Romano, 2003, p. 7).

An important implication of the 1950 constitution was that President Sukarno's powers were limited. Frustrated with the liberal democracy that evolved during the first years of independence, he introduced the concept of Guided Democracy (*Demokrasi Terpimpin*) in 1956 and formally proclaimed the system in February 1957. Arguing that the Western form of democracy was ill-suited for Indonesia, Sukarno wanted to develop a political system inspired by the traditional system in villages, where discussions and agreements came about under the guidance of elders. Following these political changes, the role of media was also altered. Media was now guided by the state, and its duties were to work against counter-revolutionary influences and to disseminate knowledge about

Indonesian socialism (Romano, 2003, p. 8). Media became highly politicized and divided between those who supported and opposed communism (Romano, 2003, p. 9).

In 1965, military troops led by then Major General Suharto countered an attempted coup backed by the communist party. After the failed coup, the military carried out a purge of communists, resulting in killings on a massive scale across the country. Suharto seized power and established what he came to call the New Order (*Orde Baru*) (Vickers, 2005, pp. 156-160). As a result of the purge, newspapers with alleged links to communists were shut down. Many of the remaining outlets, however, initially welcomed the changes as they marked a shift away from the rigid rules during Guided Democracy. They were now operating under the parole “free but responsible” (Schwarz, 1994, p. 238). However, as newspapers became increasingly critical towards the New Order government, they also came under increased scrutiny. Following several incidents during the 1970s, an increasing number of news outlets were banned, and the previous relationship between the press and the government came to an end. In 1982, the government established SIUPP, the press publication permit, which in practice functioned as a more potent censorship tool than the previous publishing licenses. However, as pointed out by Schwarz (1994, p. 239), the most effective censorship that evolved during this period was that of self-censorship.

The dramatic political changes from independence until the end of New Order had significant effects on the media industry. While the press was allowed to operate relatively freely during short periods of time, primarily in the beginning of Sukarno’s presidency and the initial stage of New Order, there was never time for it to evolve independently from political interests. The role of the press as the so-called fourth estate thus never fully materialized in Indonesia after independence.

3.2 Media in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia

After Suharto resigned and *Reformasi* was introduced in 1998, the situation in Indonesia's media sector began to change. While it was extremely difficult for outsiders to own a media outlet during Suharto's rule, virtually everyone was now allowed to establish a media company. Permits for media companies were granted relatively easy and as a result of this combined with the general spirit of the new era, a large number of media companies were established during the subsequent years. In September 1999, Law No. 40 on the press was passed. That law annulled the requirements for publishing companies to obtain official licenses, which in effect meant that anyone could set up and run new publications (Romano, 2003, p 35). Wisudo (2000) estimates that the transition government came to grant somewhere between 1,800 to 2,000 new publication licenses up until the passage of Law No. 40. Moreover, previous outlets that had been banned during the New Order were now allowed to operate freely. One important example of such news sources is Tempo Magazine, a publication that had been banned twice, once in 1982 and once in 1994, as the authorities argued the magazine was a threat to national stability. It was after the ban of Tempo Magazine and two other magazines, Editor and Detik, that a group of journalists made the decision to establish *Aliansi Jurnalis Independen* (Alliance of Independent Journalists), or AJI. Goenawan Mohamad, the founder and editor of Tempo, was among the journalists who founded AJI, an organization that has come to promote press freedom in Indonesia.

In addition to the rapid expansion of the number of news outlets that was established across the country, new media conglomerates emerged alongside the old media groups that evolved during the New Order. One example of these newer media

conglomerates was the Kompas-Gramedia Group, with its flagship publication Kompas. It quickly expanded its newspapers division under the subsidiary Pres Daerah (Local Press) and later changed its name to Tribun Group (Nugroho et al., 2012). Another example was the Grafiti Pers Group, the holding company that controls Jaw Pos. The group expanded its newspaper division under the subsidiary Radar Group (Nugroho et al., 2012). As Nugroho et al. (2012) point out, conglomeration in Indonesia's media sector was not a new phenomenon after *Reformasi* began. Instead, it began in earnest when members of President Suharto's family started to get involved in different sectors of the economy, one of which was the media industry. For example, Suharto's third son (Bambang Trihatmodjo), his daughter Siti Hardiyati and his cousins Henri Pribadi and Sudwikatmono all became very active in the broadcast industry as early as the late 1980s. These activities resulted in the whole broadcast business in Indonesia being more or less composed of a few conglomerates and effectively controlled by Suharto's inner circle. Similarly, conglomeration in the press industry began in the early 1990s. Examples of groups that expanded their portfolio during this period are Kompas-Gramedia Group and Grafiti Pers. As pointed out by Nugroho et al. (2012), diversification was used for pure survival. It was common for outlets to be shut down, and in order for workers to have a job in case that happened, a group with a number of outlets under its umbrella was able to provide work for another outlet within the same group.

Conglomeration continued after 1998, but for other apparent reasons. One such reason was naturally the goal of strengthening the overall business of the different media groups. Rapid changes in the media industry in general, including digitalization, is another natural reason for this development. Media conglomeration and concentration is hardly

unique for Indonesia. In fact, the business of media conglomerates is becoming increasingly global in nature, effectively creating a group of global oligopolists (McChesney, 2015). Some observers have argued that this is a natural process, that it minimizes the threat of monopoly power, and that economies of scale are needed to compete in the global marketplace (see Chan-Olmsted and Chang, 2003). Others argue that the consolidation of the media sector results in a homogenization of media and that it in the long run may constitute a threat to democracy (e.g. Wellstone, 2000; McChesney, 2015). Numerous studies have highlighted a connection between media markets and political participation (e.g. DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007; Enikolopov et al., 2011; Gentzkow et al., 2011; Piolatto and Scheutt, 2015).⁴ For example, Chan and Suen (2008) find that competition is associated with less partisan policies and higher welfare for voters. Media such as the press constitute key providers of political information (e.g. Snyder and Strömberg, 2010), and thus play an important role in the democratic process. Indeed, it is not particularly farfetched to assume that a high level of consolidation in the media sector may result in media being captured by select groups of society.

However, while consolidation of media is taking place across the globe, the effects on the political systems is likely to vary across countries. Confining the discussion to democratic system for simplicity, democracies characterized by problems such as higher levels of corruption, money politics, and rent seeking are likely running a greater risk of experiencing adverse effects of high levels of concentration in the media sector. In such a setting, media represents an important channel through which money and power can influence the outcome in the democratic process is that of the media. As pointed out by

⁴ See Strömberg (2015) for a detailed analysis on media and politics.

Corneo (2006), the media may collude with interest groups with the goal of influencing public opinion and that an increase in concentration of media ownership increases the likelihood of media bias. In extreme cases, powerful individuals or families may use their direct control over media channels to promote themselves during elections. As pointed out by Winters (2014), this is what has happened in Indonesia. Shortly after the expansion of the media sector during the early period of *Reformasi*, powerful interests came to consolidate most of the media industry into roughly twelve different groups. Table 1 provides an overview of these groups as presented by Nugroho et al. (2012). Most of the owners of these groups are oligarchs dating back to the New Order. These powerful individuals have realized how important media is in the pursuit of political power. Close to 97% of the total number of national TV stations are owned by five companies, and the national TV stations in turn make up for over 90 percent of viewer hours in Indonesia (Winters, 2014). A similar picture is found in the press and online media sectors.

Thus, as argued by a number of scholars (e.g. Ida, 2011, p. 14; Winters, 2014, p. 25), ownership has come to remain in the hands of the family and individuals that were close to Suharto. The result of this development is that a majority of Indonesians living in urban areas get most of their news from a small number of media groups (Sen, 2011, p. 8). Ida (2011, p. 15) also argues that the way powerful individuals and families control media is similar to how control was established in most industries during the New Order: Sino-Indonesian capitalists such as Hary Tnaoe, Fofa Sariaatmadja and Sudono Salim have to a significant extent funded much of the industry and their investments have been secured by *pribumi* (indigenous) patrons with key positions within the bureaucracy.

Table 1. Media Ownership in Indonesia 2011

No	Group	TV	Radio	Print Media	Online Media	Other Businesses	Owner
1	Global Mediacomm (MNC)	20	22	7	1	Content production, Content distribution, Talent management	Hary Tanoesoedibjo
2	Jawa Pos Group	20	n/a	171	1	Paper mills, Printing plants, Power plant	Dahlan Iskan, Azrul Ananda
3	Kelompok Kompas Gramedia	10	12	88	2	Property, Bookstore chain, Manufacturing, Event organizer, University	Jacob Oetama
4	Mahaka Media Group	2	19	5	n/a	Event organizer, PR Consultant	Abdul Gani, Erick Thohir
5	Elang Mahkota Group	3	n/a	n/a	1	Telecommunication and IT solutions	Sariatmaadja Family
6	CT Corp	2	n/a	n/a	1	Lifestyle and entertainment, Natural resources, Property	Chairul Tanjung
7	Visi Media Asia	2	n/a	n/a	1	Natural resources, Network provider, Property	Bakrie & Brothers
8	Media Group	1	n/a	3	n/a	Property (Hotel) & Beverage,	Surya Paloh
9	MRA Media	n/a	11	16	n/a	Automotive	Adiguna Soetowo & Soetikno Soedarjo
10	Femina Group	n/a	2	14	n/a	Publishing	Pia Alisjahbana
11	Tempo Inti Media	1	n/a	3	1	Documentary making services, Cable TV, Internet service	Yayasan Tempo
12	Beritasatu Media Holding	2	n/a	10	1	provider, University	Lippo Group

Note: Other businesses are businesses which are run by the same owner or group owner.

Source: Nugroho et al. (2012), p. 39.

This view is essentially the same as that of Robison's (1986) often cited analysis of Indonesian business during New Order.⁵ Not all powerful families and individuals who are active in the media sector are Sino-Indonesian however. For example, Anindya Bakrie, son of Aburizal Bakrie (a long-standing leader of Golkar) is building what has been labeled a "media powerhouse". His media empire owns several national private TV stations, including ANTV and TV One (Shmavonian, 2012). It also controls a number of other media channels, including the news website Vivanews. Another example of a politically active *pribumi* with significant ownership in the media sector is Dahlan Iskan, an outspoken

⁵ For a comprehensive analysis on the Indonesian elite in contemporary Indonesia and its historical roots, see Johansson (2015).

politician and former minister of state-owned enterprises under President Susilo Bambang Yudoyono. Iskan controls the Jawa Post Group, a conglomerate based in East Java. Ida (2011, p. 19) argues that Iskan has political support via a close relationship with the East Java government, which wants to see *pribumi* business succeed locally.

The fact that a few powerful individuals and families control a significant portion of Indonesia's media means that it is challenging for independent publishers to operate. Formal barriers to entry are minimal as a result of the liberalization of the industry after 1998. However, surviving is another matter entirely. Nugroho et al. (2012) note that the fact that media has become a key tool for political campaigning means that it is very difficult for a media business to survive unless it entertains political interests. Winters (2014) has tied oligarchs' control over media to politics, showing that several of the most influential politicians in Indonesia today have direct links to media. Table 2 summarizes the links between politicians, oligarchic backers and media outlets for some of the most prominent individuals in Indonesian politics. during the last decade. It should be noted that these links are far from set in stone. As pointed out by Tapsell (2015), the setup found in Table 2 changed considerably during the process of the 2014 presidential elections. For example, Dahlan Ikan came to back Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, not Bakrie. Bakrie himself abstained from running and instead supported Prabowo, who in turn did not end up investing in TV stations. However, these changes in themselves do not disprove the thesis of oligarchic democracy put forward by leading proponents Robison and Hadiz (2004, p. 223)⁶ and Winters (2011, pp. 179-193; 2014). At least when it comes to the media sector, most observers would likely agree with the argument that a few powerful individual and

⁶ See also Hadiz and Robison (2014).

families control most of the country's media, and that most of these belong to the oligarchy dating back to Suharto.

Summing up this discussion, studies show how media in Indonesia to a significant extent is controlled by a small number of conglomerates. Several of these conglomerates are in turn either directly controlled by or are supporting key political players. One result of this is that coverage tends to be one-sided (Economist, 2014). The extent to which media has been captured by vested interests highlights a weakness in the democratic process itself. While new laws have been put in place to regulate the media industry⁷, the government and the Indonesian broadcasting commission (KPI) seem to be lax when it comes to implementing some of those regulations (Ida, 2011, p. 16). The overall level of media capture in Indonesia highlights the limitations of traditional media in the political process. It also showcases how media bias can be exacerbated in an institutional setting characterized by the influence of a few very powerful individuals or families, a power structure that dates back to a previous authoritarian regime.

⁷ For example, the Broadcasting Bill No. 32/2002, article 18 regulates ownership in the media industry and limits media ownership concentration (Ida, 2011, p. 16).

Table 2. Oligarchic Democracy 2013

Politician	Oligarch	Oligarch Backers	Media	Owns/Bought Party
Aburizal Bakrie (11% of TV)	Yes	Self (also SBY links)	TVOne, ANTV, Visi Media Asia, Vivanews.com (Anindya) Dahlan Iksan Jawa Pos Group (Radar, TV network)	Yes (Golkar)
Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (27% of TV)	Hidden (Yes)	Budi Sampoerna, Sunaryo Sampoerna, Ramadhan Pohan Chairul Tanjung James Riady (Peter Gontha) [2004 Aburizal Bakrie, Jusuf Kalla] Squeezed Chinese	Media Nusa Pradana (Jurnal Nasional) Trans Corp (TransTV, Trans 7), Detik.com Lippo Media, Berita Satu Media Holdings (Suara Pembaruan, Jakarta Globe, Investor Dailu, BeritaSatu.com)	Yes (Democrat Party)
Surya Paloh (36% of TV)	Yes	Self	MetroTV, Media Indonesia	Yes (NasDem)
Prabowo	Yes	Self Hashim (brother)	Trying to buy TV stations	Yes (Gerindra)
Wiranto	Yes	Self (Cendana?) Hary Tanoesoedibjo (had SBY links, then Surya Paloh links)	- MNC Group, RCTI, Global TV, MNC TV, Sindo Radio, Seputar Indonesia, Okezone.com	Yes (Hanura)
Megawati	Hidden	Taufik Kiemas Arifin Panigoro	-	Genetic (PDIP)
Jusuf Kalla	Yes	Self	-	Yes (Golkar)

Note: SBY stands for Susilo Bambang Yodhoyono.

Source: Winters (2014), p. 28.

4 Social Media in Indonesia

The use of internet, especially over mobile, and social media has increased rapidly in Indonesia during the last decade. We Are Social (2016) reports that out of a population of about 259 million, approximately 88.1 million were active internet users in the beginning of 2016. The number of mobile connections at that time stood at 326.1 million, or 126 percent of the population. These numbers are likely to continue to grow fast. The growth of internet users in Indonesia during 2015 stood at 15 percent and the growth in the number of active social media users during the same time was 10 percent. 85 percent of the adult population owns some type of mobile phone, suggesting that mobile use and the potential for even further spread of social media use is not limited to urban areas on the most populous islands in the archipelago. As many as 79 million people were active social media users in the beginning of 2016, making up close to 90 percent of all active internet users in the country. In addition, the average time spent on social media each day by social media users in 2015 was 2.9 hours. While close to average numbers in neighboring countries such as Thailand (2.9 hours) and Malaysia (3.0), it is significantly higher than that of social media users in developed countries such as the US (1.7 hours), the UK (1.5 hours), Singapore (1.6 hours), and Hong Kong (1.5 hours).

Social media users in Indonesia utilize a variety of platforms to communicate with their peers. Somewhat surprisingly, at 19 percent user penetration, the messenger app BBM was the most widely used social platform in 2015. The intense use of BBM is most likely due to the fact that the Blackberry phone remained popular for so long in Indonesia. 15 percent were using Facebook, while 14 and 13 percent were active on the messenger apps WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, respectively. Other popular social

platforms include Google+ (12 percent), Line (12 percent), Twitter (11 percent), and Instagram (10 percent). In 2015, the number of Facebook users were close to 68 million and it has been estimated that this number will reach over 105 million in 2019 (eMarketer, 2015). The number of Twitter users in 2015 was over 14 million (estimated number of Twitter users in 2019 is close to 23 million). The capital Jakarta has repeatedly been identified as the city with the most Twitter posts in the world (Grazella, 2012; Lukman, 2013). As a result of the growing importance of the Indonesian market, Twitter opened up an office in Jakarta in March 2015.

5 A Closer Look at Social Media in Indonesian Politics

In terms of taking in information and engaging in discussions related to the political discourse, open social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter remain popular channels. Facebook and Twitter users in Indonesia cover topics such as public policy debates, social causes, as well as campaigns and elections at the local and national levels (Epley, 2013). Taking note of the increased popularity of social media, political actors themselves have become increasingly active online, using social platforms as campaigning tools in both national and local elections. Overall, with the cost of campaigning on a steady increase, limited political financing, problems with money politics and the limits of traditional media have resulted in candidates looking for alternative channels to make their voices heard. Social media has helped solve some of these challenges, and has in effect altered how candidates market themselves (Ahmad and Popa, 2014). Here, we focus the discussion on how political actors have utilized social media during election campaigns and the political debate.

5.1 *The 2012 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election*

Jakarta is the political and economic capital of Indonesia. Dating back as early as the fourth century, the city became the de facto capital of the Dutch East Indies, then under the name of Batavia. In addition to being the home of the national government and government office department and agencies, it is the most populous city in Indonesia with over 10 million residents. It could easily be argued that, except for the national presidential elections, the gubernatorial election in Jakarta is the political event that draws the most attention in the country.

As noted by Ahmad and Popa (2014), the 2012 gubernatorial election was quite different from that of the previous election that took place in 2007. In 2007, there were only two pairs of candidates for governor and vice governor. The incumbent Fauzi Bowo and Prijanto were nominated by the Golkar Party, the Indonesian Struggle Democratic Party, the National Awakening Party, the National Mandatory Party, and the Democratic Party. The challenging pair Adang Darajatun and Dhani Irawan were supported by the Prosperous Justice Party. Fauzi Bowo and Prijanto won the first round of elections by getting 57.8 percent of the votes. In the 2012 election, on the other hand, there were no less than six candidates running for office during the first round. In addition, the 2012 election was characterized by a much stronger focus on the candidates themselves rather than the parties that nominated them. After the first round of votes on July 11, two candidate pairs remained: the incumbent Fauzi Bowo with his new partner Nahrowi Rahmi and Joko Widodo (commonly called Jokowi) and Basuki Tjahaya Purnama (commonly called Ahok).

As noted by observers, Bowo epitomized the establishment and the advantages that come with it, including abundant financing and name recognition (e.g. Reformasi, September 14, 2012). Jokowi, on the other hand, previously worked as the mayor of

Solo, a major city in central Java and did not have a well-developed network among the Jakarta elite. In addition to Jokowi being an outsider, his running mate Ahok is of Chinese decent and a Christian. Bowo tried to shed light on these individual traits during the campaign. Among other things, he joked about revoking the identity cards of Betawi residents who failed to vote for him and jokingly urged Betawi who were disloyal to leave town (Reformasi, September 14, 2012). Similarly, the Bowo-Rahmi side called for people to “choose a candidate of the same faith”, questioning not only Ahok but also Jokowi’s faith, with rumors stating that his mother was Catholic (Tempo, September 30, 2012, p. 11, 17). In the end, Jokowi and Ahok prevailed. Quick count surveys on election day showed that the challengers had won the election, a result that was announced officially on September 29.

It has been argued that the 2012 Jakarta gubernatorial election represented a turning point for social media in Indonesian Politics (Lake, 2014). Twitter and Facebook were used by candidates, parties, supporters, and the electorate. For example, Jokowi supporters used Twitter to engage with voters during the first round of voting by tweeting the hashtag #ReplaceTitleSongWithJOKOWI (Merdeka.com, 2012). These tweets urged Jakarta residents to come up with humorous ways of combining Jokowi’s name with popular song titles. A few examples of these tweets were as follows:

Example: Rima Hazrati (@Rimazrati24), July 10, 2012

Tweet: #ReplaceTitleSongWithJOKOWI sheila on 7 - buat Jokowi tersenyum (*smile for Jokowi*)

Example: Pengkuh Arya (@pengkuharyaa), July 10, 2012

Tweet: #ReplaceTitleSongWithJOKOWI one direction - what make JOKOWI beautiful :D

Example: Afiana Thoriq (@afianaathoriq), July 11, 2012

Tweet: #ReplaceTitleSongWithJOKOWI Rihanna - We Found Jokowi :’3

As can be seen in Figure 1, the seemingly impromptu campaign, albeit short-lived, spread quickly just before and during the day of the election. The Twitter campaign, which seems to have been initiated independently from the official Jokowi campaign, thus succeeded in attracting interest to Jokowi’s candidacy at a time when it truly mattered.

Figure 1. Tweets with Hashtag #ReplaceTitleSongWithJOKOWI



Note: Data are from Crimson Hexagon.

5.2 The 2014 Legislative and Presidential Elections

On April 9, 2014, legislative elections were held to elect 560 members of the People’s Representative Council (DPR), 136 members of the Regional Representative Council (DPD), as well as members of regional assemblies at the provincial and regency or municipality levels. National legislative elections in Indonesia are huge political events that requires a lot of planning and resources to organize. In addition to deciding what the parliamentary structure will look like, the election results are crucial to the

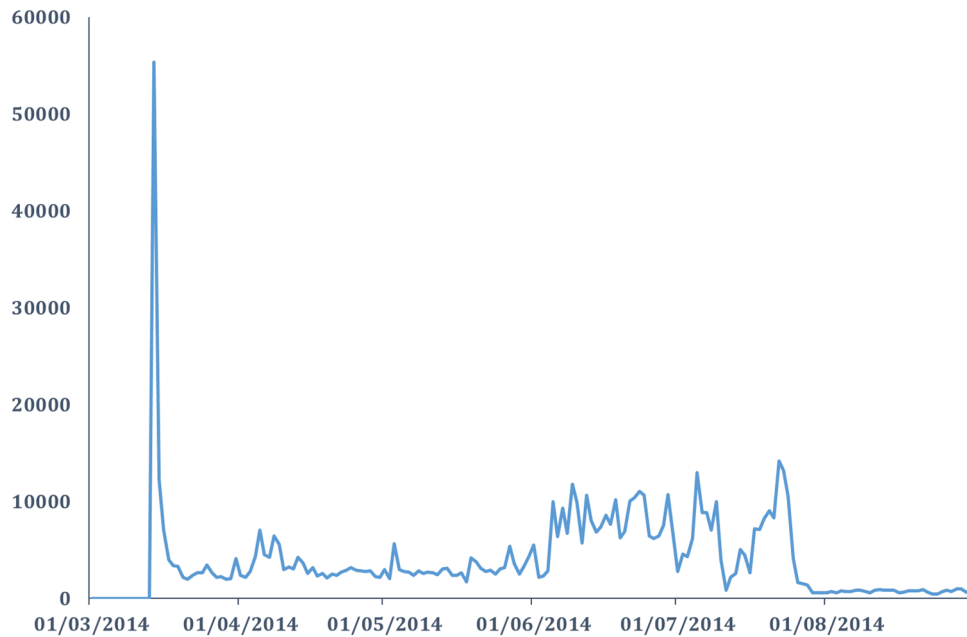
following presidential election. This is because a presidential ticket needs to be approved by a single party or a coalition of parties that have won at least 20 percent of the seats or 25 percent of the popular votes in the legislative election.

Previous studies on the legislative election have pointed to political actors' use of social media to communicate with the electorate. For example, Aspinall and Sukmajati (2016, p. 29) note that the DPR candidates with better resources would have team members "who handled media relations or ran social media campaigns". In a study on the 2014 legislative election, Johansson (2016) collected Twitter data on all winning candidates. The study shows that the use of Twitter among candidates is spread relatively evenly across the country and that candidates' personal characteristics such as age and education have explanatory power for the use of social media during the campaign. More generally, the findings in the paper suggest that even though Twitter is a popular medium in Indonesia, relatively few political candidates seem to have developed a clear media strategy for the platform. This is supported by Wahid (2016, p. 226), who in a study on politicians in Cirebon during 45 days leading to and directly after the election notes that only a few candidates actively used social media to reach out to voters. When they did, they primarily used Twitter, Facebook, or some form of messenger to communicate with the electorate. However, it is worth noting that Wahid's study focuses on the *kabupaten* (regency) level, where candidates' use of social media to engage with voters is likely to differ from that of candidates at the provincial and national levels. In fact, Johansson (2016) shows that 172 out of 560 of the winning candidates were active on Twitter during the campaign period and that a large number of these candidates tweeted about the election, policies, or their party. Dewi et al. (2016, p. 180) report that some candidates hired consultants to manage their social media campaigns and that Jakarta candidates tended to use social media more than candidates

from other parts of the country. As an example, Jakarta candidate Firman Abadi distributed material that included contact details over several social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo Messenger, WhatsApp, and BBM (Dewi et al., 2016, p. 172).

While many of the candidates and citizens were discussing the legislative election, the presidential election turned out to be an event during which social media really became an integral part of the democratic process. Online activity over social media started early for what has been called a social media election (O'Neil, 2014), as people started using the hashtag #JKW4P soon after it was announced that Jokowi were going to be the presidential candidate with support from the party Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P) on March 14. Figure 2 shows how Jokowi as presidential candidate gained momentum over Twitter. There was a clear initial spike as the announcement came, with over 55,000 tweets mentioning it on March 14. However, the figure also shows that the hashtag was used consistently throughout the presidential election campaign.

Figure 2. Tweets with Hashtag #JKW4P



Note: Data are from Crimson Hexagon.

Other popular hashtags used to support Jokowi included #KeepCalmAndVoteJokowi, #salam2jari (or the “two finger salute”), and #Rame2Celup2Jari (or “dipping the finger in ink for voting”) (Wan, 2014). Similarly, support for the opposing candidate Prabowo Subianto spread over Twitter, with hashtags such as #IndonesiaSatu (one Indonesia) and #pilihankusatu_PRABOWO (or “Prabowo, my number one choice”). People were also actively encouraging their peers to go out and vote, using hashtags such as #SayNoToGolPut (ABC, July 9, 2014), where the word golput means “white group”, or having no party affiliation. In the case of election, it basically stands for someone who does not vote or someone who submits a blank ballot.

The presidential candidates both had a significant presence on social media, albeit with very different approaches. Haryanto (2014) reports that Prabowo’s social media campaign was organized and run by a group of young digital strategists. Gerindra

(the political party founded by Prabowo) had a digital team on its payroll dating back to 2009, something that for example had resulted in very a large following for Prabowo on Facebook. That digital team was composed of no less than 50 people in 2014. Jokowi's approach was very different. His social media campaign was organized and run by a group of volunteers under the name of Jokowi Advances Social Media Volunteers, or JASMEV. These volunteers were spread out across the country and worked much more sporadically. However, while seemingly less organized, this network had grown into more than 30,000 people. To sum up, the legislative and presidential elections in 2014 were characterized by wide-spread use of social media by both political actors and their constituencies.

5.3 Politicians and the Political Debate

In addition to becoming increasingly instrumental in the democratic election process, social media has turned out to be an important medium for politicians to reach out to the people. One of the most outspoken political leaders over social is former President and current chairman of the Democratic Party, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (commonly called SBY). He regularly comments on current affairs and has done so ever since leaving office in 2014. For example, in August 2015, the Jokowi administration was contemplating reviving an article in the Criminal Code on defamation of the head of state. The old defamation clause dates back to the New Order period. Government officials drafted a proposal that included a maximum jail sentence of five years for publications of messages that denigrate the president or the vice president, with the definition of denigration (*penghinan*) remaining vague (Reformasi Weekly, August 7, 2015). If the change in the code went through, it could possibly leave room for the head of state to intimidate his or her opponents, thereby causing harm to the democratic

process in the future. While a potential revival of the old defamation clause had been up for discussion also during SBY's time in office, he was quick to let the public know his point of view. On August 9, 2015, SBY sent out one of his so-called "tweetstorms" (Jakarta Globe, August 9, 2015), in which he criticized Jokowi for contemplating implementing the ban. In a series of no less than 22 tweets, he explained his view and potential negative effects if the clause was reintroduced. Among other things, SBY commented on how such a clause would affect the democratic process:

@SBYudhoyono: Andai itu tjd mungkin rakyat tak berani kritik, bicara keras. Takut dipidanakan, dijadikan tersangka. Sy jd tdk tahu apa pendapat rakyat *SBY*

*Translation: If that happens maybe people avoid to criticize and speak up. Afraid of being jailed, becoming suspects. We wouldn't know the opinions of the people. *SBY**

@SBYudhoyono: Kalau pemimpin tak tahu perasaan & pendapat rakyat, apalagi media juga diam & tak bersuara, saya malah takut jadi "bom waktu". *SBY*

*Translation: If a leader does not know the feelings and opinions of the people, and if media is silent and voiceless, I am afraid it will turn into a time bomb. *SBY**

He also addressed the dangers of the potential misuse of power, not only by the president, but also by other people in positions of power, as well as the press and the people:

@SBYudhoyono: Para pemegang kekuasaan (power holders) tak boleh salah gunakan kekuasaannya. Presiden, parlemen, penegak hukum, pers & juga rakyat. *SBY*

*Translation: Power holders should not misuse their power. President, parliament, law enforcer, press, and the people as well. *SBY**

This is not the first or last time SBY has engaged in dialogue over Twitter in an attempt to influence policy. Another example is when he sent out a series of Tweets on the issue of whether Indonesia should join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Towards the end of October 2015, Jokowi visited the US. During this trip, Jokowi announced that "Indonesia intends to join the TPP" (Guardian, October 27, 2016). Following this statement, the discussion on a potential TPP membership quickly got heated back in Indonesia, with SBY joining in. In his tweets, SBY cautioned his successor Jokowi against signing up for the TPP on Indonesia's behalf. SBY refused to move forward with a membership during his time in office and apparently felt that the reasons for doing so still held value. Examples from his series of tweets on this topic are:

@SBYudhoyono: Sebenarnya TPP baik, jika negara anggotanya "siap", kepentingannya diwadahi & benar-benar memberikan keuntungan bersama. *SBY*

*Translation: TPP is actually good if the member states are ready, their interests are served, and [if it] brings real mutual benefits. *SBY**

@SBYudhoyono: Jika Indonesia merasa belum siap & dipaksa masuk TPP, maka justru negara kita akan dirugikan. Begitulah "hukum globalisasi". *SBY*

*Translation: If Indonesia is not ready and forced to enter TPP, that is when our country will suffer. This is the "law of globalization". *SBY**

@SBYudhoyono: Jika tak siap, justru pasar kita akan banjir barang & jasa negara lain, sementara ekspor kita tak bisa bersaing di luar negeri. *SBY*

*Translation: If we are not ready, our market will be flooded with goods and services from other countries, while our exports cannot compete abroad. *SBY**

While no longer president, SBY still carries influence. As mentioned, he is the chairman of the Democratic Party and he actively participates in the political debate. Today, SBY has well over 9 million followers on Twitter, and over 5.5 million likes on Facebook, the two social media platforms he is the most active on. His engagement over

social media even reaches traditional media on a regular basis. For example, news media reported on his statements on the defamation clause as well as on potential TPP membership for Indonesia (Jakarta Globe, August 9, 2015; Today, October 31, 2016).

Many other politicians in leading positions publish their thoughts and opinions over social media. One example is Yusril Ihza Mahendra, the former Minister of Secretary of State, current president of the Crescent Star Party and a professor of Constitutional Law. Yusril is very active on Twitter (@Yusrilihza_Mhd), where he has close to a million followers. A typical example of his engagement with the public over Twitter is when the Jokowi administration in November of 2014 trimmed down the fuel subsidies that weighed on the fiscal budget. Yusril sent out a series of tweets on the legal implications of lifting the fuel subsidies on November 5, 2014. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter thus remain popular channels for Indonesian political actors to reach out with their opinions to the public.

6 Concluding Remarks

The rapid increase in the use of social media across the world is changing the role that media plays in the political process. While previous studies have consistently highlighted a notable increase in the importance of social media in Indonesian politics, a theoretical and context-based framework that can be used to explain this has been lacking. This article fills this gap in the literature by discussing this development with the help of a theoretical framework that emphasizes social media's potential role in the political process and combines this framework with a discussion on the contextual setting in Indonesia with a primary focus on the traditional media industry.

The primary argument in this study is that the growing importance of social media in Indonesia's political process at least partly is due to the complementary

and to some extent even substitutive role social media has alongside traditional media. The impact that social media has on politics is further strengthened by the fact that traditional social media in Indonesia to a certain extent is captured by vested interests. These interests are closely related to key political actors. As a considerable share of traditional media outlets are owned and controlled by powerful actors in Indonesian society, social media provides an alternative channel through which politicians can engage in direct dialogue with their constituencies. Recent political events have highlighted how social media can play a fundamental role in propelling political candidates who are traditionally seen as outsiders into becoming serious contenders for key political positions. The perhaps most telling example of this is how Jokowi came to rely heavily on social media during his campaign leading up to the 2012 Jakarta gubernatorial election. Similarly, social media played an important role in the 2014 presidential election, in which Jokowi once more came out as the winner.

A key implication of this study is the need to understand how social media affects the political process in Indonesia. As discussed in the paper, there is a burgeoning literature on social media and politics in democracies around the world. However, until now, most of them have neglected a contextual setting of young democracies that can be found in the developing world. In such settings, the impact of social media is potentially very different and there may therefore be an even stronger impetus for political actors and ordinary citizens to use social media in the political process. Moreover, while this paper has argued that social media, and more specifically channels such as Twitter and Facebook, have played a role in Indonesia's political process recently, there are other challenges to consider when it comes to understanding the interplay between new media and politics in Indonesia. First, few existing studies measure the real use and impact of social media in the political process in Indonesia.

One exception is Johansson (2016), who collects and analyzes all Twitter accounts and tweets from the winning candidates in the 2014 national legislative election and use that data to shed light on social media in the Indonesian democratic process. In terms of importance, some critiques have argued that social media is already too polarized to have a significant influence on voters' decision (e.g. Haryanto, 2014). More quantitative studies are thus needed for us to better understand how social media is truly used and what effects this use has on the political process. Second, as social media as a phenomenon evolves, so does the sophistication of its users. An increased level of sophistication among social media users can result in several changes compared to how this communication channel has been utilized up until now. For example, political actors may approach social media in an increasingly professional manner, which can result in an ever-increasing difficulty for citizens to differentiate between news, propaganda, and opinions. Moreover, it is evident that users constantly compare different social media platforms against each other, with resulting changes in their choice of platforms and to what end they use them for.

Third, there is an ongoing debate taking place in Indonesia that relates to the freedom of speech and social media as well as internet in general. So far, the attempts to limit the use of social media or internet in general to make one's voice heard has been met with such heavy criticism that temporary bans have been withdrawn. Nevertheless, this does not have to be the case in the future. The steady increase in social media use and the role it plays in everyday life of more and more Indonesians combined with the limitations of traditional media discussed in this paper suggests that social media will continue to be important in the future, not the least in Indonesian politics. However, which social platforms will be the most popular and what the political discourse will look like is not as certain. For example, while Twitter has constituted an important

channel for political debate, there are indications that this social platform also brings with it challenges for its users. For example, it has been reported that Twitter can be an uncomfortable place to voice one's views, as it at times has been flooded by large groups of people with a common goal (Wagstaff, 2016). Thus, some users turn to private messenger platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Line, and BBM for discussion. The evolving nature of social media thus needs to be taken into consideration when analyzing the interplay between social media and politics in the future.

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