

NEGATIVE CAMPAIGNING IN INDONESIA'S DIGITAL-ERA ELECTIONS

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Australian
National
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Disclaimer

I hereby declare that the work undertaken in this thesis has been conducted by me alone, except where indicated in the text. I conducted this work between January 2019 and June 2024, during which period I was a PhD student at the Australian National University. This thesis, in whole or any part of it, has not been submitted to this or any other university for a degree

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Abstract

Negative campaigning can inform voters and ensure accountability, but it can also foster voter cynicism, divert attention from meaningful policy debates, and increase political polarization. In the digital era, negative campaigns have shifted from fostering informed discussion to employing manipulative tactics by focusing on the candidate's character, particularly issues of identity that have not been systematically investigated in Indonesian context. This thesis explores negative campaigning in the digital era in Indonesia marking the new wave of digital political communication by looking at its mechanics, actors, key narratives, and effects. To this end, the study analyses three elections: the 2019 presidential election, the 2022 mayoral election in Medan in Sumatra, and the 2022 mayoral election in South Tangerang in Java. Fieldwork for this thesis included conducting over two years of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, such as politicians and social media campaigners. In addition, content analysis was carried out on social media and other online media, as well as orchestrating various other surveys.

The findings reveal that digital media has transformed the nature and professional practice of negative campaigning. Campaign actors, such as influencers and buzzers, operate covertly on various social media platforms, employing bots, automation, and anonymity to amplify messages, ranging from legitimate criticisms to slander and disinformation using computational propaganda. Key to this study is the identification of various negative campaign narratives, such as portraying opponents as disobedient to Islam, subservient to foreign interests, lacking integrity, or being associated with the Indonesian Communist Party. This thesis also highlights the impact of negative campaigning on voters, showing a feasible decrease in support for the targeted candidate. My key theoretical contribution to the literature lies in the cross-disciplinary integration of communication and politics in theories, methodologies, and argumentation, which significantly enriches the field of political communication research in recent time. My thesis found that negative campaigning is primarily dominated by character attacks that exploit the identity issues of candidates, rather than focusing on policies. The findings of this first systematic study with extensive case details in Indonesia enhance the understanding of computational propaganda in the world's fourth-largest democracy and highlight the need to mitigate their adverse effects. The findings also indicate the emergence of digital negative campaigning which is different from the old conception at the mass media era.

Glossary

Digital political communication	The use of digital technologies and platforms, such as social media, websites, and messaging application, to share political messages, engage with audiences, and influence public opinion for political goals.
Official campaign actors	Campaign actors who are officially registered with the KPU in accordance with the registration mechanism for the winning campaign team of election participants
Unofficial campaign actors	Campaign actors who are not officially registered with the KPU according to the registration mechanism for the winning campaign team of the election participant pair
Organic	The quality and nature of account behaviour carried out naturally by humans in interacting with other accounts on social media
Unorganic	The quality and nature of account behaviour run by robots in interacting with other accounts on social media
Digital media	Production technology and media content created and distributed through computer-based platforms, enabling easy modification and exchange in visual, video, or audio formats
Social media	A web-based media platform that allows users to create, share and interact with fellow users interactively both in a synchronous and an unsynchronous ways. Social media is a subset or a type of digital media
Black campaign	The process of disseminating negative messages about opponents through false information, hoaxes or fake news
Negative campaign	Communication strategy of a candidate where he or she disseminates messages that criticize or attack policies, values, records, and character of their opponents to paint them unfavourably to influence public perception and voter decisions
Positive campaign	Communication strategy of a candidate where he or she disseminate factually positive messages about them in elections
Digital negative campaign	The use of digital tools such as social media, websites, and messaging applications to disseminate contents of negative messages about a political opponent with the aim to discredit or undermine the opponent's reputation
Western	Refers to the academic tradition of negative campaigning within primarily the U.S. and European scholars, unless specified otherwise

List of abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ANRI	Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (The National Archives of Indonesia)
API	Application Programming Interface
Bawaslu	Badan Pengawas Pemilu (Election Supervisory Body)
BPN	Badan Pemenangan Nasional (National Winning Body)
CIB	Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour
CNN	Cable News Network
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
Nasdem	Partai Nasional Demokrat (National Democratic Party)
DDC	Data-Driven Campaigning
DKPP	Dewan Kehormatan Penyelenggara Pemilu (Election Organizer Honorary Council (DKPP))
DPD	Dewan Perwakilan Daerah (Regional Representative Council)
DPR	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (House of Representatives)
DPRD	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (Regional People's Representative Assembly)
Gerindra	Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Greater Indonesia Movement)
Golkar	Golongan Karya (Group work)
GPT	Generative Pre-trained Transformer
Hanura	Hati Nurani Rakyat (The People's Conscience)
IFTTT	If This Than That
INSIDER	Anies Baswedan – Sandiaga Uno Digital Volunteer
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JASMEV	Jokowi Ahok Social Media Volunteers
KPK	Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (Corruption Eradication Commission)
KPU	Komisi Pemilihan Umum (General Election Commissions)
KPUD	Komisi Pemilihan Umum Daerah (Regional General Election Commission)
LSI	Lembaga Survei Indonesia (Indonesian Survey Institute)
LSI Denny JA	Lingkaran Survei Indonesia (Indonesian Survey Circle)
Masyumi	Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Advisory Council)
MPR	Majelis Perwakilan Rakyat (People's Representative Assembly)
MUI	Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Council of Ulama)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NU	Nahdlatul Ulama
PAN	Partai Amanat Nasional (National Mandate Party)
PBB	Partai Bulan Bintang (Star Moon Party)
PD	Partai Demokrat (Democratic party)
PDI	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (Indonesian Democratic Party)
PDIP	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle)
PDS	Partai Damai Sejahtera (Peace and Prosperity Party)
PKB	Partai Kebangkitan bangsa (National Awakening Party)
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
PKS	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party)
PNI	Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Party)

PP	Peraturan Pemerintah (Government regulations)
PPP	Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party)
PRIDE	Prabowo Sandi Digital Team
PSI	Partai Solidaritas Indonesia (Indonesian Solidarity Party, 2014)
PSI	Partai Sosialis Indonesia (Indonesian Socialist Party, 1948)
PSII	Partai Syarikat Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Syarikat Party)
SARA	Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar Golongan (Ethnicity, Religion, Race, Inter-Groups)
SMRC	Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting
TKN	Tim Kampanye Nasional (National Campaign Team)
UU ITE	Undang-Undang Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik (Electronic Information and Transaction Law)
TVRI	Televisi Republik Indonesia (Television of the Republic of Indonesia)
UUD 1945	Undang-Undang Dasar 1945 (1945 Constitution)
UUDS	Undang-Undang Dasar Sementara (Provisional Constitution)

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Chapter 1 Introduction

"It's called a black film, *black campaign*, so there's no need to comment on that,"¹ replied the Golkar party leader, Airlangga Hartanto, three days ahead of the 2024 presidential election, when asked about "Dirty Vote" a documentary released on YouTube made by some of Indonesia's most prominent civil society activists.² Earlier in the campaign, the Governor of West Java Ridwan Kamil made a similar statement about negative campaigning and the 2024 campaign. He said,

The point is that I'm not surprised because there is a group of people who want to win through negative campaigns or smear campaigns. Smear campaigns include slander whereas in negative campaigns, (past) scandals are exaggerated. You can check with TKN (National Campaign Team), we have happy politics, idea politics, creative politics.³

Ridwan was responding to a journalist about the nature of the 2024 campaign. These two statements encapsulate the ambiguity in defining negative campaigning in Indonesia, and the misleading definitions that emerge in the wake of such ambiguity. Of course, politicians are not the only ones who do not have a clear understanding of what precisely negative campaigning is and when it should be stopped. As this thesis shows, academics and policymakers are grappling to understand these new forms of negative campaign tactics and professional practices, where new, digital technologies are key to driving changes around campaign tactics.

¹ Airlangga Hartanto is chairman of Golkar party which join Prabowo-Gibran coalition. The "Dirty Vote" movie according to its official release intends to "reveal that various instruments of power had been used for the purpose of winning elections and destroying the democratic order." It was released for the first time (11 February 20, 2024) on Youtube account of PSHK Indonesia (See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHX7N-gcvhQ>). "Airlangga soal 'Dirty Vote': Itu Black Campaign, Pas Minggu Tenang," 2024, accessed 20 February, 2024, <https://news.detik.com/pemilu/d-7188535/airlangga-soal-dirty-vote-itu-black-campaign-pas-minggu-tenang>.

² In the case of dirty vote, see for example: "Dirty Vote: Film 'tentang kecurangan pilpres' tuai pro-kontra, bagaimana publik harus menyikapinya?," 2024, accessed 1 March 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c72g1x45gj4o>.

³ Ridwan Kamil is former Governor of West Java and head of Prabowo-Gibran's regional campaign team in West Java. Abdul Manan, "Kecurangan Pemilu Menurut Tim Sukses Calon Presiden," *TEMPO*, 22 January, 2024, <https://majalah.tempo.co/read/wawancara/170731/kecurangan-pemilu-2024>.

My thesis investigates the development negative campaigning as a strategic employment of political communication at the 21st century with the massive adoption of digital media platforms during electoral contestations by candidates, parties, and voters alike which paves the way for an era of digital political communication. As a sub-field of digital political communication which is the use of digital technologies and platforms, such as social media, websites, and messaging application, to share political messages, engage with audiences, and influence public opinion for political goals, digital negative campaigning seems to sit on a paradoxical state where on one hand it operates to fulfil the interest of political elites through rhetoric and propaganda to sway and persuade audiences, on the other it is expected to deliver democratic functions. As a form of public persuasion in electoral processes, electoral campaigning at the digital era poses harmful threats to democracy and demands for investigation. Political communication is crucial in any democratic polity as it facilitates participatory civic engagement through bottom-up communication, maintain well-informed citizenry with the coverage of politics by the media, and accountable leaders through their open political communication with constituents during and beyond electoral periods. Democracy, particularly the one like Indonesia's, would always require free and inclusive political communication for democracy to thrive especially at the advent of information disorder, polarized politics, and democratic declining. The study of political communication has not really developed in Indonesia despite its democratic dynamic. There are not many scholars who specializing in the field either compared to political science or economy, for instance. We can also see it from the limited program on political communication at higher education compared to democracies like the US and Europe. Given its speed, versality, and ease of use⁴ candidates gain numerous advantages from employing digital political campaigning like promoting themselves through digital media but also by campaigning against opponents also called as negative campaigning.

This thesis examines how innovation in digital media modernizes negative campaigning and how it affects Indonesian voters. Later in this chapter I discuss various definitions and conceptual arguments around negative campaigning and propose a political communication perspective to conceptualizing negative campaigning. However, a simple working definition by Nai and Walter describes negative campaigning as "the act of attacking the opponent on his own programme, values, record or character."⁵ As we shall see, negative campaigning has

⁴ Philippe J. Maarek, "Politics 2.0: New Forms of Digital Political Marketing and Political Communication," *Tripodos* 1 (2014).

⁵ Alessandro Nai and Annemarie Walter, "The War of Words: The Art of Negative Campaigning," in *New perspectives on negative campaigning: Why attack politics matters.*, ed. Alessandro Nai and Annemarie Walter (Colchester, United Kingdom: ECPR Press, 2015), 12.

clearly evolved as an electoral tactic in many countries around the world. However, existing literature has primarily centered on the US context, focusing on television advertising.⁶

My research seeks to answer the following questions: What are the key narratives of negative campaigning in Indonesia's digital-era elections? How have new digital technologies changed the nature of negative campaigning in Indonesia? How effective is negative campaigning as an electoral tactic to defeat political opponents?

The central argument of my thesis is that the new digital technologies have modernized negative campaigning through digitalization, automation, and targeting mechanisms. The new mechanics of negative campaigning, which produces multimodal content and is spread by human or bot agents to reach potential voters at an unprecedented pace, makes waging negative campaigning more massive and faster in the digital era. The mobilization of social media allows the collective engagement of actors (coordinated behaviour) to directly attack political candidates during election campaigns. Individual users of social media with different motivations can now design and operate fake accounts to disseminate problematic information about a candidate by exploiting the social media logic—programmability, popularity, connectivity, and datafication—for electoral gain, signalling the rise of digital negative campaigning.

Given the rise of social media and key narratives of electoral campaigning in Indonesia, personal attacks around identity issues remain the dominant messages of negative campaigning in the digital era. Consequently, negative campaigning has not resulted in deliberative debates over policy issues proposed by candidates but more of dirty tactics to manipulate voters by amplifying emotion-loaded issues about the candidates through highly sophisticated computational mechanism. Despite its sophistication, the new mechanics of negative campaigning is not a substitute for the traditional dissemination of campaign attacks in Indonesia. Rather, it has been complementing it to reach a wider audience in a hybrid campaign system that makes negative campaigning an effective strategy to influence voters' perception about the candidates.

Social media decentralizes negative campaigning—direct involvement of citizens with certain internet skills is a key feature of the strategy. Hence, rather than attacking opponents directly, candidates outsource their negative campaigning to a network of unofficial actors, such as

⁶ For some reviews, see Richard R. Lau, Lee Sigelman, and Ivy B. Rovner, "The Effects of Negative Political Campaigns: A Meta-Analytic Reassessment," *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 69, no. No. 4, Nov. (2007).; Richard R. Lau and Gerald M. Pomper, *Negative campaigning : an analysis of U.S. Senate elections* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).; Alessandro Nai and Annemarie Walter, *New perspectives on negative campaigning: Why attack politics matters* (Colchester, UK: ECPR Press, 2015).; Kim L. Fridkin and Patrick J. Kenney, *Taking Aim at Attack Advertising: Understanding the Impact of Negative Campaigning in US Senate Races* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

buzzers, influencers, and volunteers by producing and distributing attacking and counter-attacking messages on social media using computational techniques. The unofficial actors use social media platforms, autonomous agents, big data, and PR marketing to influence public opinion by promoting negative messages about political candidates. Nevertheless, this is more of a hybrid negative campaign rather than total replacement of mass media campaigning. Because of the nature of social media, negative campaigning often leads to slanderous campaigning via unofficial actors, and the use of disinformation or fake news with highly emotional content appeals to the targeted potential voters. Negative campaigning on social media is unlikely to face significant reprisal or identification of the source, thanks to the anonymity and automation process by which they are disseminated on social media. Partly as a result of these trends brought about by digital media, in Indonesia a popular term employed is *kampanye hitam* (or 'black campaign'). A *kampanye hitam* misleads voters and jeopardizes democracy, pushing false information and slander. The locally popularized concept of *kampanye hitam* may resemble the concept of smear campaign or disinformation in general. However, as this thesis shows, there is a large grey zone around where the boundaries are with negative campaigning, and in a *kampanye hitam* the lines are increasingly blurred.

My thesis ultimately argues that negative campaigning has become dominated by attacks on the character of the candidates rather than on a policy issue or the values espoused by their political party. Character attacks are used through various forms of campaign communication targeting on personality, family life, behavior, and social identity that candidates have through both well-prepared methods and reactive strategy during the campaign. Campaign professionalization has given rise to various forms of personal attacks, in particular through the targeting of candidates using false, useless, or irrelevant information around identity. I argue that the concerning trends in democracy and elections in Indonesia that scholars are now identifying is partly caused by the growing nature of negative campaigning in Indonesia, which focuses on the identity-based attacks.

This topic deserves a systematic investigation because these forms of negative campaigning impede voters from getting legitimate information during an election campaign, disempowering voters from making well-informed decisions. Even if the voters know that the campaign messages are false and do not believe them, they still lead to deteriorating trust in the elected leaders: the legitimacy and public trust in the new government suffers if the electoral integrity that brings politicians to government is questionable. Furthermore, this thesis shows how negative campaign in Indonesia tends to polarize society because of the divisive narratives used exploiting division and horizontal differences in the society. The use of such polarising narratives pushes voters to rely on their identity in deciding who to believe and how to decide, leading to

affective polarization of the electorates. Affective polarization as such breeds animosity and has at times become the seed for violence in Indonesia.

In this thesis, I examine narrative in the context of electoral campaigning. US based scholars in particular have contributed much to the scholarship on political narratives and election campaigns. Political narratives are defined as “narratives that are specifically about sociopolitical issues, deal with political characters, and are set within imagined communities that are affected by political events.”⁷ Leaders construct narratives to shape national identity and influence public opinion through a nation’s humiliating past.⁸ Government authorities disseminate strategic narratives to portray themselves as a beneficial force (heroes) and others as hostile antagonists (villains) in international relations.⁹ For example, in 2016, US presidential candidate Donald Trump’s campaign advertisements (ads) employed a negative narrative where American voters were exposed to a story of “Two Americas”, asking voters to choose between “Hillary Clinton’s America” where corruption, crime, and illegal immigration reign” or “Donald Trump’s America”, where American are safe and secure. Negative campaign political narratives present to voters a political threat (the target candidate).

Political scientists argue that “Insofar as narratives affect our perceptions of political reality, which in turn affect our actions in response to or in anticipation of political events, narrative plays a critical role in the construction of political behavior.”¹⁰ Campaign narratives are increasingly prepared and crafted by professional consultants of political marketing.¹¹ These narratives can be delivered in textual and visual campaign messages.¹² A strong tendency of narrative in political communication is the intention of the producers to narrate hate by elaborating self as care, fair, loyal, and pure while portraying the opponent as harmful, cheating, betraying, and degraded.¹³ For example, Kamala Harris, vice presidential candidate at the 2020 US presidential election was attacked by opponents with three strategic narratives: othering (questioning her eligibility to be vice president), essentializing (intersecting gender and race), and authenticating

⁷ Bryan McLaughlin, John A. Velez, and Joshua A. Dunn, “The political world within: how citizens process and experience political narratives,” *Annals of the International Communication Association* 43, no. 2 (2019).

⁸ Yiqing Xu and Jiannan Zhao, “The power of history: How a victimization narrative shapes national identity and public opinion in China,” *Research & Politics* 10, no. 2 (2023).

⁹ Pablo Moral, “A tale of heroes and villains: Russia’s strategic narratives on Twitter during the COVID-19 pandemic,” *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* (2023). See Ronald C Arnett and Pat Arneson, *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age: Community, Hope, and Interpersonal Relationships* (New York: SUNY Press, 1999).; Nicholas J. O’Shaughnessy and Stephan C. Henneberg, “The selling of the President 2004: a marketing perspective,” *Journal of Public Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2007).

¹⁰ Molly Patterson and Kristen Renwick Monroe, “NARRATIVE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 1, no. 1 (1998).

¹¹ Richard M Perloff, *The dynamics of political communication: Media and politics in a digital age* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 236-47.

¹² Janis Teruggi Page and Margaret E. Duffy, “What Does Credibility Look like? Tweets and Walls in U.S. Presidential Candidates’ Visual Storytelling,” *Journal of Political Marketing* 17, no. 1 (2018).

¹³ Brendan Kennedy et al., “The (moral) language of hate,” *PNAS Nexus* 2, no. 7 (2023).

(purity of black identity) narratives, which were intended to delegitimize her candidacy by targeting and exploiting “identity based differences to maintain existing hegemonic social orders and/or undermine challenges to extant political power” in the context of electoral politics.¹⁴ Another example of this is the “Pizzagate” conspiratory narrative against Hillary Clinton during the 2016 US election. Distributing narratives like this helps in actively conveying political messages and worldviews to harm political opponents.¹⁵

I approached the phenomenon from the perspective of political communication at the digital era which paves the way for digital political communication and digital campaigning. Digital political communication is understood as the use of digital technologies and platforms, such as social media, websites, and messaging application, to share political messages, engage with audiences, and influence public opinion for political goals. Digital technologies are used in campaign strategies and campaign content, management of data in electoral registers, and the use of voter personality data for targeting the use of AI-generated materials for manipulating voters.¹⁶ In this thesis, the employment of digital media in election campaigning is seen as bringing more an adverse tendency towards democratic electoral competitions through the investigation of negative campaigning in Indonesian context.

This thesis aims to contribute to the literature on negative campaigning in three folds. First, my study is the first to systematically investigate negative campaigning in Indonesia with extensive case details, enhancing understanding of the new mechanics of negative campaigning and the need to address their negative impacts. Second, ultimately this thesis calls for a new understanding of the nature of negative campaigning, one that uses the Indonesian experience as a way to shed light on new forms of political campaigning, which encompasses concepts such as black campaigning, fake news, disinformation, and discretely-funded slander campaigns online. The narratives of negative campaigning matter. They are dominated by religion, ethnic, gender, and nationalism issues rather than party’s program or policy issues. Although Indonesia is a multiparty democracy, the conduct of negative campaigning tends to be intense and polarized into binary opposition based on the ideological roots of Islam and nationalism. Third, unlike in the US context, where candidates attack their opponent directly and openly, negative campaigning in Indonesia is driven by unofficial actors, where candidates take advantage by outsourcing their attacking strategies to specialized teams who often operate

¹⁴ Madhavi Reddi, Rachel Kuo, and Daniel Kreiss, “Identity propaganda: Racial narratives and disinformation,” *New Media & Society* 25, no. 8 (2021).

¹⁵ Stefan Groth, “Political Narratives / Narrations of the Political: An Introduction,” *Narrative Culture* 6, no. 1 (2019).

¹⁶ Gabriela Borz and Fabrizio De Francesco, “Digital political campaigning: contemporary challenges and regulation,” *Policy Studies* 45, no. 5 (2024).

underground thanks to the affordances of the digital media. In addition, negative campaigning in Indonesia is influenced by contextual factors of culture and the direct electoral system, which highly values campaigning.

My thesis examines the innovation of negative campaigning as a strategic application of political communication in Indonesia and shows how the production (actors, narratives, and methods) and its influence are driven by the digital media. To examine the actors, messages, narratives, and methods of negative campaigning, I interviewed politicians, buzzers, influencers, consultants, and campaign staff. I undertook content analyses of social media posts and news stories, and analyzed key documents. To show the effect of negative campaigning, I ran an online survey as well as analyzing the secondary data from a national survey with a representative sample.

The results show three key findings: first, computational propaganda is a growing form of negative campaigning in Indonesia's elections in the digital era. Computational propaganda is used to manipulate information and voters by attacking opponents using problematic information through social media platforms with automation and fake accounts to avoid backlash. Identity-related attack messages dominated the messages of negative campaigning both at national and local elections alike in the 2019 presidential and 2020 local elections, often driven by computational propaganda. Second, the key narratives of negative campaigning center around framing the opponent as an "enemy of and breaking the law of Islam". While other narratives exist, Islam and religion are often the key narratives that dominate negative campaigning material. Third, my thesis shows that negative campaigning staged against opponent candidates is able to lower the electability of the target candidate. There is a decreasing probability of voting for a target candidate as exposure to and acceptance of attack messages increases for the voters.

My fieldwork found that negative campaign material is produced by unofficial actors who work in loosely coordinated networks, producing and distributing attacking messages around the issues of a candidates' characters, policy, track-records, and so on. A key message of negative campaigning rests on identity-based *kampanye hitam* to label the opponent as a threat or common enemy of Islam, to evoke fear, anger, and loathing among voters. I found that, rather than attacking opponents directly through their official social media accounts, candidates outsourced their negative campaigning to a network of unofficial actors, such as buzzers, influencers, and volunteers. These unofficial actors produce and distribute attacking and counter-attacking messages with the help of the wider political campaign industry, using social media to set the mainstream media agenda, which results in further influencing the attacking messages. The attacking messages are produced and distributed with some level of digital

fakery and automation but spread beyond the original intention of the producers thanks to the engagement features of social media. Some materials for the attacking messages were drawn from news media, and often the news media also covered key attacking messages on social media campaigns.

The significance of these findings lies in its novelty in offering a new understanding of how Indonesia's democracy works through new forms of digital political communication during electoral competitions. And transparency in campaign communication particularly at the digital era is a foundation for free and fair elections. In short, this thesis aims to help us Indonesians—and perhaps beyond Indonesia—to understand better the declining trend of our democracy. Low campaign discourse quality is a key factor in this democratic decline. Democratic advocacy can initiate reforms in election campaigns through regulatory innovation, incentive mechanisms, and voter empowerment, suggestions I outline in the last chapter of this thesis as a way to implement practical solutions from my findings.

1.1 Negative campaigning in existing literature: Key debates

Free and fair election campaigns are a crucial tenet of democracy. The campaign is not only an opportunity where politicians persuade voters to vote for them, but it is also an embodiment of how democracy is sustained. Research shows that campaign messages “enlighten” voters during elections.¹⁷ Campaigns also inform and educate voters so that they make well-informed decisions and participate accordingly.¹⁸ But most of all, electoral campaigns “provide venues for deliberation and opportunities to debate alternative solutions to the nation’s problems.”¹⁹ Ideally, election campaigns provide enough information about not only accomplishments, leadership, and policy preferences of contesting candidates but also weaknesses, failures, and mistakes based on facts and data. It is believed that truthful and relevant information is useful for voters to reach rational decisions. Thus, campaigns function not only as a strategy to win elections but also as a key step to preserve democracy.

However, there has always been an element of ‘dark arts’ to election campaign strategies and methods.²⁰ As the goal of electoral campaigning is to win elections, campaigns may not always

¹⁷ Kevin Arceneaux, “Do Campaigns Help Voters Learn? A Cross-National Analysis,” *British Journal of Political Science* 36, no. 01 (2005).

¹⁸ Participation would increase not only the legitimacy, but also acceptance and enforceability of policies in the context of participative democracy. Richard S. Katz, *Democracy and Elections* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 67.

¹⁹ Richard M Perloff, *Political Communication: Politics, Press, and Public in America* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 351.

²⁰ David Mark, *Going dirty: The art of negative campaigning* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

comply with fair and democratic values. Electoral campaigns can suppress certain parts of the electorates, parties, or other institutions.²¹ They can also cause cynicism and alienation.²² The message candidates disseminate, the channels they use as well as the part of the electorates they target could empower certain voters but alienate others at the same time. In some countries, election campaigns can even dissuade citizens from voting. In short, there has long been debate about what is 'fair' during an election campaign, and what is 'playing dirty', and this is particularly the case when we think of the term negative campaigning. This section investigates major literature on negative campaigning to understand the existing definitions and concepts of negative campaigning in global literature.

Negative campaigning has been extensively studied in the context of US politics, and there is much debate and conjecture in this literature. Most of these studies concentrate on the detrimental effects of negative campaigning on democracy, using TV ads as case studies. For instance, Jamieson²³ found in the US that the production of negative campaigning in television era tended to be notorious attack ads that lacked truthfulness, accuracy, and relevance. Negative ads, as Ansolabehere and Iyengar²⁴ found, contribute greatly to low political participation and a growing cynicism towards politics in American democracy. Attack ads, they concluded, demobilize voters. However, Lau and Pomper who investigated negative campaigns in the US senate elections from 1992-2002 found no evidence to support the effects of negative campaigning on turnout, trust, and efficacy.²⁵ Meanwhile, other scholars found that negative campaigning mobilized citizens to vote, especially if the attack messages were relevant and delivered appropriately²⁶ or when voters saw something was at stake.²⁷ Another stream of studies focuses on the determinants of negative campaigning where candidates are more likely to attack opponent if they are an opposition, lagging in the poll, and a male candidate.²⁸

²¹ David L Swanson and Paolo Mancini, *Politics, media, and modern democracy: An international study of innovations in electoral campaigning and their consequences* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996), 2.

²² Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar, *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 146.

²³ Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Dirty politics: Deception, distraction, and democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

²⁴ Ansolabehere and Iyengar, *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate*.

²⁵ Richard R Lau and Gerald M Pomper, *Negative campaigning: An analysis of US Senate elections* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

²⁶ Kim F. Kahn and Patrick J. Kenney, "Do Negative Campaigns Mobilize or Suppress Turnout? Clarifying the Relationship between Negativity and Participation," *The American Political Science Review* 93, no. 4 (1999).

²⁷ K Goldstein and P Freedman, "Campaign Advertising and Voter Turnout: New Evidence for a Stimulation Effect.," *Journal of Politics* 64, no. 3 (2002).

²⁸ Maier and Jansen, "When do candidates attack in election campaigns? Exploring the determinants of negative candidate messages in German televised debates."

Scholars tend to agree, however, that negative campaigning matters because it is more powerful than positive campaigning,²⁹ because negative emotions appeals to fear and prejudice,³⁰ and because such stories tend to be amplified by news coverage.³¹ A study of political ads shows that anger mobilizes, but fear demobilizes voters from participating, discussing politics, and being interested in politics.³² Similarly, Brader demonstrated that enthusiasm motivates participation and activates loyalties, but fear stimulates vigilance, increases reliance on recent evaluations of issues, and facilitates persuasion.³³ Recent studies show that negative emotion increases the popularity cues of a political party's communication and invokes more comments on Facebook.³⁴

The literature indicates that understanding campaign messages would not be sufficient unless one includes the element of emotion. Of course, not all topics have the same weight in people's minds. Some topics have stronger emotional appeals than others, driven by symbolic meaning of the topics to the voters. Also, similar messages of negative campaigns may have a different influence when disseminated via newspaper, television, or social media. With the introduction of the internet, negative campaigning in the US changed dramatically to incorporate tactics around campaigning during the use of debates,³⁵ political ads, and later, controlled interactivity on social media.³⁶ New strategies of micro-targeted ads, automated campaigning, and the employment of professionals and data scientists from social media companies have added to this professional practice of negative campaigning,³⁷ including various forms of foreign interference.

A key work on negative campaigning in the pre-internet era literature is Ansolabehere and Iyengar's *Going Negative: How Political Advertisements Shrink and Polarize the Electorate* (1995), which stimulated persistent debates among academics. In their seminal book, they show that negative campaigning suppresses turnout and polarizes voters.³⁸ In 1999, Wattenberg and Brian (1999) tested the same causality and found that negative ads do not discourage

²⁹ Stuart Neil Soroka, *Negativity in democratic politics causes and consequences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

³⁰ Ted Brader, *Campaigning for Hearts and Minds: How Emotional Appeals in Political Ads Work*, Perspectives on Politics, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 21.

³¹ Jamieson, *Dirty politics: Deception, distraction, and democracy*.

³² Christopher Weber, "Emotions, Campaigns, and Political Participation," *Political Research Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2012).

³³ Ted Brader, "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions," *American Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 2 (2005).

³⁴ Sina Blassnig et al., *Popularity on Facebook During Election Campaigns: An Analysis of Issues and Emotions in Parties' Online Communication*, vol. 15, 2021, (2021), social media, political communication, popularity cues, political parties, elections. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/17040/3573>.

³⁵ Mazlan Maskor, Niklas K Steffens, and S Alexander Haslam, "The psychology of leadership destabilization: an analysis of the 2016 US Presidential Debates," *Political Psychology* 42, no. 2 (2021).

³⁶ Jennifer Stromer-Galley, *Presidential campaigning in the Internet age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³⁷ Daniel Kreiss and Shannon C. McGregor, "Technology Firms Shape Political Communication: The Work of Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter, and Google With Campaigns During the 2016 U.S. Presidential Cycle," *Political Communication* 35, no. 2 (2018).

³⁸ Ansolabehere and Iyengar, *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate*.

participation and do not reduce political efficacy.³⁹ Furthermore, Buell and Sigelman's *Attack Politics, Negativity in Presidential Campaigns since 1960* investigates the level of negativity in every presidential contest from 1960 to 2004. They argue that in contrast to conventional belief, campaign negativity in the US had not increased during the periods, and only three periods showed strongly negative campaigns, 1960, 1972, and 1992.⁴⁰ Lau and Pomper's *Negative Campaigning, An Analysis of US Senate Elections* analyses the motivations, effects, and consequences of negative campaigns. They found that the belief in the effectiveness of negative campaigning and its deleterious effects on democracy is unproven. They also show that going negative is a poor strategy for incumbents.⁴¹ *In Defense of Negativity* by Geer offers an optimistic argument for defending negative campaigns in retrospective democracy. He argues negativity is more informative than positive information because a negative ad is based on evidence in order for it to work.⁴² Similarly, *The Positive Case for Negative Campaigning* of Mattes and Redlawsk shows how voters make use of attack messages. They argue that people's reported negative reactions may be a function of the wording in the survey questions. They found that people are intelligent enough to differentiate between critical and informational vs defamatory attack ads.⁴³

Nai and Walter launched an edited volume of *New Perspective on Negative Campaigning: Why Attack Politics Matters* in 2015, which is the most comprehensive account of negative campaigning, and the one that I found most useful for my thesis. They argue that studies on negative campaigning have centred on the US context and that their volume is an answer to the demand for scholarly works beyond US democracy, and as such is useful for understanding conceptual definitions beyond a US context.⁴⁴ However, although the last work was initiated to expand the context of investigation, it still focused mainly on the US, with some additions from European democracies.

³⁹ Martin P. Wattenberg and Craig L. Brians, "Negative Campaign Advertising: Demobilizer or Mobilizer?," *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 93, no. No. 4, Dec. (1999).

⁴⁰ Emmett H. Buell Jr. and Lee Sigelman, *Attack Politics: Negativity in Presidential Campaigns since 1960*, 2nd ed. (USA: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

⁴¹ Lau and Pomper, *Negative campaigning : an analysis of U.S. Senate elections*.

⁴² John G Geer, *In defense of negativity: Attack ads in presidential campaigns* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁴³ Kyle Mattes and David P Redlawsk, *The positive case for negative campaigning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

⁴⁴ Nai and Walter, *New perspectives on negative campaigning: Why attack politics matters*.

1.1.1 Key debates in the literature 1: Defining negative campaigning

Despite the extensive literature on negative campaigning, definitions and conceptual debates about the term vary. Some scholars like to distinguish between an 'evaluative' definition and 'directional' definition of negative campaigning.⁴⁵

The directional definition is simple and straightforward, where scholars define negative campaigning as "talking about the opponent criticizing his or her programs, accomplishments, qualifications, and so on. Positive campaigning is just the opposite: talking about one's own accomplishments, qualifications, programs, etc."⁴⁶ Walter and Vliegenthart define negative campaigning "as all criticism directed at the opposing political party or candidate, regardless of the kind of criticism or accuracy."⁴⁷ The directional definition does not see negative campaigning specifically from a moral standpoint but merely from the direction of the communication based on orientation of the messages which yield a continuum of negativity in election campaigning. It is a broad approach to see the spectrum of negative campaigning during elections. In short, anything negative in a campaign is included. Previous studies have a strong inclination of using the directional definition simply because of its practicality and the ease of using content analysis or opinion surveys to measure prevalence or intensity of negative campaigns. The most prominent example is John Geer who argues that "negativity is any criticism leveled by one candidate against another during a campaign."⁴⁸ Geer, along with other scholars, investigates negative campaigning in relation to an open possibility of the quality or legitimacy of campaigning, ranging from 'civil to uncivil attack', 'negative, moderate, positive,' and so on.

However, the directional definition makes it hard to distinguish between legitimate forms of attack, and illegitimate conduct in campaigning. The evaluative perspective is ultimately more functional to understand truthfulness, relevance, fairness of the messages in an election campaign.⁴⁹ Ultimately, the evaluative approach to negative campaigning allows us to better evaluate new forms of illegitimate campaigning found in the digital era.

The evaluative definition regards negative campaigning as campaigning by which candidates criticize, discredit, or belittle their opponents rather than promoting their own ideas and

⁴⁵ Lau and Pomper, *Negative campaigning : an analysis of U.S. Senate elections*.

⁴⁶ Richard R. Lau and Gerald M. Pomper, "Negative Campaigning by U.S. Senate Candidates," *Party Politics* 7, no. 1 (2001): 73.

⁴⁷ Annemarie S. Walter and Rens Vliegenthart, "Negative Campaigning across Different Communication Channels: Different Ball Games?," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 15, no. 4 (2010): 443.

⁴⁸ Geer, *In defense of negativity: Attack ads in presidential campaigns*.

⁴⁹ Walter and Vliegenthart, "Negative Campaigning across Different Communication Channels: Different Ball Games?."

program.⁵⁰ Equivalent terms used by scholars for the evaluative concept are “dirty politics,”⁵¹ or “poison politics”⁵² where negative campaigning is perceived as “unfair”, “dishonest”, “irrelevant”, and “manipulative”.⁵³ This perspective examines negative campaigning from a moral standpoint by evaluating the righteousness of the communication. This definition is often problematic in that it is hard to draw the line between fair or unfair, and relevant or irrelevant. Is a campaign claiming a candidate is corrupt unfair, if there are accusations of such behaviour, for example? To answer this criticism, proponents of the evaluative definition would give examples of campaigning that is clearly manipulative and illegitimate, but even these terms can be hazy.⁵⁴ Ultimately, my thesis argues that we need to better conceptualise negative campaigning in the digital era, and to do this we need an evaluative approach to negative campaigning, as difficult and as grey as this understanding might sometimes be.

1.1.2 Key debates in the literature 2: What causes a negative campaign?

A subset of scholarship examines what might cause a negative campaign to dominate an election. Some existing research⁵⁵ found that candidates are more likely to attack opponents if they are the opposition candidate, lagging in the poll, are male,⁵⁶ and have fewer resources.⁵⁷ Scholars also found that candidates with a certain personality type profile (such as a populist or narcissist⁵⁸) tend to stage more aggressive and uncivil campaigns.⁵⁹ Other scholars argue that a “candidate who is perceived as having less attractive personal attributes runs a relatively more negative campaign.”⁶⁰

Contextual factors also explain why candidates resort to negative campaigning. Scholars found that in the US senate elections “ads were more likely to be negative if they were produced by

⁵⁰ S. Ansolabehere et al., “Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?,” *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 88, no. No. 4, Dec (1994): 829.

⁵¹ Jamieson, *Dirty politics: Deception, distraction, and democracy*.

⁵² Victor Kamber, *Poison politics: Are negative campaigns destroying democracy?* (USA: Perseus Publishing, 2003).

⁵³ Walter and Vliegenthart, “Negative Campaigning across Different Communication Channels: Different Ball Games?,” 442.

⁵⁴ Jamieson, *Dirty politics: Deception, distraction, and democracy*.; Cristian Vaccari and Marco Morini, “The Power of Smears in Two American Presidential Campaigns,” *Journal of Political Marketing* 13, no. 1-2 (2014).; Ansolabehere and Iyengar, *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate*.

⁵⁵ Maier and Jansen, “When do candidates attack in election campaigns? Exploring the determinants of negative candidate messages in German televised debates.”

⁵⁶ Maier and Jansen, “When do candidates attack in election campaigns? Exploring the determinants of negative candidate messages in German televised debates.”

⁵⁷ Jamieson, *Dirty politics: Deception, distraction, and democracy*.

⁵⁸ Delroy L. Paulhus and Kevin M. Williams, “The Dark Triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy,” *Journal of Research in Personality* 36, no. 6 (2002).

⁵⁹ Alessandro Nai and Jürgen Maier, “Dark necessities? Candidates’ aversive personality traits and negative campaigning in the 2018 American Midterms,” *Electoral Studies* 68 (2020).

⁶⁰ Jr Joseph E. Harrington and Gregory D. Hess, “A Spatial Theory of Positive and Negative Campaigning,” *Games and Economic Behavior* 17, no. 2 (1996).

challengers, in races in larger states, and by candidates in more competitive races.”⁶¹ In short, the closer the race, the more desperate the stakes, and all forms of campaign tactics, including negative campaigning, are more likely to be used. Another factor in the use of negative campaign is the prominence of PR firms and the type of political ads they are expert in creating can mean it is more about who is behind the campaign team driving messages than the politician themselves.⁶²

In multiparty democracies, negative campaigning is perhaps less pronounced, because attacking an opponent does not guarantee success due to multiple options of party for voters to choose. Hence, criticisms among parties could mean just to set out differences from each other to strengthen their policy preferences.⁶³ Haselmayer and Jenny⁶⁴ found that coalition members criticized each other during Austrian national elections but with a “friendly fire” of tonality aiming at keeping the political “bridges” in place. In Europe, one study found personality traits affect the campaign tactics, as “kinder and more stable candidates tend to go less negative; when they do, they tend to stay away from character-based attacks and somehow focus on issues.”⁶⁵ However as Papp and Patkos argue, European countries with increasing disproportionality of electoral results, excessive fragmentation, and less polarized electorates are fertile ground for negative campaigning.⁶⁶ In conclusion, there is much debate in Western scholarship on what might cause an election to be dominated by negative campaign material, but no consensus.

1.1.3 Key debates in the literature 3: Negative campaign’s impact: Can it influence an election result?

The key aspect of negative campaigning that has puzzled academics for decades is its contentious effect on voters. Scholars have investigated the effects of negative campaigning by trying to understand whether negative campaigning impacts voter turn-out, overall awareness, voter choice, and broader polarization patterns. What follows below is a literature review of these four categories of scholarship.

⁶¹ Jon F Hale, Jeffrey C Fox, and Rick Farmer, “Negative advertisements in US Senate campaigns: The influence of campaign context,” *Social Science Quarterly* (1996).

⁶² Matt Grossmann, “What (or Who) Makes Campaigns Negative?,” *The American Review of Politics* Vol. 33, no. Spring (2012).

⁶³ Iñaki Sagarzazu and Heike Klüver, “Coalition Governments and Party Competition: Political Communication Strategies of Coalition Parties,” *Political Science Research and Methods* 5, no. 2 (2017).

⁶⁴ M. Haselmayer and M. Jenny, “Sentiment analysis of political communication: combining a dictionary approach with crowdcoding,” *Qual Quant* 51, no. 6 (2017).

⁶⁵ Alessandro Nai, Anke Tresch, and Jürgen Maier, “Hardwired to attack. Candidates’ personality traits and negative campaigning in three European countries,” *Acta Politica* (2022).

⁶⁶ Zsófia Papp and Veronika Patkós, “The Macro-Level Driving Factors of Negative Campaigning in Europe,” *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 24, no. 1 (2018).

The first sub-set of literature I examine here is that which evaluates voter turn-out and negative campaigning. Demobilization advocates (scholars who believe that negative campaigning suppress voters which leads to lower turnout)⁶⁷ who implemented an evaluative perspective of negative campaigning showed that the intention to vote drops by 5% when participants were shown negative ads. They argue that negative campaigning makes voters become more cynical about politics, and that negative advertising essentially demobilizes voters.⁶⁸ Alternatively, proponents of the mobilization perspective (those believing in the power of negative campaigning to motivate people to vote) found that negative messages significantly increase the likelihood of citizens to vote, especially when the message contains a relevant topic and is delivered appropriately.⁶⁹ For example, Goldstein and Freedman found in a survey that exposure to negative political ads stimulates voter turnout because voters are made aware of something in which their interests are at stake in the attack.⁷⁰ Interestingly, Brooks demonstrated that exposure to uncivil attacks mobilizes men more than women to vote.⁷¹

Krupnikov asserts that negative political ads do not mobilize or demobilize, in fact they can do both depending on different factors such as time.⁷² The time between exposure to the negative ads and when choice is made justifies whether the mobilizing or the demobilizing effect exists. She concluded that “negativity can only demobilize when two conditions are met: (1) a person is exposed to negativity after selecting a preferred candidate and (2) the negativity is about this selected candidate.” Brader showed that appealing to emotions (i.e., fear and enthusiasm) changes how voters perceived political ads, such as “cueing fear stimulates vigilance, increases reliance on contemporary evaluations, and facilitates persuasion.”⁷³ Chou and Lien found that attacking ads that “do not provide evidence, unimportant appeals benefit the ad sponsor more than important appeals, regardless of whether the appeal centers on issues or images.” Brooks and Geer⁷⁴ argue that tone, civility, and focus of the message may determine the influence of an attack, highlighting from their work saying that “we see no evidence that even the most despised of candidate messages—negative, uncivil, trait-based messages—are harmful to the

⁶⁷ Ansolabehere et al., “Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?”

⁶⁸ Stephen D. Ansolabehere, Shanto Iyengar, and Adam Simon, “Replicating experiments using aggregate and survey data: The case of negative advertising and turnout,” *The American Political Science Review* 93, no. 4 (1999).

⁶⁹ Kahn and Kenney, “Do Negative Campaigns Mobilize or Suppress Turnout? Clarifying the Relationship between Negativity and Participation.”

⁷⁰ Goldstein and Freedman, “Campaign Advertising and Voter Turnout: New Evidence for a Stimulation Effect..”

⁷¹ Deborah Jordan Brooks, “A Negativity Gap? Voter Gender, Attack Politics, and Participation in American Elections,” *Politics & Gender* 6, no. 3 (2010).

⁷² Yanna Krupnikov, “How Negativity Can Increase and Decrease Voter Turnout: The Effect of Timing,” *Political Communication* 31, no. 3 (2014).

⁷³ Brader, “Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions.”

⁷⁴ Deborah J. Brooks and John G. Geer, “Beyond Negativity: The Effects of Incivility on the Electorate,” *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 1 (2007).

democratic engagement of the polity.” Sides et al.⁷⁵ showed that the informativeness of the attack messages for voters determine how they evaluate the campaign. The studies of Fridkin and Kenney confirmed that voters’ tolerance towards negative messages influences how attack advertising shapes their evaluations of candidates and intentions to vote. In short, like the literature on what causes a negative campaign, there is much conjecture on the impact of a negative campaign in terms of whether it enhances or reduces voter turn-out.

The second sub-set of literature I examined was on awareness and knowledge about candidates and their policies. The attained knowledge allows voters to identify candidates’ attributes, such as supporting political parties, campaign themes, policies, issues positions, and differences from other candidates. Negative messages are considered more informative than positive messages from which voters can learn policies and personalities of the candidates.⁷⁶ Negative campaigns alter voters’ impressions of political information. This process takes place in three stages: first, negative messages could activate the long-ingrained partisanship of citizens with certain political parties and incline voters toward the candidate from the affiliated party; second, information in negative campaigns may help citizens to learn about candidates for the first time as their prior knowledge extends; and third, negative information is useful as a counterfactual information for voters to re-evaluate their previous judgment about the candidate.⁷⁷ However, emotional appeals can shape how voters respond to negative messages.⁷⁸ Anger promotes political involvement, leading to a strong internal efficacy towards politics, whereas fear and sadness degrade political engagement.⁷⁹ Politicians might use these emotional appeals to get their message across and persuade voters. Emotional appeals are communication messages intentionally conveyed to elicit an emotional response from the receivers.⁸⁰ In a groundbreaking work, *The People’s Choice*, scholars acknowledge that in the U.S election candidates used propaganda techniques by inserting emotional appeals on topics that people are strongly for or against, such as the issues of democracy and communism.⁸¹ The news media also contributes to the dissemination of emotionally loaded and highly polarized messages and is entrenched in

⁷⁵ John Sides, Keena Lipsitz, and Matthew Grossmann, "Do Voters Perceive Negative Campaigns as Informative Campaigns?," *American Politics Research* 38, no. 3 (2009).

⁷⁶ Sides, Lipsitz, and Grossmann, "Do Voters Perceive Negative Campaigns as Informative Campaigns?."

⁷⁷ Kim L. Fridkin and Patrick Kenney, "The Impact of Negative Campaigning on Citizens' Actions and Attitudes," in *The SAGE Handbook of Political Communication*, ed. Holli A. Semetko and Scammell Margaret (London: Sage Publications, 2012), 177.

⁷⁸ Brader, "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions."; Weber, "Emotions, Campaigns, and Political Participation."

⁷⁹ Weber, "Emotions, Campaigns, and Political Participation."

⁸⁰ Brader, "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions."

⁸¹ Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The people's choice: How the voter makes up his mind in a presidential campaign* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948).

a “we against them” mindset.⁸² In conclusion, the nature of negative campaigning becomes important in shaping voters’ awareness that directs them when evaluating candidates.

A third sub-set of literature examines how voters evaluate the candidates, or voter choice. Candidate evaluation is influenced by perception of characters, perception of policy preferences, and of political parties supporting the candidates.⁸³ Here, the effectiveness of negative campaigning is tested by how successful it lowers the evaluation of the target. For example, Kaid and Boydston found that negative ads in newspapers successfully created more negative images of the target.⁸⁴ Roddy and Garramone⁸⁵ revealed in an experiment that the effectiveness of attack ads only applies when the messages are issue-attacks rather than character-attacks. Further, voters evaluate candidates differently when rebuttal of attack is present. Garramone found that viewers who see rebuttal advertisements would report significantly negative perceptions of the source than viewers in the non-rebuttal condition.⁸⁶ This is an example of the ‘boomerang effect’ of negative campaigning. Garramone argues that if perceived by voters as untruthful, undocumented, or unjustifiable, a strong attack on a candidate may create more negative feelings toward the source than toward the target.⁸⁷ However, a recent study shows that the boomerang effect of negative campaigning occurs when voters can see alternative candidates who are equally attractive as the attacker.⁸⁸ Stewart found that supporters of Democrat, Republican, or Independents, evaluated politicians who committed personal attacks as untrustworthy, unqualified, unlikeable, not self-confident, and immature.⁸⁹

The result of a voter’s evaluation of a candidate shapes the way the voter makes their choices. High evaluation would lead to positive likelihood of a vote for the candidate and vice versa. Campaign messages influence vote choices in several stages.⁹⁰ Voters start to learn the candidates and the issues during the campaigns, which they find useful and relevant to their thinking processes. In those processes, voters observe candidates’ qualifications, traits, issue positions, and competence as they run the campaigns. Campaigns raise awareness about information important to voters’ decision making on national issues, such as the state of the

⁸² Raffael Heiss, Christian von Sikorski, and Jörg Matthes, “Populist Twitter Posts in News Stories,” *Journalism Practice* (2019).x

⁸³ William L. Benoit, *Communication in political campaigns* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2007).

⁸⁴ Lynda Lee Kaid and John Boydston, “An experimental study of the effectiveness of negative political advertisements,” *Communication Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1987).

⁸⁵ Brian L. Roddy and Gina M. Garramone, “Appeals and strategies of negative political advertising,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 32, no. 4 (1988).

⁸⁶ Gina M. Garramone, “Effects of negative political advertising: The roles of sponsor and rebuttal,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 29, no. 2 (1985).

⁸⁷ Gina M. Garramone, “Voter Responses to Negative Political Ads,” *Journalism Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (1984): 251.

⁸⁹ Charles J. Stewart, “Voter perception of mud-slinging in political communication,” *Central States Speech Journal* 26, no. 4 (1975).

⁹⁰ Gary C. Jacobson, “How Do Campaigns Matter?,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 18, no. 1 (2015): 39.

economy. Then, the campaigns connect these pieces of information with beliefs and attitudes that voters already have about the candidates. For example, in an experiment, scholars found that political ads benefit the attacking candidates and have a stronger effect in reinforcing voters' previous political beliefs than converting them, but were also useful at persuading low-information voters.⁹¹

The characteristics of voters may impact upon the effects of negative campaigning. Kahn and Kenney⁹² found that partisans, those interested in politics, and political experts are unaffected by negative campaigning as well as mudslinging. However, those who are independent, have little interest in campaigns, and have less political knowledge become more susceptible to negative campaigns. Thinking processes also shape how voters evaluate campaign messages.⁹³ Retrospective thinking works by looking to the past on how public life has been during the leadership of a candidate in office, whereas prospective thinking occurs when voters orient their expectations towards the future and imagine how the future may be under the leadership of one candidate or the other.⁹⁴ In real life, voters may use both types of thinking and allow themselves to be influenced by the most appealing candidates' messages to them.

Fourth and finally, a much deeper yet less explored impact of negative campaigning is highlighted in the literature on polarization. Political polarization is increasing in US politics both at policy (ideological polarization) level and party level (affective polarization).⁹⁵ Political polarization occurs when subgroups of citizens hold increasing contradictory attitude towards political parties, politicians, or policy, which can stifle deliberation and collaboration among elites as well as citizens.⁹⁶ Abramowitz and Saunders found that it is those citizens who are most interested, informed, and active politically who have much more polarized political views.⁹⁷ Scholars show that this affective polarization in the US is driven by partisan group identity as commonly measured in feeling-thermometer questions.⁹⁸ In the UK it was also driven by the significant political event of Brexit that formed opinion-based group identities, such as Leaver

⁹¹ Ansolabehere and Iyengar, *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate*, 75.

⁹² Kahn and Kenney, "Do Negative Campaigns Mobilize or Suppress Turnout? Clarifying the Relationship between Negativity and Participation," 878.

⁹³ For example, see William L. Benoit, "Retrospective Versus Prospective Statements and Outcome of Presidential Elections," *Journal of Communication* 56, no. 2 (2006).

⁹⁴ Benoit, "Retrospective Versus Prospective Statements and Outcome of Presidential Elections," 334.

⁹⁵ Shanto Iyengar et al., "The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States," *Annual Review of Political Science* 22 (2019).

⁹⁶ Gordon Heltzel and Kristin Laurin, "Polarization in America: two possible futures," *Current opinion in behavioral sciences* 34 (2020).

⁹⁷ Alan I Abramowitz and Kyle L Saunders, "Is polarization a myth?," *The Journal of Politics* 70, no. 2 (2008).

⁹⁸ Iyengar et al., "The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States."

and Remainder.⁹⁹ Ansolabehere and Iyengar argue that negative advertising in the US is responsible for polarizing electorates; it alienates non-partisans, leaving the competition solely between the extreme partisans of two parties.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, partisans tend to perceive negative campaigning from or about the party they favour as less negative than nonpartisans.¹⁰¹

This section has evaluated the large body of literature on negative campaigning in a largely Western academic perspective, in the pre-digital era. The literature shows there is much conjecture around the definition, impact, and prominence of negative campaigning in Western democracies (both in the US and Europe), and much of the material is not only diverse, but at times contradictory in its findings. My aim here has not been to agree or disagree with any of these studies, but merely to highlight and conceptualize negative campaigning as a scholarly study, in order to advance my argument about the requirement for new research around negative campaigning, both for Indonesia specifically, and for the digital era more broadly, where we see more prominence of *kampanye hitam* style election campaigning. In the next section, I examine literature on the impact of digital media and negative campaigning.

1.2 Digital media and negative campaigning literature

The arrival of digital media has changed campaigning in Western democracy both in the US and Europe. The production of campaign material on the internet and social media is believed to have a deep influence on politics due to its enabling features that generate citizen involvement and interactive participation.¹⁰² This is viewed as an equalizer to the playing field in generating a flow of communication that can benefit both the elites and the electorates as well as both the weak and strong candidates.¹⁰³ It is not only changing the demography of the audience for political communication, but also the agency behind it.¹⁰⁴ Also, as I explain below, although parties and candidates stage online negative campaigning, it is the involvement of unofficial political actors that has caused the explosion of online negative campaigns in the digital era.

⁹⁹ Sara B Hobolt, Thomas J Leeper, and James Tilley, "Divided by the vote: Affective polarization in the wake of the Brexit referendum," *British Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 4 (2021).

¹⁰⁰ Ansolabehere and Iyengar, *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate*, p 10.

¹⁰¹ Martin Haselmayer, Lisa Hirsch, and Marcelo Jenny, "Love is blind. Partisanship and perception of negative campaign messages in a multiparty system," *Political Research Exchange* 2, no. 1 (2020).

¹⁰² Jimmie Manning, "Definition and Classes of Social Media," in *Encyclopedia of social media and politics*, ed. Kerric Harvey (California: Sage Publications, 2014), 1158.

¹⁰³ Danah Boyd, "Social media: A phenomenon to be analyzed," *Social Media+ Society* 1, no. 1 (2015): 1.

¹⁰⁴ Samuel C. Woolley and Philip N. Howard, "Political Communication, Computational Propaganda, and Autonomous Agents: Introduction," *International Journal of Communication* 10 (2016).

Digital media undoubtedly drives the rising use of negative campaigning in the twenty-first century. The internet makes waging negative campaigning easier and faster.¹⁰⁵ Digital media allows for anonymity, which saves users from possible backlash or recriminations. Negative campaigning now occurs online in the forms of fake news, hoaxes, misinformation, and disinformation through highly sophisticated tools, such as micro-targeting, computational propaganda,¹⁰⁶ and 'lie machines.'¹⁰⁷ Candidates and parties also hire consultants to achieve successful online campaigns by gathering data before and during the campaigns, designing content and applications, organizing interactions, and running online political ads based on microtargeting. Scholars argue that an ever-increasing use of micro-targeting in running political campaigns allows parties and candidates to identify the individual voters that are most likely to be persuaded and to match their campaign messages to meet the specific interests and vulnerabilities of the target voters.¹⁰⁸ Using the same approach enhanced by automation and political bots, electoral campaigns in some parts of the world manipulate public opinion and behavior on the internet and in social networks through computational propaganda with the hope to swing votes, defame, or intimidate the opposition.¹⁰⁹ In the US, professionals from social media companies have collaborated in the official campaigns of candidates as digital consultants to design strategy, produce content, and execute the campaigns.¹¹⁰

Before social media became popular tools for election campaigning, candidates and parties relied on websites and blogs for attacking opponents online. For instance, Schweitzer found in multiple German elections that parties' websites contained far more attacks (56.8%) than self-promotions in their 1,280 news releases posted online; challengers were more negative than incumbents, and second-rank politicians were sources of attack rather than candidates to avoid backlash.¹¹¹ Also, Wicks et al. found in the 2008 US presidential election that 36% of posts on official campaign blogs (My.BarakObama.com and JohnMcCain.com), party blogs (Democrats.org and GOP.com), and six nonaligned blogs were categorized as attack out of a total of 1,699 posts. The findings echo conventional belief that Republican and trailing candidate

¹⁰⁵ Bruce Allen Bimber and Richard Davis, *Campaigning online: The Internet in US elections* (New York: Oxford University Press on Demand, 2003), 99.

¹⁰⁶ Samuel C Woolley and Philip N Howard, *Computational propaganda: Political parties, politicians, and political manipulation on social media* (Oxford University Press, 2018).;

¹⁰⁷ Philip N. Howard, *Lie machines: How to save democracy from troll armies, deceitful robots, junk news operations, and political operatives* (Michigan: Yale University Press, 2020).

¹⁰⁸ F. J. Z. Borgesius et al., "Online Political Microtargeting: Promises and Threats for Democracy," *Utrecht Law Review* 14, no. 1 (2018).

¹⁰⁹ Samuel C. Woolley and Philip N. Howard, *Automation, Algorithms, and Politics| Political Communication, Computational Propaganda, and Autonomous Agents — Introduction*, vol. 10, 2016, (2016). <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/6298/1809>.

¹¹⁰ Kreiss and McGregor, "Technology Firms Shape Political Communication: The Work of Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter, and Google With Campaigns During the 2016 U.S. Presidential Cycle."

¹¹¹ Eva Johanna Schweitzer, "Global Patterns of Virtual Mudslinging? The Use of Attacks on German Party Websites in State, National and European Parliamentary Elections," *German Politics* 19, no. 2 (2010).

attacked far more frequently on their posts.¹¹² Although websites and blogs offer some levels of interactivity in the flow of electoral communication, nothing is equivalent to the huge differences that social media has to offer in terms of frequency, actor, participation, and method of negative campaigning with innovative technologies and strategies.

Several key literatures examine negative campaigning in the form of 'computational propaganda.' Computational propaganda, is defined as "the assemblage of social media platforms, autonomous agents, and big data tasked with the manipulation of public opinion," and has been adopted as a political tool during elections and beyond worldwide.¹¹³ Leading scholars in this field, Woolley and Guilbeault, found in the 2016 US election that, among other digital tools, political bots¹¹⁴ had been a key technology used to shift the flow of information by infiltrating the networks of conversations on Twitter. This strategy was driven by digital strategists, campaign officials, consultants, and supporters of candidates, and they produced interactive advertisements, live-streamed videos, memes, and personalized messages. They found that the strategy was not only to boost turnout, but also to "sow confusion, to give false impression of online support, to attack and defame the opposition, and to spread illegitimate news reports."¹¹⁵ Fake accounts, hashtags, automation, and bots were assembled to achieve the goals. This phenomenon shows how political propaganda during elections is not controlled by elites anymore, but democratized to supporters of candidates. They found that Twitter was used to steal the role of agenda-setting and trigger a bandwagon effect which, for example, was well executed by the campaigns of Donald Trump, leading to his unexpected victory.

A striking production of computational-based negative campaigning is fake news. Allcott and Gentzkow found that in the 2016 US election, fake news was widely shared and heavily tilted in favour of Donald Trump. There were at least 115 pro-Trump fake stories shared 30 million times on Facebook, and 41 pro-Clinton fake stories shared 7.6 million times.¹¹⁶ And the single most shared pro-Trump fake news for three months leading up to the election was a publication of an article by ETF News (endingthefed.com) stating that the Pope endorsed Trump, where it was

¹¹² Robert H. Wicks et al., "Tracking the Blogs: An Evaluation of Attacks, Acclaims, and Rebuttals Presented on Political Blogs During the 2008 Presidential Election," *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 6 (2011).

¹¹³ Woolley and Howard, *Computational propaganda: Political parties, politicians, and political manipulation on social media*.

¹¹⁴ Political bots are "the algorithms that operate over social media, written to learn from and mimic real people so as to manipulate public opinion across a diverse range of social media and device networks." Woolley and Howard, *Automation, Algorithms, and Politics* | *Political Communication, Computational Propaganda, and Autonomous Agents — Introduction*, 10.

¹¹⁵ Samuel C Woolley and Douglas Guilbeault, "United States: Manufacturing Consensus Online," in *Computational Propaganda. Political Parties, Politicians, and Political Manipulation on Social Media*, ed. Samuel C Woolley and Philip N Howard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), p 187.

¹¹⁶ Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow, "Social media and fake news in the 2016 election," *Journal of economic perspectives* 31, no. 2 (2017).

actually a fabricated story.¹¹⁷ Bradshaw et al. also found that there are far more polarizing and conspiracy 'junk news,' "which refers to sources that deliberately publish misleading, deceptive, or incorrect information packaged as real news", shared on Twitter than professional news outlets in the 2016 US election, which could have seriously affected undecided voters looking for information about the candidates.¹¹⁸ Fake news is an influential form of negative campaigning that is shared rapidly online and difficult to identify as false information by the time it goes viral.

The term fake news quickly became a buzzword, particularly with the rise of Donald Trump in the US in 2016. Scholars have found that "fake news was both widely shared and heavily tilted in favour of Donald Trump."¹¹⁹ The Republican candidate established a new mechanic of electoral campaign in the US democracy regardless of its controversy over his strategy of using social media, particularly Twitter, with constant attention grabbing, prolific, insulting, and threatening tweets to attack opponents or counter an attack. *The New York Times* reported that Trump mastered Twitter by bringing it into the center of his campaign in a way that was "unleashing and redefining its power as a tool of political promotion, distraction, score-settling and attack."¹²⁰ In this way Trump was able to drive news coverage of him throughout the campaigns. Using a type of hybrid campaign, scholars concluded that "Trump's efforts to court media attention, through staged events, unscheduled interactions, and social media activity, were largely successful,"¹²¹ which brought him victory.

Given the complexity of the recent computational propaganda during elections, Howard captures the new trend with the concept of the "lie machine", which is "a system of people and technologies that distribute false messages in the service of a political agenda,"¹²² to explain how political life has been dominated by automated political lies. Howard explains that the lie machine works based on three elements: first, a producer of the lies that serve an ideology or political interest of elites; second, a distributor of lies, which is the algorithm of social media for spreading contents; and third, a marketer of political lies, such as consulting firms, lobbyists or hired operatives. Howard took examples from the 2016 UK referendum, where bold lies about

¹¹⁷ Cailin O'Connor and James Owen Weatherall, *The misinformation age: How false beliefs spread* (USA: Yale University Press, 2019).

¹¹⁸ Samantha Bradshaw et al., "Sourcing and Automation of Political News and Information over Social Media in the United States, 2016-2018," *Political Communication* 37, no. 2 (2020).

¹¹⁹ Allcott and Gentzkow, "Social media and fake news in the 2016 election."

¹²⁰ Michael Barbaro, "Pithy, Mean and Powerful: How Donald Trump Mastered Twitter for 2016," *New York Times (Online)* (New York) 2015.

¹²¹ Chris Wells et al., "How Trump Drove Coverage to the Nomination: Hybrid Media Campaigning," *Political Communication* 33, no. 4 (2016).

¹²² Howard, *Lie machines: How to save democracy from troll armies, deceitful robots, junk news operations, and political operatives*.

costs and benefits joining the EU circulated widely, the negative campaign of #pizzagate against Hillary Clinton in 2016, and the rise of populist leaders in Brazil, Philippines, Germany, and Canada. All these employed the elements of the lie machine, and microtargeting and redlining were highly used. The ultimate goal of the lie machines is, Howard argues, to control the most valuable asset in democracy, which is our attention. It prevents voters from making informed decisions on election day. Recently, Woolley made a compelling account on expanding development of this phenomena as 'digital propaganda.' In his research summary article resulting from his team's findings, he shows three recurring trends on the internet-spin campaigns or online influencer worldwide. First, there is a shift from 'organic' to 'semi-organic' strategies, where producers of online false information not only entirely use bots, but also pay human labor to trick bot detection and create credibility. Second, social media influencers are hired to boost performance from social media marketing firms. Third, the battleground is expanding to include the encrypted-messaging applications, where friends, family, and interest-based communities communicate thus making disinformation hard to detect.¹²³

Twitter and Facebook seem to be two most commonly used platforms by candidates and parties to stage negative campaigns online. For instance, Petkevic and Nai found in the 2018 US Senate elections that female candidates were less likely to attack on character but more on policy issues than men. However, in contrast to conventional wisdom, they showed that competitive races were less likely to see negative tweets and the later tweets are less negative too leading up to voting day.¹²⁴ Although containing limitations, this study, which analyzed 16,000 tweets of 63 senate candidates, was pioneering in automatically detecting the presence of attacking messages in tweets using the computational method of a multilayer perceptron neural network. Beyond the US elections, Joathan found in the 2014 Brazilian presidential election that 20.2% of the posts on Facebook from two major candidates (Dilma Rousseff and Aécio Neves) were attacking , from a total of 3,907 posts. Also, the frequency of negative posts jumped towards the final weeks of campaigning. Contrary to the literature, incumbent president Dilma campaigns used a higher number of attacking posts than Aécio by combining the elements of the posts, such as photos or videos, links, and statements.¹²⁵ After a runoff, Dilma won re-election with 51.6% of the votes.¹²⁶

¹²³ S Woolley, "Digital Propaganda: The Power of Influencers," *Journal of Democracy* 33, no. 3 (2022).

¹²⁴ Vladislav Petkevic and Alessandro Nai, "Political Attacks in 280 Characters or Less: A New Tool for the Automated Classification of Campaign Negativity on Social Media," *American Politics Research* 50, no. 3 (2022).

¹²⁵ Ícaro Joathan, "Negative campaign in the Brazilian presidential race: an analysis of the attacks posted on Facebook by the main candidates," *Contemporary Social Science* 14, no. 1 (2019).

¹²⁶ "Brazil elections: Dilma Rousseff promises reform after poll win," BBC, 2014, accessed 12 August, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-29782073>.

Digital media enables not only an interactive communication between politicians and voters, but also a horizontal communication among voters.¹²⁷ Voters can directly comment and involve themselves in the campaigns through redistributing, endorsing, volunteering, donating, or persuading others in their online networks, and thanks to the affordances of digital media, campaign engagement is increasing. Digital media empowers citizens to participate in campaigns as political actors¹²⁸ and has facilitated the emergence of “citizen-initiated campaigns”¹²⁹ and the “citizen marketers,” who are willing to promote candidates through official and unofficial channels.¹³⁰ Citizen-initiated campaigning is understood as a campaigning practice where “supporters who are not necessarily members make use of online tools created by the party or candidate team to campaign both online and offline on its behalf”.¹³¹ Citizen-based campaigns could contribute to the victory of a candidate through their functions of community building, resource generation, external mobilization, and message production. However, although candidates have staged massive campaigns on social media, scholars have argued it is still carried out in a “controlled interactivity”¹³² in the extent to which voters receive consistent campaign messages from the candidate.

Social media also allows ordinary citizens to be independent campaigners in waging attacks. For example, Hosch-Dayican et al. found that Twitter enabled citizens to attack parties and politicians in tweets during the 2012 Dutch parliamentary election. They showed that citizens staged more negative campaigning than candidates through tweets and retweets criticizing certain party policies, sharing negative news reporting about parties or leaders, reacting to leaders’ statements over particular issues on TV interviews or debates, and expressing frustration towards political elites.¹³³ Falasca et al. showed that users of Facebook became an active ‘digital political labour’ by distributing through sharing and liking the political ads of parties and exerting the power of user-generated content in criticizing or giving negative comments to parties’ campaign messages on Facebook in the 2014 Swedish election.¹³⁴ Another key participatory form of negative campaigning online is the ‘comment’ on social media. For example, in the 2013 Austrian national election campaign, Russmann found that citizens posted

¹²⁷ J. Stromer-Galley, “On-line interaction and why candidates avoid it,” *Journal of Communication* 50, no. 4 (2000).

¹²⁸ Alice Mattoni and Diego Ceccobelli, “Comparing hybrid media systems in the digital age: A theoretical framework for analysis,” *European Journal of Communication* 33, no. 5 (2018).

¹²⁹ Rachel K. Gibson, “Party change, social media and the rise of ‘citizen-initiated’ campaigning,” *Party Politics* 21, no. 2 (2013).

¹³⁰ Joel Penney, “Social Media and Citizen Participation in “Official” and “Unofficial” Electoral Promotion: A Structural Analysis of the 2016 Bernie Sanders Digital Campaign,” *Journal of Communication* 67, no. 3 (2017).

¹³¹ Gibson, “Party change, social media and the rise of ‘citizen-initiated’ campaigning,” 187.

¹³² Stromer-Galley, *Presidential campaigning in the Internet age*.

¹³³ Bengü Hosch-Dayican et al., “How Do Online Citizens Persuade Fellow Voters? Using Twitter During the 2012 Dutch Parliamentary Election Campaign,” *Social Science Computer Review* 34, no. 2 (2016).

¹³⁴ Kajsa Falasca, Mikolaj Dymek, and Christina Grandien, “Social media election campaigning: who is working for whom? A conceptual exploration of digital political labour,” *Contemporary Social Science* 14, no. 1 (2017).

negative comments on the seven parties' official Facebook pages questioning the qualifications of parties and politicians to govern and their leadership abilities. Out of 2,584 comments, 1,046 contained negative expressions. Interestingly, there were hardly any attacks on politicians—the target of the Facebook users was the party, but without mentioning any specific party. Also, parties did not respond to the negative comments.¹³⁵ The focus of attacks on the party rather than the politician might be influenced by the nature of the Austrian election as party-driven politics, and the absence of responses from the party can be explained by it being a common nuance of controlled interactivity of online party behavior in general.

The flip side of this social media-users based campaign is that it is hard to control the direction and meaning of the message being shared. With the rise of populist politicians and parties in Western democracy electoral campaigns have seen an increase in the use of psychometric profiling, dark ads, bots, trolls, and fake news, indicating an intrusive and manipulative campaign communication or subversive campaigning, as opposed to scientific campaigning.¹³⁶

Although studies on the production of negative campaigns on digital media have been growing, investigation of its effects on voters is still rare. An initial study in the US election found that negative campaigning on websites was more damaging when attack messages were present without being mixed with other messages, but the intention to vote was best predicted by the positive messages rather than by attack messages. Also, it showed that sponsorship of negative campaigns does not suffer from the boomerang effect, and attack messages on the web were perceived as more credible if sponsored by independent organizations.¹³⁷ Rossini et al. found that during the 2016 US election, primaries candidates' propensity to use attack messages was driven by their position in the opinion polls. Candidates with good polling positions were more likely to attack opponents based on personal traits.¹³⁸

This section has shown how negative campaigning is employed by parties and candidates in Western democracy in the digital era. The still growing literature has shown that digital media accelerates the prevalence of negative campaigning because it allows multiple actors (including ordinary people) to be involved in the sometimes sophisticated mechanics of slander, and it is

¹³⁵ Uta Russmann, "Going Negative on Facebook: Negative User Expressions and Political Parties' Reactions in the 2013 Austrian National Election Campaign," *International Journal of Communication* 12 (2018).

¹³⁶ Andrea Roemmele and Rachel Gibson, "Scientific and subversive: The two faces of the fourth era of political campaigning," *New Media & Society* 22, no. 4 (2020).

¹³⁷ H. Denis Wu and Nicole S. Dahmen, "Web Sponsorship and Campaign Effects: Assessing the Difference Between Positive and Negative Web Sites," *Journal of Political Marketing* 9, no. 4 (2010).

¹³⁸ Patrícia Rossini et al., "Social Media, Opinion Polls, and the Use of Persuasive Messages During the 2016 US Election Primaries," *Social Media + Society* 4, no. 3 (2018).

a less risky tool for political attacks thanks to anonymity and automation. The involvement of citizens in the campaigns by posting, liking, sharing, tweeting, retweeting, commenting, and others, is an innovation in negative campaigning inherent in the digital era. Also, the sources of negative campaigning against a candidate need not necessarily come from the electoral district or even the country of the election alone, but also from all over the world in various capacities, sometimes referred to as foreign intervention'. The strategy in online negative campaigning involves new skills in the political campaign industry from just a simple bot to more sophisticated computational propaganda to even more advanced practices, defined, as mentioned, by Bradshaw as the lie machine. However, much of this literature remains highly Western-centric. As digital media spreads globally, negative campaigning is adopted in countries outside of the West in different ways and through different actors. In the following section, I discuss negative campaigning in Indonesia's politics and elections, arguing that my thesis is one of the first large studies to understand this new phenomenon of digitally-based negative campaigning.

1.3 Negative campaigning and digital political communication

Election campaigning is a subfield of political communication along with other subfields such as political marketing, political rhetoric and persuasion, and media effects which was well developed themes under the conventional media era. Departing from classical one way conception of political communication by Harold Lasswell ("Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect"), recent scholars define political communication differently such as "a complex, communicative activity in which language and symbols, employed by leaders, media, citizens, and citizen groups, exert a multitude of effects on individuals and society, as well as on outcomes that bear on the public policy of a nation, state, or community."¹³⁹ Political communication sees digital era as a technological shift which opens new possibilities both for audience and politicians alike thanks to the enabling features of the digital media like social media platforms and messaging applications. The digital transformation has a profound impact on political communication by lowering access barrier for actors to become publicly visible and reconfiguring vertical flows of information into horizontal communication networks.¹⁴⁰

However, the critical approach towards negative campaigning taken by this thesis is not merely based on technological determinism, but also other factors as I have stated previously showing

¹³⁹ Perloff, *The dynamics of political communication: Media and politics in a digital age*.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Häussler, "Civil society, the media and the Internet: changing roles and challenging authorities in digital political communication ecologies," *Information, Communication & Society* 24, no. 9 (2021).

that political communication never take place in a vacuum but always in relations with social, cultural, and political contexts. Here, digital technology refers to “technology that relies on the use of microprocessors; hence, computers and applications that are dependent on computers such as the Internet, as well as other devices such as video cameras, and mobile devices such as phones and personal-digital assistants. Digital technology enables the process of digitization where information is stored, transmitted or forwarded in digital format, it is converted into numbers—at the most basic machine-level as “zeroes and ones.”¹⁴¹ This digital technology can be categorized in four groups based on its function: producing, distributing, storing, and displaying information.¹⁴² In short, digital technology is all technology that we use for various purposes operated with computer system. On the other hand, digital media is media technology that we use to communicate or to consume information. Digital media are media whose content is ‘represented’ in machine-readable form or whose methods of production and dissemination involve information technologies of various kinds.¹⁴³ The era of digital media has four basic components: digitization (the encoding of information into bits (binary digits), computing (when the content is treated as data by computer processes), microprocessors (small and powerful devices for performing a wide array of computer processes), and digital networking (transmission of digitized information among nodes that are themselves computers).¹⁴⁴ In the digital world, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, among others, played a part in political campaign allowing numerous graphics, videos, and textual messages shared online. In the UK for instance sees two emerging trends of digital political campaigning as a new normal: Facebook advertising with big data and micro-targeting capacity, and satellite campaign—the increased visibility of digital infrastructure offered by non-party organisations to encourage voting and campaigning.¹⁴⁵

This thesis relies on the theoretical concept of digital political communication. Digital political communication has not been sufficiently defined in the literature, but in this thesis, it is meant as the use of digital technologies and platforms, such as social media, websites, and messaging application, to share political messages, engage with audiences, and influence public opinion for political goals. The adoption of digital media in political communications has enabled new

¹⁴¹ Darren Lee Pullen, "Back to Basics: Electronic Collaboration in the Education Sector," in *Handbook of Research on Electronic Collaboration and Organizational Synergy*, ed. Janet Salmons and Lynn Wilson (Hershey, PA, USA: IGI Global, 2009).

¹⁴² John Vernon Pavlik, *New media technology: Cultural and commercial perspectives* (Allyn & Bacon: Massachusetts, 1998).

¹⁴³ John A. Bateman, "What are digital media?," *Discourse, Context & Media* 41 (2021).

¹⁴⁴ Ronald E. Rice, Simeon J. Yates, and Jordana Blejmar, "Introduction to the Oxford Handbook of Digital Technology and Society: Terms, Domains, and Themes," in *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Technology and Society*, ed. Simeon J. Yates and Ronald E. Rice (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

¹⁴⁵ Katharine Dommett and Luke Temple, "Digital campaigning: The rise of Facebook and satellite campaigns," *Parliamentary Affairs* 71 (2018).

politician participations and campaign communication and empowered both politicians and citizens at certain degree. Digital political communications have shifted gradually from the first wave in the 1990s, featured with websites that acted as repositories of one-way, asymmetrical information, with e-mail as a fundamental form of interaction to second wave from 2004 with the birth of Facebook and later Twitter to third wave marked by the unprecedented leverage of social media for the victory of former US President Barack Obama's campaign through intensive use of social networks, micro-segmentation, and big data to the last wave started in 2016, with the pronounced emergence of artificial intelligence and astroturfing in the pro-Brexit campaign. The fourth wave is characterized by (a) digital platforms as political actors involved in all phases of communication; (b) the intensive use of artificial intelligence and big data in all phases but specially in election campaigns; (c) the validation of lies as a political strategy (among other fake news and post-truth phenomena); (d) the combination of hyperlocal and supranational elements; (e) uncritical technological determinism; (f) the search for engagement with audiences and co-production processes and (g) the three trends that threaten democracy: polarisation, echo chambers and bubble filters.¹⁴⁶ Other scholar takes on this nexus of political communication and digital media into other four phases with overlapping characteristic with the above namely the age of innocence, the age of disillusionment, the golden age of social networks, and conquest of cyberspace. The final phase is characterized by politicians' use of their personal social media accounts as their main arena for political communication, the establishment media comes under relentless attack and becomes the target of de-legitimization campaigns, campaign managers and campaign specialists make more sophisticated uses of big data and other digital tools and platforms to shape public opinion, and the intentional weakening of the establishment press accompanied by a rejection to reliable, objective, and neutral information.¹⁴⁷ At the current phase, political actors not only intend to mould public opinion but also to create cognitive frames—mental structures through which one views the world allows one to see only what the frame makes visible.¹⁴⁸

Digital political communication is dominated by visual political messages. These visual political messages have diverse important functions such as they serve as arguments, have an agenda setting function, dramatize policy, aid in emotional appeals, build the candidate's image, create

¹⁴⁶ Berta García-Orosa, "Digital Political Communication: Hybrid Intelligence, Algorithms, Automation and Disinformation in the Fourth Wave," *Digital Political Communication Strategies* (2021).

¹⁴⁷ Vered Elishar-Malka, Yaron Ariel, and Gabriel Weimann, "Rethinking political communication in the digital sphere," *The Journal of International Communication* 26, no. 2 (2020).

¹⁴⁸ García-Orosa, "Digital Political Communication: Hybrid Intelligence, Algorithms, Automation and Disinformation in the Fourth Wave."

identification, connect to societal symbols, transport the audience, and also add ambiguity.¹⁴⁹ Digital political communication provides the fertile ground for digital negative campaigning with the speed and ease of access. In the context of election campaign, the ultimate goal of communicator is to influence the perception, attitude, and behaviour of voters to their favours with persuasive techniques such as digital propaganda in recent years. As I will explain later (see Chapter 4), propaganda model of political communication in this thesis is based on computational propaganda model developed by Samuel Woolley and Philip Howard. Although related to the root theory of propaganda developed by Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (PM), the current interpretation of propaganda model by Christian Fuchs¹⁵⁰ is more relevant to investigation of news media system on the online ecosystem from political-economic perspective rather than on electoral campaign communication by parties and candidates. Research found that digital political campaign has positive impact on electoral success especially when employed by the network model of digital campaigning.¹⁵¹ Various digital campaign activities, such as microtargeting, use of personal data, personality-tailored messages, AI-generated messages, and videos contribute to increasing the probability of risks for individual, political, and organizational actors involved in the process of deciding, producing, disseminating, or consuming the digital political message.¹⁵²

In recent years, scholars have observed the emergence of subversive political communication and the strategies of lies where digital platforms and algorithms become more than just intermediaries and increasingly powerful political actors. The subversive political communication aims to demobilize the electorate by disseminating disinformation or fake news, among others. Digital platforms and algorithms have become powerful political actors rather than just mere intermediaries. Political influence of automation has the power to create artificial public opinion and make remote voices become central.¹⁵³ Regardless of the types of campaigns, positive or negative ones, digital campaigning has a potential harm associated with microtargeting which is the potential to undermine meaningful democratic deliberation.¹⁵⁴ Digital political campaigning

¹⁴⁹ Dan Schill, "The Visual Image and the Political Image: A Review of Visual Communication Research in the Field of Political Communication," *Review of Communication* 12, no. 2 (2012).

¹⁵⁰ Christian Fuchs, "Propaganda 2.0 : Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model in the Age of the Internet, Big Data and Social Media," in *The Propaganda Model Today*, ed. Joan Pedro-Carañana, Daniel Broudy, and Jeffery Klaehn (London: University of Westminster Press, 2018).

¹⁵¹ Rachel Gibson et al., "Does digital campaigning matter, and if so, how? Testing a broadcast versus network effects model of candidates Twitter use," *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*.

¹⁵² Borz and De Francesco, "Digital political campaigning: contemporary challenges and regulation."

¹⁵³ García-Orosa, "Digital Political Communication: Hybrid Intelligence, Algorithms, Automation and Disinformation in the Fourth Wave.," Roemmele and Gibson, "Scientific and subversive: The two faces of the fourth era of political campaigning.," Ross Tapsell, "Social Media and Elections in Southeast Asia: The Emergence of Subversive, Underground Campaigning," *Asian Studies Review* 45, no. 1 (2021).

¹⁵⁴ Michael Harker, "Political advertising revisited: digital campaigning and protecting democratic discourse," *Legal Studies* 40, no. 1 (2020).

poses negative risks from distorted debates, inequality of participation in political discussions, polarization, lack of public scrutiny, lack of privacy, transparency, manipulation, disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation.¹⁵⁵ The current development of AI might cause problem to the legitimacy of digital political communication which later needs further study.

1.4 Negative campaigning in the Indonesian context

Negative campaigning has a long history in Indonesia. Indonesia's first free and fair elections were held in 1955, and negative campaigning was staged by political parties to attack other parties on the issues of cabinet policy, the role of Islam in the state, religious sentiments, and much more (see Chapter 2).¹⁵⁶ However, most of the literature on negative campaigning in Indonesia begins in the *reformasi* period from 1998 forwards. Negative campaigning developed as a reflection of the failure of political party ideologies rather than as legitimate checks and balances around policy in a democratic context. Indonesian scholars have argued that cartel politics discourages the losing parties and candidates from pursuing policy ideals and standing outside of power as an opposition, because joining the government brings more advantage than staying outside of power,¹⁵⁷ such as having ministerial posts, access to financial resources, and frequent publicity. Therefore, party ideology is often malleable, and campaigning is focused on individual leaders rather than policies, meaning it is easier to attack the individual rather than the policy. Calise has described this as a “personal party” which means the party depends on the combination of charismatic and patrimonial resources rather than a collective and party structure.¹⁵⁸ Also, political parties in Indonesia show a tendency towards being personalistic parties because “its *only* rationale is to provide a vehicle for the leader to win an election and exercise power.”¹⁵⁹ For these parties, electoral appeals are based on the personal charisma of the candidates, rather than policy. Consequently, electoral campaigning becomes so much centred around the personality of the candidates—making personalised negative campaigns a common practice, and potentially more effective in influencing votes.

Conversely, some scholars have demonstrated that the positions of Indonesian political parties are clustered close to each other except on the role of religion in politics, which indicates an

¹⁵⁵ Borz and De Francesco, “Digital political campaigning: contemporary challenges and regulation.”

¹⁵⁶ Herbert Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*, Interim Reports Series. Modern Indonesia Project, (New York: Cornell University, 1971).

¹⁵⁷ Kuskridho Ambardi, *Mengungkap politik kartel* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2009).

¹⁵⁸ Mauro Calise, “The personal party: an analytical framework,” *Italian Political Science Review/Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* 45, no. 3 (2015).

¹⁵⁹ Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, “Species of political parties: A new typology,” *Party politics* 9, no. 2 (2003).

ideological convergence of political parties in Indonesia.¹⁶⁰ Consequently, religion-related issues are leading narratives mobilized by campaigns rather than policy debates to differentiate a party or a candidate from opponents. And religion leads to emotive campaigns that are often about one's religious piety.

As a result, scholars have tended to argue that negative campaigning has grown with each election in Indonesia's democracy since 1999, which mainly used personal and religious rather than policy attacks. The introduction of the direct election system has been a foundational factor to embracing negative campaigning in Indonesia.¹⁶¹ At the first direct election in 2004, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was accused of being a Catholic and Hamzah Haz was criticized for practicing polygamy.¹⁶² Furthermore in 2009, there were some examples of negative campaigning, where vice presidential candidate Boediono was criticized as a proponent of neo-liberalism and his wife targeted in the campaign ads for being a Christian.¹⁶³ In the 2014 presidential election, Indonesia saw the significant growth of uncivil negative campaigning in the reform era, where Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla competed against Prabowo Subianto and Hatta Rajasa. Joko Widodo was a constant target of smear campaigns through online and offline attacks accusing him of not being a pious Muslim, a phenomenon which has seen a growth in scholarly literature on these developments.¹⁶⁴

In the 2014 election, negative campaigns tended to come from 'shadowy campaigners' rather than from the candidates themselves.¹⁶⁵ Mietzner observed that campaign advisers and success teams confidentially developed tactics to attack opponents by spreading rumors and allegations through printed campaign material.¹⁶⁶ The smear campaigns in a tabloid against Jokowi that attracted the most public attention accused him of being a bad Muslim, a puppet president, and supported by Chinese financiers.¹⁶⁷ In the meantime, much of the attacks against

¹⁶⁰ Edward Aspinall et al., "Mapping the Indonesian political spectrum," *New Mandala*, 14 July, 2018, <https://www.newmandala.org/mapping-indonesian-political-spectrum/>.

¹⁶¹ The very first election in *reformasi* era was held on 7 June 1999 contested by 48 political parties but only to elect members of MPR, DPR, and DPRD. From there, members of MPR would elect President and vice President based on majority vote.

¹⁶² GATRA, "Laporan Utama: Tuduhan Miring Calon Presiden," *GATRA*, 12 Juni 2004.

¹⁶³ Anas Urbaningrum, *Revolusi Sunyi: Mengapa Partai Demokrat dan SBY Menang Pemilu 2009?* (Jakarta: Teraju, 2010), 266-67.

¹⁶⁴ For examples Muningsari Sri Saraswati, "The Political Campaign Industry and the Rise of Disinformation in Indonesia," in *From Grassroots Activism to Disinformation: Social Media Trends in Southeast Asia*, ed. Aim Sinpeng and Ross Tapsell (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2021); Adam Tyson and Budi Purnomo, "President Jokowi and the 2014 Obor Rakyat controversy in Indonesia," *Critical Asian Studies* 49, no. 1 (2017); Muningsari Sri Saraswati, "The Political Campaign Industry and the Rise of Disinformation in Indonesia," in *From Grassroots Activism to Disinformation: Social Media Trends in Southeast Asia*, ed. Aim Sinpeng and Ross Tapsell (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2021); Edward Aspinall, "Oligarchic Populism: Prabowo Subianto's Challenge to Indonesian Democracy," *Indonesia* 99, no. 1 (2015); Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesian Politics in 2014: Democracy's Close Call," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 50, no. 3 (2014).

¹⁶⁵ Marcus Mietzner, "How Jokowi Won and Democracy Survived," *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 4 (2014).

¹⁶⁶ Marcus Mietzner, "Jokowi: Rise of a polite populist," *Inside Indonesia*, 5 April, 2014, <https://www.insideindonesia.org/jokowi-rise-of-a-polite-populist>.

¹⁶⁷ Tyson and Purnomo, "President Jokowi and the 2014 Obor Rakyat controversy in Indonesia."

Prabowo Subianto focused on the issue of the kidnapping of activists back in 1997/1998.¹⁶⁸ Although Prabowo constantly attacked in his speech and during televised debates, it was mainly directed at the elites, corrupt politicians, and foreign actors who, to him, had stolen the wealth of the country,¹⁶⁹ implying a populist electoral communication strategy.

After the introduction of a direct election system, a further key factor to the recent growth of negative campaigning in Indonesia has been the arrival of the internet and social media. The rapid adoption of the internet in Indonesia, particularly among the youth, which constitutes a significant percentage of eligible voters, has urged candidates to take online campaigning seriously. In 2018, according to APJII, 64.8% of the 264.16 million population had access to the internet. The data shows that Facebook is the most visited social media followed by Instagram and YouTube.¹⁷⁰ In 2020, Indonesian internet users increased significantly to 73.7% of the total population with Facebook and Instagram still the most used social media and WhatsApp for messaging.¹⁷¹ The growth of the internet and social media users has led to a practice of more “citizen-initiated campaigning.”¹⁷² Volunteering became a common phenomenon during elections in Indonesia because social media gave space for ordinary citizens to get information through the new medium and to participate accordingly with different activities. This has seen a growth in the literature on social media campaigning in Indonesia.

In a system with a highly politicized traditional media, in Indonesia, social media campaigning was seen as a timely needed alternative that would level out the playing field for newcomer politicians. For instance, challengers in the 2012 Jakarta election, Joko Widodo and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, used participatory political marketing for positive campaigning by spreading their good track records online for personal branding and supported by voluntary-campaigners.¹⁷³ Tapsell argued that social media that allowed for participatory forms of media engagement to challenge oligarchs’ influence in electoral campaigning made Jokowi a phenomena in Indonesian politics, moving from being a local to a nationally prominent figure.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ Mietzner, “How Jokowi Won and Democracy Survived.”

¹⁶⁹ Edward Aspinall, *Indonesia’s democracy is in danger* (New Mandala, 17 Juni, 2014). newmandala.org/indonesias-democracy-is-in-danger/.

¹⁷⁰ APJII, *Penetrasi dan Profil Perilaku Pengguna Internet Indonesia* (Indonesia Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), 2018), Obtained by email from here: <https://apjii.or.id/survei2018s/kirimlink>.

¹⁷¹ *LAPORAN SURVEI INTERNET APJII 2019 – 2020 (Q2)*, Indonesia Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) (2020), <https://apjii.or.id/survei2019x>.

¹⁷² Citizen-initiated campaign is “a practice defined here as one in which digitally registered supporters who are not necessarily members make use of online tools created by the party or candidate team to campaign both online and offline on its behalf.” Gibson, “Party change, social media and the rise of ‘citizen-initiated’ campaigning,” 187.

¹⁷³ Nyarwi Ahmad and Ioan-Lucian Popa, “The social media usage and the transformation of political marketing and campaigning of the emerging democracy in Indonesia,” in *Social Media in Politics* (Springer, 2014).

¹⁷⁴ Ross Tapsell, “Indonesia’s Media Oligarchy and the ‘Jokowi Phenomenon’,” *Indonesia*, no. 99 (2015).

However, current studies have argued that the celebratory moment for grassroots campaigning in Indonesia has been overshadowed by the rampant dissemination of disinformation in the online public sphere,¹⁷⁵ signalling an emergence of black campaigning in the digital era.

Tyson and Purnomo were one of the first scholars to examine the term “black campaign” (*kampanye hitam*) to refer to attacks in 2014 “that targeted Jokowi’s business and political networks and questioned his religious convictions..., based largely on rumor and conjecture.” They also used the term “a rumor-driven smear campaign,” referring to articles that attacked Jokowi and his Christian and Chinese-Indonesian backers in the tabloid *Obor Rakyat*.¹⁷⁶ Saraswati claimed the terms of negative campaigning and black campaigning as regular campaign narrative-making strategies on social media but without contrasting the two with examples. She defined negative campaigning as “the production and distribution of campaign narratives that highlighted the candidate’s political opponent(s)’s professional flaws.” Black campaigning refers to “the creation of narratives of the candidate’s political opponent(s)’s professional and personal life, much of which is untrue.”¹⁷⁷ More recently, Tapsell has argued that social media campaigning gives rise to subversive and underground campaigning in Indonesia that attacks political opponents with disinformation online.¹⁷⁸ He argued that one factor that drove the current subversive digital campaigning into insidious discourse was the absence of rules on online campaign spending, social media, and on PR professionals that constitute the electoral campaign industry.¹⁷⁹

In the digital era, negative campaigning in Indonesia is changing. It is reflected not only in the production (actors, narratives, strategies, and media) but also in the perceptions of politicians about negative campaigning itself. Disagreement on the form and use of negative campaigning in Indonesia among politicians and the public is intense. For example, the chairperson of an opposition party, PKS, Sohibul Imam urged its members to campaign with a negative tone in 20% of the messages based on facts and a positive tone in 80% of the messages in the 2019 national elections. He said,

80 percent of our campaign must be a positive campaign. Please include a negative campaign, only 20 percent. ... A negative campaign is a

¹⁷⁵ Aim Sinpeng and Ross Tapsell, *From Grassroots Activism to Disinformation* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2021).

¹⁷⁶ Tyson and Purnomo, “President Jokowi and the 2014 *Obor Rakyat* controversy in Indonesia.”

¹⁷⁷ Saraswati, “The Political Campaign Industry and the Rise of Disinformation in Indonesia.”

¹⁷⁸ Tapsell, “Social Media and Elections in Southeast Asia: The Emergence of Subversive, Underground Campaigning.”

¹⁷⁹ Tapsell, “Social Media and Elections in Southeast Asia: The Emergence of Subversive, Underground Campaigning.”

campaign in which we highlight the opponent's weaknesses, but there are facts. That's not a lie, it's called a negative campaign, that's okay, because the public must know what the weaknesses of this candidate are.¹⁸⁰

The statement was immediately criticized by law officers¹⁸¹ and member of the ruling coalition.¹⁸²

Scholars examining this issue in a Southeast Asian context have argued that the growing popularity of negative campaigning has been caused by either an incumbent who is facing a decline in electoral support, or by an opposition who hopes to win by mobilizing online disinformation.¹⁸³ Saraswati argued that social media disinformation was used by political elites to maintain power as an extension of the rising political campaign industry in Indonesia.¹⁸⁴ Lim showed that mobilization of sectarianism during the 2017 Jakarta election exemplified a practice of post-truth politics in marketing political candidates packed with negative information and fake news.¹⁸⁵ Ahmad and Popa found in 2012 that gubernatorial candidate Joko Widodo's campaigns implemented a successful professionalized campaign marketing using social media with the help of volunteers to wage an online war that gave them the combination of the lowest campaign budget ever spent in the electoral level and an electoral victory.¹⁸⁶ Saraswati observed that attack campaigning in the 2012 Jakarta election took the form of disinformation cases, which were driven in part by the rapid increase of the political campaign industry, which itself has continued to develop over the 2014, 2017 and 2019 elections.¹⁸⁷

In her study, Saraswati found that the political campaign industry mediated the persuasive role of social media campaigning in recent elections in Indonesia. the political campaign industry is seen as consisting of the interconnected commercial-based political agencies working to help organize campaigns for a candidate or party, which includes public relations, advertising, polling,

¹⁸⁰ "Presiden PKS Perbolehkan Kampanye Negatif, Jangan Kampanye Hitam," 2018, accessed 19 May, 2020, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/10/14/12351871/presiden-pks-perbolehkan-kampanye-negatif-jangan-kampanye-hitam>.

¹⁸¹ "Polri Minta Tak Ada Negative dan Black Campaign di Pemilu 2019," 2018, accessed 3 July, 2021, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4257658/polri-minta-tak-ada-negative-dan-black-campaign-di-pemilu-2019>.

¹⁸² "Kampanye negatif 'boleh asal sesuai fakta' untuk 'ungkap kelemahan lawan'," BBC, 2018, accessed 3 July 21, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-45868908>.

¹⁸³ Sinpeng and Tapsell, *From Grassroots Activism to Disinformation*.

¹⁸⁴ Saraswati, "The Political Campaign Industry and the Rise of Disinformation in Indonesia."

¹⁸⁵ Merlyna Lim, "Freedom to hate: social media, algorithmic enclaves, and the rise of tribal nationalism in Indonesia," *Critical Asian Studies* 49, no. 3 (2017).

¹⁸⁶ Ahmad and Popa, "The social media usage and the transformation of political marketing and campaigning of the emerging democracy in Indonesia."

¹⁸⁷ Saraswati, "The Political Campaign Industry and the Rise of Disinformation in Indonesia."

and political lobbying.¹⁸⁸ Saraswati examined the political and economic aspects of how social media was used by candidates in the 2012 Jakarta, 2013 Makassar, and 2014 presidential elections. The results showed that social media helped develop the advancement of the political campaign industry in Indonesia by providing new professional services to candidates and parties. This research substantiated the hypothesis of the professionalization of election campaign in Indonesia¹⁸⁹ after the collapse of the authoritarian regime, as a result of either the modernization or Americanisation of campaigns seen around the world.

While the production of attack campaigns has been around for some time, academic research on its form and development is still in its infancy, and little is known about the influence of unofficial attack campaigning on the way voters evaluate the candidates and make their electoral decisions. One early analysis of the prevalence of misinformation as attack campaigns during the 2019 presidential election showed that partisanship was strongly associated with beliefs in various types of misinformation;¹⁹⁰ however, finding that exposure to social media for political causes did not correlate with belief in the disinformation cases. Contrarily, other scholars have shown that exposure to social media was associated with an increase in belief in misinformation across all demographics, and that those who believe in cases of misinformation typically tended to be young, educated, and wealthier.¹⁹¹ In a wider context, along with the attack campaigning, social media has been blamed for the escalation of polarization among members of the society.¹⁹²

There is currently no law in Indonesia that considers forms of negative campaigning. Implicitly, however, some legal documents stipulate rules that could apply to limit the extent of *kampanye hitam*. First, the Indonesian Criminal Code, article 207 states that someone who publicly defames a public official or a public institution orally or in writing is subject to imprisonment if found guilty.¹⁹³ Second, Local Election Law No.1/2015 article 69, states the two most relevant

¹⁸⁸ Muningsari Sri Saraswati, "The Political Campaign Industry and the Emergence of Social Media in Post-authoritarian Indonesian Electoral Politics" (Murdoch University, 2016), <https://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/36337/>.

¹⁸⁹ See for example Marcus Mietzner, "Political opinion polling in post-authoritarian Indonesia: Catalyst or obstacle to democratic consolidation?," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 165, no. 1 (2009).; Muhammad Qodari, "The Professionalisation of Politics: The Growing Role of Polling Organisations and Political Consultants," in *Problems of democratisation in Indonesia: elections, institutions and society*, ed. Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010).; Andreas Ufen, "Electoral Campaigning in Indonesia: The Professionalization and Commercialization after 1998," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 29, no. 4 (2010).

¹⁹⁰ Tabereh Ahmed Neyazi and Burhanuddin Muhtadi, *Selective Belief: How Partisanship Drives Belief in Misinformation*, vol. 15, 2021, (2021), misinformation, campaign, selective belief, elections, public opinion, Indonesia. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/15477>.

¹⁹¹ Saiful Mujani and Nicholas Kuipers, "Who Believed Misinformation during the 2019 Indonesian Election?," *Asian Survey* 60, no. 6 (2020).

¹⁹² Ross Tapsell, "The polarisation paradox in Indonesia's 2019 elections," *New Mandala*, 24 July, 2018, <https://www.newmandala.org/the-polarisation-paradox-in-indonesias-2019-elections/>.

¹⁹³ The full article 207 states "Barang siapa dengan sengaja di muka umum dengan lisan atau tulisan menghina suatu penguasa atau badan umum yang ada di Indonesia, diancam dengan pidana penjara paling lama satu tahun enam bulan atau pidana denda

prohibitions during campaigning: first, campaigns shall not defame someone's religion, ethnicity, race, social status, candidates of governors, regents and mayors, and/or political party; second, campaigns shall not practice inciting, defaming, harassing political parties, individuals, and/or community groups. Third, General Election Law No. 7/2017, article 280 stipulates nearly the same prohibitions, that is, in campaigning it is not allowed to defame someone's religion, ethnicity, race, social group, candidates, and/or other electoral participants; also it is strictly prohibited to instigate and bring individuals or the society into conflict during the campaigns. Fourth, the controversial Electronic Information and Transaction (ITE) Law No. 11/2008, particularly article 28 asserts that it is prohibited to intentionally and without right spread information aimed at arousing hate or enmity on individuals and/or certain social groups based on ethnicity, race and social group. However, the implementation of this law has been politically controversial, and it is often used to suppress criticism rather than to do justice. The general convention is that fact-based negative campaigns are allowed, but negative campaigns based on false information, or *kampanye hitam*, are legally prohibited. Negative campaigning, as we can see in the Indonesian context, is increasingly composed of disinformation, hoaxes, fake news, and slander that aims to mislead rather than enlighten voters. Much negative campaigning in Indonesia today is staged with a tactic of *kampanye hitam*, and understanding and defining the difference between the two is crucial.

This section has described how the direct electoral system provides a fertile ground for negative campaigning, and the diffusion of internet and social media transforms the production of negative campaigning in terms of actors, content, frequency, and strategy. The trend indicates that there is an emerging phenomenon of *kampanye hitam* in the Indonesian politics, which does not always mean the same thing as that occurring in the Western context. In the following section, I describe this emerging form of negative campaigning, including *kampanye hitam*, and why this thesis contributes to important scholarship that investigates the changing nature of electoral campaigns in Indonesia.

1.5 Negative campaigning: A working definition

This thesis seeks to conceptualise the nature of negative campaigning in Indonesia's digital-era elections, considering *kampanye hitam* as one aspect of this growing trend. The thesis examines

paling banyak empat ribu lima ratus rupiah." (Whoever intentionally publicly insults an authority or public institution in Indonesia, verbally or in writing, is liable to a maximum imprisonment of one year and six months or a maximum fine of four thousand five hundred rupiahs)

the political campaign industry,¹⁹⁴ seeing it as having been a high-tech engine of negative campaigning in Indonesia's recent elections. New campaign techniques and production, and how they are conducted digitally, are the focus of my research. Furthermore, what is not yet known is the extent to which negative campaigning affects the perception of voters towards political candidates and their negative campaigns. My thesis aims to uncover some of these aspects of voter preferences and say more about the impact of negative campaigning on Indonesian politics and democracy.

Framing a negative campaign is challenging in the Indonesian context for four main reasons. First, to the best of my knowledge there has not been a clear and formal definition of negative campaigning in the literature in the context of Indonesia. What scholars have been working on is using the term 'negative campaigning' alongside other concepts of interest, and they offer examples without elaboration or comparison to other concepts through consulting with previous literature. For example, Saraswati refers to "negative campaign" as "the production and distribution of campaign narratives that highlighted the candidate's political opponent(s)'s professional flaws."¹⁹⁵ This definition would immediately exclude personal flaws—which are commonly used in Indonesian election campaigning—regardless of its factuality. Further, Lim who investigated social media campaigning in the 2017 Jakarta election argued that "The social media campaigns during Pilkada DKI were heavily packed with negative information and 'fake news'."¹⁹⁶ Negative information seems to be equated to 'negative campaigning' but there is not sufficient examination of the term. Further, Rakhmani and Saraswati only use the terms 'attack' or 'attacking' to show how cyber armies of candidates operated at the 2019 presidential election.¹⁹⁷ Ufen used the term apparently randomly, saying that "During the presidential campaign of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Fox Indonesia was responsible for image-making, countering negative campaigning (such as the "neoliberalism" accusation by Megawati Sukarnoputri and Prabowo)."¹⁹⁸ Tyson and Purnomo, who examined the controversial *Obor Rakyat* tabloid, proposed that the "*Obor Rakyat* tabloid newspaper in May 2014 at the height of the national campaign cycle, contained serious allegations against Jokowi." The "serious allegations" were used alongside "negative campaigning and mudslinging," and "occasionally

¹⁹⁴ M. John Burton, William J Miller, and Daniel M Shea, *Campaign craft: the strategies, tactics, and art of political campaign management* (California: Praeger Publishers, 2015).

¹⁹⁵ Saraswati, "The Political Campaign Industry and the Rise of Disinformation in Indonesia."

¹⁹⁶ Lim, "Freedom to hate: social media, algorithmic enclaves, and the rise of tribal nationalism in Indonesia."

¹⁹⁷ They argue "By flooding the media space with images that reinforce the candidates' persona, mobilizing cyber armies to defend them, and attacking those opposing them, the actual socio- economic problems that grip Indonesia are lost in circular debates during the presidential campaign." Inaya Rakhmani and Muninggar Sri Saraswati, "Authoritarian Populism in Indonesia: The Role of the Political Campaign Industry in Engineering Consent and Coercion," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 40, no. 3.

¹⁹⁸ Ufen, "Electoral Campaigning in Indonesia: The Professionalization and Commercialization after 1998."

slandorous messages,” to explain the *Obor Rakyat* phenomena, and they concluded that “*Obor Rakyat* media scandal ... arguably represents a new manifestation of rumor politics and smear campaigning...”¹⁹⁹ Baulch et al. proposed red (negative or attack) campaign messages, as opposed to white (positive) official campaign messages and black (false) messages, deemed unofficial campaigning.²⁰⁰ More elaborately, Hui explained “negative campaigning” as “pointing out the weaknesses of election candidates and proposed policies—without resorting to false allegations.”²⁰¹ Some political scientists looked at the election information as “political misinformation” encompassing “rumors,” “fake news,” and “false narratives.”²⁰² And Tapsell showed an emerging underground operation of “attacking one’s opponent online” known as “black campaigning.”²⁰³ In short, the current literature either defines it as anything that is criticism of opponents based on facts, but also personal attacks, serious allegations, and mudslinging. Not only in scholarly works, but in legal documents related to elections, negative campaigning has been barely defined. Consequently, existing definitions have not resulted in accumulative research findings about the forms and effects of negative campaigning on voters and on democracy across time in Indonesia, let alone being able to generalize in a context of comparative study. This is because the current concept of negative campaigning in Indonesia is often fluid—encompassing everything from legitimate criticisms to deliberate falsehoods.

Second, there is a gap between how politicians and voters perceive negative campaigning, which might yield unexpected responses to it. Mahfud MD, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs (period of October 2019 – February 2024), on 10 October 2023 urged everyone to avoid negative campaigning so that elections could run smoothly and politely.²⁰⁴ While the opposition party of PKS urged its members to run negative campaigning at a proportion of 20%, the incumbent PDI-P party asserted that it was only committed to using positive campaigning and that it would avoid negative campaigning in the 2019 election,²⁰⁵ and

¹⁹⁹ Tyson and Purnomo, “President Jokowi and the 2014 *Obor Rakyat* controversy in Indonesia.”

²⁰⁰ Emma Baulch, Ariadna Matamoros-Fernández, and Fiona Suwana, “Memetic persuasion and WhatsAppification in Indonesia’s 2019 presidential election,” *New Media & Society* 0, no. 0.

²⁰¹ Jennifer Yang Hui, “SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE 2019 INDONESIAN ELECTIONS: Hoax Takes the Centre Stage,” *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2020).

²⁰² Taberez Ahmed Neyazi et al., “Who Gets Exposed to Political Misinformation in a Hybrid Media Environment? The Case of the 2019 Indonesian Election,” *Social Media + Society* 8, no. 3 (2022).; Mujani and Kuipers, “Who Believed Misinformation during the 2019 Indonesian Election?.”; Neyazi and Muhtadi, *Comparative Approaches to Mis/Disinformation* [*Selective Belief: How Partisanship Drives Belief in Misinformation*, 15.

²⁰³ Tapsell, “Social Media and Elections in Southeast Asia: The Emergence of Subversive, Underground Campaigning.”

²⁰⁴ “Menko Polhukam: Hindari Kampanye Negatif Walau Tak Ada Hukumannya,” (Government Portal), Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, 2023, accessed 19 March 2024, <https://polkam.go.id/menko-polhukam-hindari-kampanye-negatif-walau-tak-ada/> (Press Release). On 1 February 2024, Mahfud MD resigned as a coordinating minister to run the 2024 election as vice presidential candidate of Ganjar Pranowo

²⁰⁵ “PDIP: Kami Tidak Tergoda dengan Kampanye Negatif,” Kompas.com, 2018, accessed 19 March, 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/10/15/15521841/pdip-kami-tidak-tergoda-dengan-kampanye-negatif>.

in the 2020 local elections.²⁰⁶ Voters were also ambiguous about negative campaigning. A survey of *Kompas* (2023) captured this confusion, showing that voters could not tell “negative campaign” and “black campaign” apart, with 44.4% saying they were the same and 49.3% saying they were different ($N = 506$).²⁰⁷ This gap was also visible between academics and voters in another context. Research found that there was a gap between how academics defined negative campaigning and how voters perceive a negative campaign.²⁰⁸ The term ‘negative’ resonated as something problematic in people’s minds, which affected how voters perceived negative campaigning itself. As we shall see, Indonesian voters see the word ‘negative campaigning’ and believe this means harsh and personal attacks.²⁰⁹

Third, the conduct of negative campaigning in Indonesia is different from the Western-based traditional method, which is largely through political ads sponsored by political parties or partisan political action committees. Digital media technologies in Indonesia have paved the way for the new tactics of attacking political candidates via campaign teams to produce new types of messages to deceive voters and manipulate public opinion during elections.²¹⁰ Of course, the rise of deepfakes and computational propaganda is also growing in Western democracies and Indonesia concurrently, but the underground campaign industry is more prevalent in developing world democracies like Indonesia, through, for example, the use of buzzers in Indonesia (or trolls in the Philippines, cybertroopers in Malaysia).²¹¹

That said, Western scholarly definitions of negative campaigning are helpful to understanding how it works in Indonesia. As stated earlier, my working definition comes from Nai and Walter (2015), who defined negative campaigning as “the act of attacking the opponent on his own programme, values, record or character.”²¹² An earlier definition from Walter and van der Brug (2013) defined negative campaign as “a strategy by which political parties distinguish themselves from other political parties, by attacking or criticizing their opponents.” Most recently, Baranowski et al, (2023) redefined the term as “a campaign strategy used by political actors to attack political opponents by criticizing their behavior, ideologies, policy positions, set of values,

²⁰⁶ “Ketua DPD PDIP Kalbar ajak kadernya tidak kampanye negatif,” 2020, accessed 18 December, 2023, <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/1837804/ketua-dpd-pdip-kalbar-ajak-kadernya-tidak-kampanye-negatif>.

²⁰⁷ “Publik Menolak Kampanye Hitam,” 2023, accessed 23 December, 2023, <https://www.kompas.id/baca/riset/2023/12/18/publik-menolak-kampanye-hitam>.

²⁰⁸ Keena Lipsitz and John G. Geer, “Rethinking the Concept of Negativity: An Empirical Approach,” *Political Research Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2017).

²⁰⁹ Mattes and Redlawsk, *The positive case for negative campaigning*.

²¹⁰ Woolley and Howard, *Computational propaganda: Political parties, politicians, and political manipulation on social media*.

²¹¹ J.C. Ong and R. Tapsell, *Mitigating Disinformation in Southeast Asian Elections: Lessons from Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand*, NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence (2020), www.stratcomcoe.org/mitigating-disinformation-southeast-asian-elections.

²¹² Nai and Walter, “The War of Words: The Art of Negative Campaigning.”

or personal qualities” as they analyzed negative campaigning by European parliamentary election on Facebook. These three definitions follow the same directional approach of Nai and Walker, and I adopt this direction in the thesis. Therefore, I define negative campaign as a campaign strategy used by political campaign actors to attack political opponents by criticizing their programs, values, records, and characters with the purpose of making weaknesses and misconducts of opponents available to voters. However, in this Thesis I have to embrace the perspective of political communication more into the conceptualization and proposed this definition of negative campaign:

A negative campaign is communication strategy of a candidate where he or she disseminates messages that criticize or attack policies, values, records, and character of their opponents to paint them unfavorably to influence public perception and voter decisions

I choose to follow Nai and Walker’s broad definition of negative campaigning for use in the Indonesian context for a number of reasons. First, it uses the term ‘attacking’ and ‘criticizing’ rather than ‘attacking ads,’ which makes it applicable to all forms of attacking campaign statements or messages as campaign media is diverse in the digital era today. This is important in the non-US contexts where political ads are not the driver of negative campaigning. Second, campaign messages in Indonesia come in different contents, shapes, and legitimacies, and voters could have a different understanding of acceptability of negativity indicating that it is a subjective phenomenon. Using broad terms as such prevents unexpected data exclusion from analysis. Third, it follows that the logic of functional theory is relevant to the context of election campaign in Indonesia with its multiparty democracy. The multidimensional determinants of negative campaigning we see in Indonesia (2019 national and 2020 local elections), which seem to depart from the literature, the hybrid media used following the heterogeneity of voters, and diverse campaign actors attacking at the same time could be subsumed under the unifying function of their communications, which is either to attack or to advocate for a candidate at the election. Fourth, negative campaigning in Indonesia is also influenced by social norms or values rather than just policy, track-records, and the character of the target candidates from religious and ethnic values held dear by the general public; right and wrong is fragmented and based on social context.

Negative campaigning is usually a criticism levelled against a political candidate for his or her policies, character, or track-record. Campaigns vary in different degrees of usefulness, relevance, and truthfulness of messages, and can come in highly different forms. Some material expands voters’ knowledge and understanding about the candidates. As Jamieson argued, by providing voters with accurate, fair, contextual, and relevant information about the candidates,

it is possible to reward substance and punish sleazy and corrupt candidates.²¹³ Others are blatant lies that could deceive voters. Negative campaigning with totally false information attempts to manipulate voter's perception and decision-making.

I consider black campaigning, or *kampanye hitam*, as a variant of negative campaigning with the specific characteristics of totally false and irrelevant material. Black campaigning occurs when a criticism is levelled against a political candidate for his policies, character, track-record, which contains useless, false, and totally irrelevant information. Black campaigning, or *kampanye hitam*, is in the form of disinformation, fake news, slander, or libel during an election campaign period. Black campaigning is based on falsehood with the intention to demean opponents through the deception and manipulation of voters. Black campaigning is illegitimate campaigning in a democracy because the intention is to manipulate voters through persuasive techniques using false information. Increasingly in the digital era it is carried out anonymously by unofficial campaigns. A black campaign often does not have relevance towards governance or to the role of the contested public office, instead focusing on personal slander or scare campaigns. In Indonesia, the narrative of black campaigning tends to echo around negative emotions, such as religious fears.²¹⁴

This thesis develops a grounded typology to understand the nature of negative campaigning in Indonesia. Negative campaigning consists of three dimensions: usefulness, truthfulness, and relevance. And it can be character oriented or policy oriented. Black campaigning occurs when the three dimensions of the information meet the lowest level in all the categories. So, negative campaigning can be legitimate and illegitimate depending on its dimensional characteristics. Throughout this thesis I argue, through detailed examples, that my study of the empirical manifestation of negative campaigning in Indonesian politics is helpful in enabling us to better make distinctions between legitimate negative campaigning and smear campaigns under black campaigning. I also show how certain types of black campaigning are a growing problem for Indonesian democracy and need to be addressed by policymakers.

To employ the theoretical concepts above into investigating and analyse negative campaigning in Indonesia at the digital era's elections following the perspective of political communication, I tend to operationalize my analytical framework as follows: Negative campaign is driven by the cost and benefits analysis of candidates and their campaign team in employing negative

²¹³ Jamieson, *Dirty politics: Deception, distraction, and democracy*, p 262.

²¹⁴ Jamieson, *Dirty politics: Deception, distraction, and democracy*.

campaigns with certain attack messages and negative narratives as well as methods of attack after learning relevant information about their opponents to attack including incumbency status, past track-records, popularity, personal backgrounds, among others which they have collected by various means including survey. A part of the cost and benefit analysis, to avoid boomerang effect and legal penalty, the dissemination of attack messages is driven by mostly 'unofficial campaign actors' who employed computational propaganda by exploiting the affordances of digital media (i.e. social media and messaging apps) in the context of hybrid media environment. The final target of negative campaign itself is not opponents but voters to influence their perceptions and vote choice. However, the negative campaign does not only affect voters at the end, but also democracy which was not intended that way by the attacking candidates at the first place. The nature of negative campaigning itself is influenced by political context (regime), electoral system and level, media development, and candidates characteristics. My thesis following the perspective of political communication is aimed at implementing this framework.

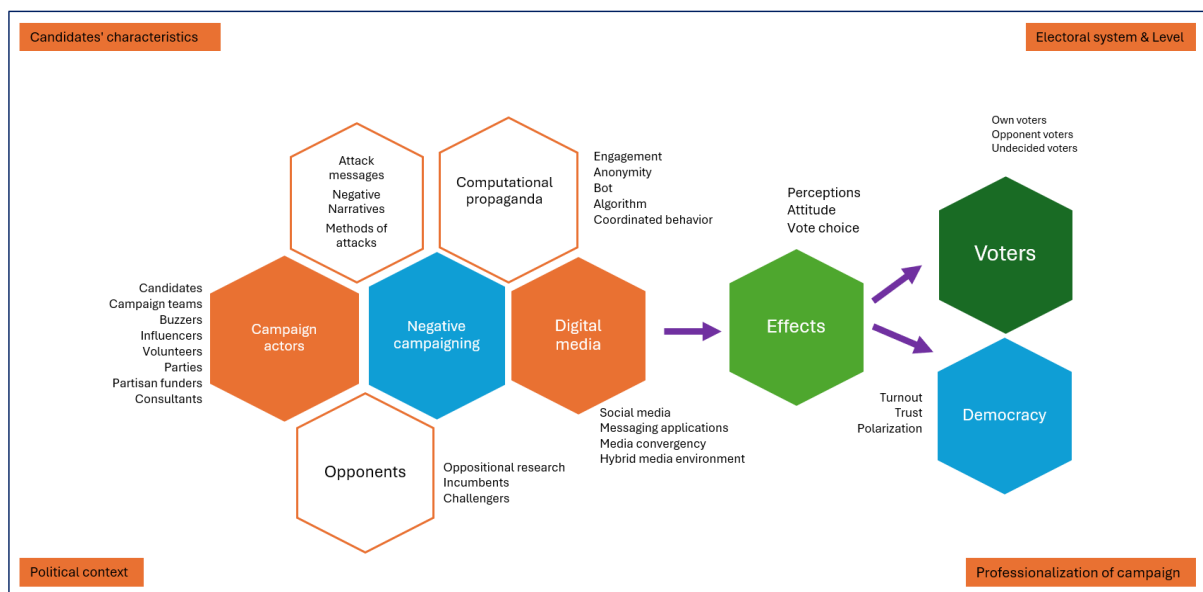


Figure 1 conceptual framework

1.6 Research methodology

The methodologies that scholars have used to study negative campaigns are quantitative approaches, such as content analysis, surveys, and experiments. A milestone study by

Ansolabehere and Iyengar²¹⁵ examined the effects of negative campaigning on turnout in an experiment. They argued that the use of a controlled experiment was more powerful than a survey, because it met the two criteria for scientific methodology: the ability to control the stimuli and the use of a comparison group.²¹⁶ However, Wattenberg and Brians²¹⁷ analyzed the same elections using survey data from National Election Studies to test Ansolabehere and Iyengar's hypothesis and found contradictory results: exposure to negative advertisement did not suppress turnout; however, only in the 1996 election. To reconcile the difference, scholars set out to identify the dimensions of campaign messages before measuring effects, because different messages may mean different things to different voters. In doing so, scholars applied content analysis to collect the characteristics of real negative messages from political advertisement and news coverage,²¹⁸ including level, diversity, and intensity of negativity.²¹⁹ In the context of direct democracy, Nai used content analysis of political advertisements as published in Swedish newspapers to predict the effect of negative campaigning on turnout. Also, Buell Jr. and Sigelman²²⁰ conducted a content analysis to systematically analyze negativity in the US presidential campaign from 1960 to 2008. Recently, content analysis has also been used to investigate negative campaigning on social media, such as Facebook²²¹ and Twitter.²²²

Scholars also found a challenge in measuring negative campaigning, particularly in assuring that what they measured was what they intended to measure in the first place. To deal with the issue of measurement validity, researchers combined findings of content analysis with survey results. For instance, Finkel and Geer²²³ conducted a systematic content analysis of advertisements of US presidential campaigning to yield a solid measure of candidates' negative and positive appeals by coding two attributes: issue appeals and trait appeals. Then, they used NES survey data to establish a correlational analysis of the level of negativity and voter turnout. The result, among others, is that issue negativity slightly demobilized voters, while trait negativity slightly motivated voting.

²¹⁵ Ansolabehere and Iyengar, *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate*.

²¹⁶ Ansolabehere and Iyengar, *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate*, 19.

²¹⁷ Wattenberg and Brians, "Negative Campaign Advertising: Demobilizer or Mobilizer?."

²¹⁸ Travis N. Ridout and Michael Franz, "Evaluating Measures of Campaign Tone," *Political Communication* 25, no. 2 (2008).

²¹⁹ Alessandro Nai, "What really matters is which camp goes dirty: Differential effects of negative campaigning on turnout during Swiss federal ballots," *European Journal of Political Research* 52, no. 1 (2013).

²²⁰ Buell Jr. and Sigelman, *Attack Politics: Negativity in Presidential Campaigns since 1960*.

²²¹ For example Rossini et al., "Social Media, Opinion Polls, and the Use of Persuasive Messages During the 2016 US Election Primaries."

²²² For example Heather K. Evans et al., "Mudslinging on Twitter During the 2014 Election," *Social Media + Society* 3, no. 2 (2017).

²²³ Steven E. Finkel and John G. Geer, "A Spot Check: Casting Doubt on the Demobilizing Effect of Attack Advertising," *American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 42, no. No. 2 (1998).

I employed a mixed method approach with sequential characteristics. A mixed methods research employs “a research design that uses both quantitative and qualitative data to answer a particular question or set of questions,”²²⁴ which includes the procedure, design, collection, and analysis of data.²²⁵ A sequential exploratory mixed methods approach data and analyze it by collecting first qualitative data then followed by quantitative data to explain the qualitative data more thoroughly. I used social media data and interview to construct survey instrument and then the survey findings could inform the social media and interview data, or to assess the extent to which the initial qualitative findings generalize to a population.²²⁶ However, the sequential aspect does not entirely define the data collection and process due to the broad sources of qualitative data collection. In this thesis I analyze how digital media innovates negative campaigning in Indonesia and what influence it has on Indonesian democracy. I start by studying the historical development of negative campaigning in Indonesia from 1955 to the reform era. And then, I move on to analyse the effect of digital media on the production of negative campaigning in Indonesia’s recent presidential and mayoral elections in an ethnographic approach using interview, observation, document analysis, text mining, and content analysis. Next, I measure the effect of negative campaigning on the evaluation of candidates, vote choice, turnout, and polarization using surveys. Given the diverse data, I employ a mixed methods approach to collect and analyze data. Below I outline the methodology in more detail.

1.6.1. Qualitative method

The qualitative feature of this research employed case studies. A case study can be understood as “an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon.”²²⁷ Similarly, Yin defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”²²⁸ Sources of data for a case study are plenty such as face-to-face and telephone interviews with key informants, agency records, project documentation and memoranda, illustrative material such as newsletter, and on-site

²²⁴ Another term called multimethod approach “refers to the mixing of methods by combining two or more qualitative methods in a single research study (such as in-depth interviewing and participant observation) or by using two or more quantitative methods (such as a survey and experiment) in a single research study.” Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, *Mixed methods research: Merging theory with practice* (New York: Guilford Press, 2010), 3.

²²⁵ John W Creswell and Vicki L Plano Clark, *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (California: Sage publications, 2017).

²²⁶ Creswell and Clark, *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*.

²²⁷ Joe R Feagin, Anthony M Orum, and Gideon Sjoberg, *A case for the case study* (UNC Press Books, 2016), 2.

²²⁸ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, 3rd ed. (California: Sage Publications, 2003), 13.

observation.²²⁹ In employing the approach, I followed what Caliandro recommended of strategies for social media observation namely (a) follow the medium which means observing and describing the processes of online communication ratified by social media affordances and digital devices, and (b) follow the natives which means observing and understanding the online social formations generated by actors through different activities in the digital media and the meanings they attribute to the activities.²³⁰ In short, it encompasses observing simultaneously the mechanism, the actors, their practices, and the motivations they have in staging negative campaigning on the online media.

As a case study I rely on a number of data collection techniques, such as social media observation, documentary analysis, and semi-structured interviews. I used the interview method for the 2019 presidential election only, not for the 2020 Medan and South Tangerang mayoral elections due to several reasons that I will explain later. I held three categories of interviews based on the sources and goals for the 2019 presidential election. Some of these interviews were conducted in-person, others via Zoom following health protocols during the COVID-9 pandemic of June 2020 to May 2022.

First, interviews were conducted with official campaign teams, namely 12 politicians/campaign teams, four consultants, and unofficial actors—two buzzers and three influencers. The goal of this interview was to understand the perceptions, motivations, and experiences of official and unofficial campaigns in waging negative campaigning or their responses to it. I asked a list of questions around the production of negative campaigning, such as the organization of campaign teams, key actors, selection of narratives, and so on (see Appendix A). Follow-up questions were sometimes asked based on the responses given by the interviewees. Interviewing these actors was essential for the thesis because they explained their experiences in the production of negative campaigning and the motivations to attack opponents. Second, interviews were conducted with electoral management bodies, one commissioner of KPU and one member of Bawaslu. The goal of the interviews was to examine the role and capacity of election management bodies and election laws to oversee and rule about negative campaigning in Indonesia. I asked questions about the criteria for differentiating between negative campaigning and black campaigning, limitations of election laws, and challenges in suppressing the conduct of black campaigning, among others (see Appendix A). Third, interviews were conducted with two political experts and two experts in election law. These interviews were held to assess the

²²⁹ Robert K. Yin, "The Case Study Method as a Tool for Doing Evaluation," *Current Sociology* 40, no. 1 (1992).

²³⁰ Alessandro Caliandro, "Digital Methods for Ethnography: Analytical Concepts for Ethnographers Exploring Social Media Environments," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 47, no. 5 (2018).

quality of election campaigns and the limitations of legal and institutional systems in addressing dirty tactics in campaigns and upholding quality campaigns (see Appendix A). After the interviews, recordings of the interviews were transcribed into Word documents for analysis. The sources were given a reimbursement for their transportation cost, lunch, and/or internet access amounting to AU\$30 (some refused to accept).

Prior to the fieldwork, I organized lists of key questions and key informants with more than 45 names. The list was assembled based on the names of the official campaign teams registered by candidates to the KPU and also from an observation of news sources as quoted by five sampled newspapers. The COVID-19 pandemic called for swift adjustments to the interviews. The list had to be renewed and updated based on potential sources suggested from every prior successful interview along the way. Towards the end of every interview, I asked if the informants would like to suggest any key persons who know about specific campaign tasks of the candidates, such as a member of a digital team, a consultant, or an influencer, and explained my research ethics and confidentiality principle. This snowball technique worked well under the circumstances and led me to resourceful interviewees.

The COVID-19 pandemic deeply affected my fieldwork more generally also. I began my fieldwork in Jakarta just before the pandemic hit Jakarta in March 2020. Afterwards, it was hard to arrange in-person interviews, as offices were closed and the city was in lockdown. Some key sources were just not available for interviews without giving any reasons. Therefore, I needed more time to collect my data, rescheduled appointments, again and again, and waited for a relaxation of the mobility restrictions, which entirely affected the rest of my data collection and the succeeding processes. The COVID-19 based obstacles also made it impossible to go to the field and interview sources during the 2020 local elections in Medan and South Tangerang. This is why in-person interviews were not held in the local election cases. Zoom interviews were sometimes possible, but it was undoubtedly harder to achieve as this was a new way of conducting research interviews and Indonesian political actors were reluctant to do so. I interviewed 12 informants on Zoom: politicians, members of campaign teams, pollsters leaders, and electoral bodies management officials. Interviewing on Zoom posed its own challenges, and some of the most difficult were the hesitation of interviewees to speak openly as the interviews were mediated and usually recorded for transcription quality, the lack of cues for the interviewer to read non-verbal messages from the informants, distractions that happened that broke the interviews, and lastly, informants did not like being interviewed for long enough and tended to request shorter sessions. And of course, some people were just reluctant to discuss black campaigning or even negative campaigning out of a feeling of unease over its reputation as being bad. In spite of these factors, I managed to hold 21 face-to-face interviews with selected

sources who were party elites, campaign teams, buzzers, buzzers coordinators, consultants, and volunteers.

For the interviews, I was able to connect with some personal-based networks of individuals who were connected by friendship, family, work, (and by accident). The interviewees were actors in digital campaign teams, which execute a task to attack opponent candidates using computational techniques on social media. They consisted of funders, managers, field coordinator, buzzers, influencers, and volunteers who received support from the political campaign industry, such as political consultants, media companies, polling, and digital artists. They co-produced and disseminated their own messages but also distributed messages based on orders from the official campaign teams. I then set about trying to interview these digital actors either via Zoom or later in person. Regardless of their role, many of the official campaign teams did not acknowledge this team in the interview, saying that they avoided negative campaigning, let alone black campaigning, because it was against the values and principles of their candidates for the sake of democracy. No doubt some of their reluctance was because it was difficult for me to establish more direct personal links, including participant observation, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the qualitative interviews I did conduct (in person and via Zoom) were crucial to the evidence base for this thesis, and they are quoted throughout this thesis.

1.6.2. Quantitative methods

My quantitative methods were three-fold and involved text mining and surveying. Text mining is “a knowledge-intensive process in which a user interacts with a document collection over time by using a suite of analysis tools.”²³¹ Text mining is usually used for extracting meaningful information from unstructured data through the identification of interesting patterns. I used text mining to collect and analyze data from Twitter based on accounts of the candidates and hashtag-based messages using *academicwritteR* package in R programming for accessing historical data on Twitter. The *academicwritteR* package allows researchers to collect tweets from specific users and tweets containing specified key words.²³² Tweets were downloaded through Twitter API (application program interface) for Academic Research track. API is a doorway for a computer application to communicate with social media platforms connected

²³¹ Ronen Feldman and James Sanger, *The text mining handbook: advanced approaches in analyzing unstructured data* (Cambridge university press, 2007).

²³² Christopher Barrie and Justin Chun-ting Ho, "academicwritteR: an R package to access the Twitter Academic Research Product Track v2 API endpoint," *Journal of Open Source Software* 6, no. 62 (2021).

through the internet in a legitimate way, including for drawing data or information. I created an application on Twitter to access the API through my Twitter account and then used codes in R to run the process as shown in Figure 2 below. The process returned more than 1 million raw tweets in total.

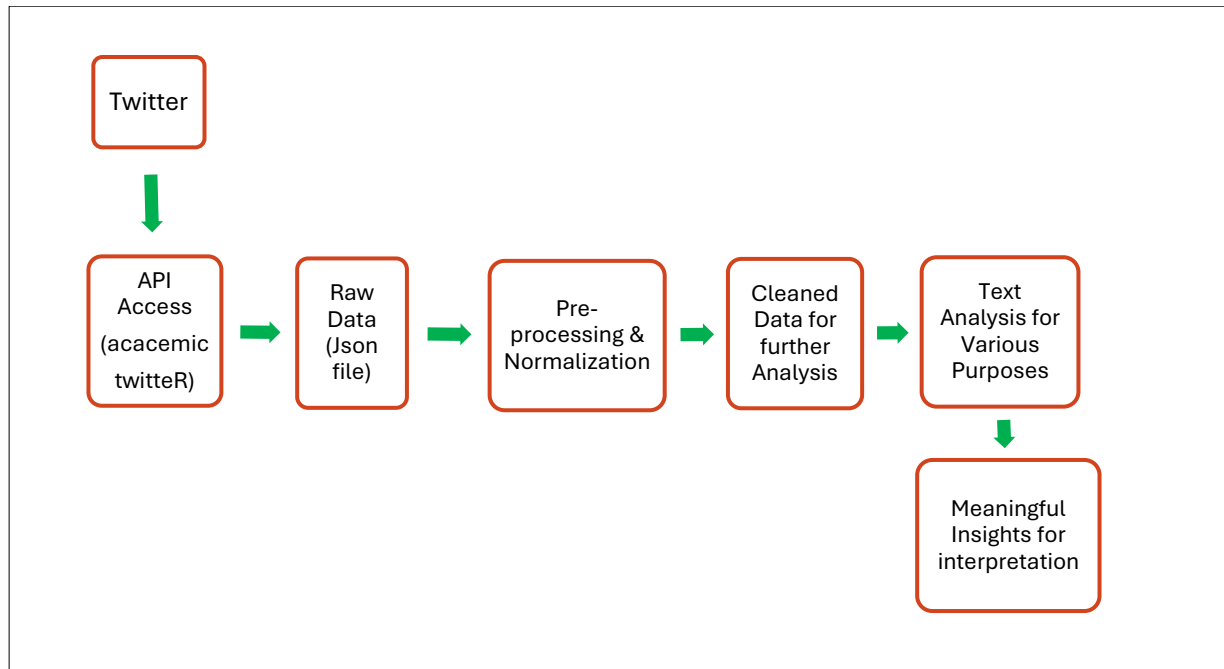


Figure 2 The flow of Twitter data collection and analysis

Facebook posts were downloaded through Facebook’s internal application for research called CrowdTangle with historical data. The process produced 900,000 posts. For inquiries on Twitter and Facebook, I used the official accounts of candidates, their nominating parties, and also hashtags-based search indicating an attack such as #2019GantiPresident, #2019TetapAntiPKI, #BapakHoaxNasional, #Cukup1Periode, #JKWTakutPaparkanVisiMisi, #JokowiBohongLagi, and #UninstallJokowi, #KoalisiPraBOHONG, #PrabowoCapresHoax, #PrabowoTakutDebat, #PrabowoTakutTestNgaji, #SandiwaraUno, and #SkandalSandiaga.

R is an “integrated suite of software facilities for data manipulation, calculation and graphical display.”²³³ R can do numerous tasks, including text mining, visualization, and advanced statistical analysis. In this research, I operated four basic techniques of text mining: word

²³³ "What is R?," <https://www.r-project.org/about.html>.

frequency, visualization, and network analysis, as well as correlation in R. From the text mining I found that the production and distribution of attacking messages was dominated by illegitimate and irrelevant personal attacks against candidates. The tactic extensively uses automation and anonymity of the accounts during the 2019 presidential election. Most of the attacks on Twitter were based on retweets rather than original tweets.

Lastly, I administered an online survey to measure the effect of negative campaigns on the evaluation of candidates and potential voter choice. The voter survey was used to analyze voters' opinions on their exposures to negative campaigning and its effect on how they evaluated the candidate being attacked and their vote choice. The survey data consisted of my online survey on university students and national survey data from Charta Politika, SMRC, and Indikator Politik Indonesia. Some of the questions were synthesized from the interview and content analysis findings, particularly with regards to the major cases of black campaigns. I explain this method in greater detail in Chapter 6. The online survey showed that voters tended to dislike candidates who ran negative campaigning, but they admitted that they took advantage of learning about the candidate from the negative campaigning. Analyzing the secondary data of the national survey revealed that negative campaigning lowers voters' evaluations of the targeted candidate, which could lead to them being unlikely to vote for the target candidate, particularly when the message of the attack was irrelevant and untruthful.

Understanding the effect of negative campaigns has been the main reason for pursuing this investigation. To this end, I ran the content analysis of social media and news coverage of the election campaign to detect the prevalence of negative campaigning in the 2019 presidential election and 2020 mayoral election. Just like other mobilization strategies by presidential candidates, negative campaigning is motivated by some expectation and objective. But because some negative campaigns are black campaigning and are seen as 'dark acts,' candidates and parties avoid admitting it regardless of its magnitude. However, by asking key actors related to the campaign through interviews, official or unofficial ones, can give access to real experiences, motivations, why opponents are attacked in certain ways, and how they reacted to it. As the primary goal of the tactics is presumably to lower evaluation of the target candidate, it is hard to know its effectiveness unless measured in how voters actually evaluated the target. Because of some limitations, I also used secondary survey data held by polling organizations with representative national random samples. This is useful particularly for some further statistical analysis to detect effect.

This section has explained how the data were collected to address my key problem: how digital media has enhanced the conduct of negative campaigning in Indonesia. To understand the relation between digital media and negative campaigning, one needs to observe the conduct of

negative campaigning on social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, by the candidates by looking at the sources, messages, targets, and other characteristics. However, in Indonesia the negative campaigning was not carried out directly by the candidates themselves but outsourced to unregistered campaigns.

The mixed method approach has enabled me to examine the conduct of negative campaigning in Indonesian elections, particularly in the 2019 presidential election and 2020 mayoral elections. My interviews have shown how the organization of campaigning involves buzzers, influencers, and volunteers in disseminating attacking messages against candidates on social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook. The finding is corroborated by the result of my content analysis of tweets, Facebook posts, and news reports, which reveal the use of identity-based negative campaigns salient to voters, such as religious, ethnic, and ideological negative campaigns. The survey results also showed that voters disliked candidates who attacked opponents based on identity issues, and the use of irrelevant, unhelpful, and untruthful messages of negative campaigning tended to decrease the electability of the targeted candidate.

1.7 Overview of the dissertation

This section discusses the structure of the rest of this thesis.

Chapter 2 Negative campaigning in the pre-digital era (1955-2009). This chapter discusses the history and characteristics of negative campaigning in the pre-digital era. It explains that negative campaigning occurred long before the arrival of the internet, and that it was shaped by the context of the political system and the characteristics of media at the time. Mobilizing false information around religious, gender, and ethnic identities was common in the 1955 elections. Islam was a main driver of messages and the narratives of negative campaigning. The chapter focuses on negative campaigning in the 1955 election, the New Order 'elections,' where competition was restricted, and the early reform era elections in 2004 and 2009.

Chapter 3 Negative campaigning in the digital era (2012-2019). This chapter argues that digital media changes the nature of negative campaigning in a way that allows ordinary citizens to actively participate in campaigning against a candidate through social media platforms, which gives rise to identity-based negative campaigning. The chapter focuses on negative campaigning in the 2012 Jakarta election, 2014 presidential election, 2017 Jakarta election, and 2018 gubernatorial election in West Java.

Chapter 4 Negative campaigning in the 2019 presidential election. This chapter argues that in the 2019 election unofficial actors waged key negative campaigns against candidates using computational techniques to influence the media agenda and public opinion by producing and distributing personal attacks with useless and irrelevant information online.

Chapter 5 Negative campaigning in the 2020 mayoral elections. This chapter focuses on negative campaigning in the 2020 South Tangerang and Medan mayoral elections. The chapter argues that although negative campaigning was less common due to the limited campaign activities because of the COVID-19 pandemic, law enforcement, and gaps in internet access at local levels, religious narratives, identity, and disinformation were used during the local election campaigns.

Chapter 6 The effects of negative campaigning. This chapter argues that negative campaigning is effective in decreasing evaluations of a candidate, which leads to voters being unlikely to vote for the target. The chapter notes that voter's perceptions of negative campaigning is motivated by partisan belief in the candidate.

Chapter 7 Conclusion. This chapter summarizes the findings by arguing that digital media has transformed how negative campaigning is conducted in Indonesian elections through enabling citizens to be involved in attacking candidates directly using sophisticated techniques of computational propaganda. Rather than directly attacking themselves, candidates mainly outsourced their negative campaigning against opponents to a network of actors who produced and distributed irrelevant and often false attacking and counter-attacking messages using computational enhancement on social media platforms, with the potential for messages to become viral, and hence more strongly influence the increasingly hybrid media environment.

Chapter 2 Negative campaigning in the pre-digital era

This chapter examines the history of negative campaigning in Indonesia's pre-digital-era elections. The chapter explores how the political context,²³⁴ candidates' characteristics, and campaign organization shaped the conduct of negative campaigning in Indonesia's pre-digital elections.²³⁵ The nature of electoral campaigns in Indonesia changed as the political system changed—from a parliamentary system, to an authoritarian system, to a reform era with a direct election system.

Understanding the nature of negative campaigning in Indonesia's history helps us understand Indonesia's democracy and its trajectory in recent times. As this chapter shows, negative campaigning has been around since the first legislative elections in 1955.

My analysis shows the key characteristics of negative campaigning in this pre-digital who driving negative campaign messages, and how the context of the political system and the development of mass media impacts the narratives of the time. Although policy attacks played a substantial role, character attacks have been evident since as early as the 1955 election. Their visibility notably increased during elections held in the reform era.

I analysed primary and secondary data of written texts from a range of sources to display the overarching features of pre-digital era negative campaigning following the qualitative content analysis approach (see Appendix E). My primary sources for the 1955 election were newspapers and magazines related to the major political parties in the 1950s, namely *Harian Rakjat*, *Abadi*, *Pedoman*, *Hikmah* and *Indonesia Raya*. I accessed these publications through online archives of the library of the Australian National University, National Library of Australia, and the Indonesian National Library. My data sources included *TEMPO* weekly magazine (accessed via Tempo Data Science) and *KOMPAS* daily (accessed via Kompas Data). Both media covered elections in Indonesia since 1971 and are independent media, being long champions of quality

²³⁴ Political contexts that influence the conduct of candidates and parties' campaigns include political, electoral, party systems and political dynamics prior to the elections. Characteristics of candidates driving black campaign are number of candidates, incumbency status, track-records, supporting parties, and ideological stance. And campaign organization by which candidates run their campaigns determined by regulation, professionalization, personalization, financing, and media.

²³⁵ I constructed these factors based on Denton and Stuckey's six key elements crucial to understanding political campaign from a communication perspective namely strategic environment, organization, finance, public opinion polls, candidate image, and media. However, considering some overlaps among these elements, I subsumed them under three key elements relevant to negative campaigning: political context (strategic environment), characteristics of candidates (candidate image), and campaign organization (finance, polls, and media). Robert E Denton Jr, "Communication variables and dynamics of the 1996 presidential campaign," in *The 1996 presidential campaign: A communication perspective*, ed. Robert E Denton Jr (Wesport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998).

journalism in Indonesia. First, I searched the keywords “pemilu” and “kampanye pemilu” followed by each year of interest, then I overviewed the contents, selected relevant editions, and then downloaded the files onto my computer—67 editions of *TEMPO* and 40 editions of *KOMPAS* from 1977 to 2009. I arranged all the editions into 10 folders based on the years of the election, namely 1955, 1971, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1997, 1999, 2004, and 2009. Furthermore, I also analyzed books, journals, and other scholarly works published between 1955 and 2009 that discussed election campaigns in Indonesia. For all these documents, I collected campaign rhetoric used by candidates or political parties that criticized their opponents during the campaign based on the texts provided.

2.1. Negative campaigning at the first national election (1955)

This section focuses on negative campaigns during the legislative election in 1955. Due to political instability, it took three administrations to prepare and hold an election after the country’s independence in 1945. Indonesia finally held its first legislative election on 29 September 1955, followed by a senate election on 15 December 1955 to elect members of the Indonesian Constitutional Assembly (*konstituante*), which was responsible for enacting a constitution for the new state. The initial signal to conduct the election was unveiled when election law was enacted on 4 April 1953 (UU No.7/1953), and the Central Election Committee was established in November 1954. Along with the enactment of the law, the parties’ symbols were approved on 31 May 1954, and the campaigning period was from April 1953 until the voting day. This was Indonesia’s first free and fair election and the only free and fair election it had until 1999. Not only was there universal suffrage, but also the parties and groups with competing ideologies had the same chance to run in the election. Campaigning was held freely, where parties could criticize and attack other parties or participants openly and directly in speeches, political ads, and news coverages without the fear of retribution for blasphemy, libels and the like.

Scholarship on the election is limited, but a few works are crucial to understanding negative campaigning in 1955. Hebert Feith observed that contenders at the legislative election varied from political parties, to organizations, to individual candidates with strong ideological tendencies. Activities of union, peasant, educational, and social welfare organizations became the large-scale campaign tools of parties with related ideologies.²³⁶ Feith suggested at least five streams of political thinking in the period: Radical Nationalism (Indonesian National Party),

²³⁶ Herbert Feith, *The decline of constitutional democracy in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2007).

Javanese Traditionalism (Greater Indonesia Party), Islam (Masjumi,²³⁷ Nahdlatul Ulama,²³⁸ Partai Syarikat Islam Indonesia), Democratic Socialism (Indonesian Socialist Party), and Communism (Indonesian Communist Party).²³⁹ Although this does not cover all the political streams, it shows the major political powers in the early polarizing era. Evans simplified the ideological differences based on a left (secular), right (Islamic), and elitist (populist) axis, positioning PNI and PKI on the left, PKI being more on the populist side, Masyumi and NU in the right camp, and NU leaning towards populist.²⁴⁰ Ideological polarization strongly persisted at the elite level and carried on into society, which enhanced the campaign mobilization and rhetoric of the political parties.

To secure more votes, political parties diversified their campaign tactics at national and local village levels. Feith observed that in the period of 1950-1953 party competition primarily occurred in large cities and towns, on plantations, and mines, and rarely existed in villages where parties did not have established membership; however, this changed in 1955. At Jakarta, or the national level, the principal politics that set the theme for campaigning was rivalry between Masjumi and PNI. In addition, PKI was a third party that determined campaign issues as it tended to oppose Masjumi and the Burhanuddin cabinet.²⁴¹ There was a tendency for each party to portray itself as the most Islamic and most Pancasila or nationalist advocate and to accuse others of the total opposite. For example, a political ad of Masyumi (Figure 3) said that choosing the hammer and sickle (the symbol of the Communist Party of Indonesia) meant submitting Indonesia to foreign power, and to avoid this, people should vote for the star and crescent (the symbol of the Masyumi party).

²³⁷ Masyumi's statuta states two objectives of the party: 1. Upholding the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia and Islam; and 2. Implementing Islamic ideals in state affairs. Anggaran Dasar dan Rumah Tangga Masjumi, (12 December 1949).

²³⁸ NU decided to become a political party, defecting from Masyumi's constituents organization in April 1952 during its first national congress in Palembang under the Ali cabinet. Rémy Madinier, *Islam and politics in Indonesia: The Masyumi party between democracy and integralism*, trans. Jeremy Desmond (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015), p 136.

²³⁹ Herbert Feith, *Introduction*, ed. Herbert Feith and Lance Castles, *Indonesian Political Thinking 1945-1965*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1970), p 13.

²⁴⁰ Kevin R. Evans, *Sejarah Pemilu dan Partai Politik di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Arise Consultancies, 2003).

²⁴¹ Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*.



Figure 3 Anti-PKI poster published by Masyumi

(Source: *Hikmah*)

A further example is an anti-PKI satirical caricature published in *Hikmah* magazine, a publisher affiliated with Masyumi, depicting a member of PKI bowing to empty chairs labelled “Kawan Malenkov” and “Kawan Mao”, suggesting that PKI was subservient to foreign leaders such as Georgy Malenkov, the Premier of the Soviet Union (1953-1955) and Mao Zedong, Chairman of the Communist Party of China (1943-1976) (Figure 4).



Figure 4 Negative campaign against PKI

(Source: *Hikmah*, 10 April 1954)

Masyumi along with its allies criticized PKI for disseminating an election platform claiming that the party also belonged to those who were not partisans or people who did not have a party. PKI did not revise this despite the criticism because some parties did not see any problems with the publication. In response, *Harian Rakjat*, a daily newspaper affiliated with PKI, published a caricature on its front page attacking Masyumi by labelling the party as *maling* (thief), a metaphor in Indonesian language used to describe someone who blames his crime on another: *maling teriak maling* (a thief who yells thief) (Figure 5). Another attack from *Harian Rakjat* against Masyumi depicted that Masyumi and PSI parties, if elected, would use tractors to cultivate people's rice fields (Figure 6).



Figure 5 Negative campaign against Masyumi

(Source: *Harian Rakjat*, 14 February 1955)



Figure 6 Negative campaign against Masyumi-PSI

(Source: *Harian Rakjat*, 26 September 1955)

At the village level, the parties did not talk much about national politics or cabinet issues to appeal to voters, mainly because of political morality, and social conditions at the local level. For example, although PKI's land policy at national level was less emphasized in the interest of keeping a good relationship with the government (Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet), at village and regional areas PKI promised land distribution and a land management policy. At the national level there was also a strong anti-imperialism narrative, but at the village level it was expressed as a xenophobic and anti-white narrative.²⁴² For example, during the campaign, Masjumi and Nahdatul Ulama declared that only those who voted for their parties would go to heaven, and that those not doing so would go to hell.²⁴³ Beyond attacking their opponents, political parties also advocated based particularly on their histories, leaders, and the ballot symbols of their parties. For instance, PNI continually conveyed that PNI was the party of 'Pak Karno' to get

²⁴² Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*, p 16.

²⁴³ Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*, p 15-16.

votes.²⁴⁴ These campaigns seem to have used issue targeting in a traditional way based on the geographical characteristics of potential voters between the village and national levels.

The availability of mass media was limited, leaving parties to rely on printed media. The use of media for campaigning was dominated by partisan newspapers and outdoor media, such as billboards, posters, banners, and so on. For example, key party's media displayed the same logo as their political parties on the top front page of the partisan media, including the newspaper *Suluh Indonesia*, with its PNI's logo, with the publication being positive towards party affiliation and negative towards others. Another example of print media campaigning was the display of parties' logos around main streets, such as at Prapatan Kwitang street in Jakarta, as seen on 24 July 1955 (Figure 7).



Figure 7 Campaign posters of participants in 1955 election.

(Source: ANRI, published by CNN Indonesia).²⁴⁵

Each party mobilized its partisan newspapers to publish campaign activities and political advertisements, including attacking opponents, such as *Harian Rakjat* of the Communist Party of Indonesia, *Pedoman* of the Socialist Party of Indonesia, *Suluh Indonesia* of the National Party

²⁴⁴ Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*, p 16-17.

²⁴⁵ <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20190416191822-34-386915/foto-pemilu-1955-tonggak-sejarah-demokrasi-indonesia/1>

of Indonesia, and *Abadi* of Masjumi.²⁴⁶ News headlines of these newspapers openly showed which side they stood for and which sides they fought against. For examples, “President: Diponegoro never infidelized his own people” (*“Presiden: Diponegoro tidak pernah meng-kafirkan bangsanja sendiri”*, on *Suluh Indonesia*, 10/01/1955), “Masjumi lost, only getting 1 seat regarding the DPRD elections in Manado” (*“Masjumi keok hanya dapat 1 kursi terkait pemilu DPRD di Manado,”* on *Harian Rakjat*, 19/07/1954), “The opposition is looking for reasons to minimize its meaning. Masyumi went against his wishes regarding the running of the Asia-Africa conference” (*“Oposisi tjari² alasan utk perketjil artinja. Masjumi bertentangan sendiri dengan kemauannja” terkait jalannya konferensi Asia Afrika,”* on *Suluh Indonesia*, 11/01/1955), “Mr. MOH ROEM: If Masjumi wins, these gangs will support the establishment of the Islamic State” (*“Mr. MOH ROEM: Djika Masjumi menang gerombolan² ini akan sokong dirikan Negara Islam,”* in *Harian Rakjat*, 29/09/1955), and “Choosing Masjumi means choosing D.I.” (*“Memilih Masjumi berarti memilih D.I.”*, on *Harian Rakjat*, 24/09/1955).

However, a self-proclaimed non-partisan newspaper *Indonesia Raya* was critical towards the government, Soekarno and even PKI, which later led to the detention of the editor.²⁴⁷ In 1950, four years before the election, there were 92 registered newspapers with a total of circulation 499,500 and this peaked in 1957 with 120 dailies, including *Harian Rakyat*, *Pedoman*, *Suluh Indonesia*, *Abadi*, *Merdeka*, *Sin Po*, and others.²⁴⁸

Negative campaigning was a strong feature of the 1955 election. Islam was the central issue in the whole processes of campaigning because of its position as an ideology proposed by Islamic parties as well as an everyday social identity. Islam was used as campaign rhetoric to advocate for electability of the Islamic parties and to attack opponents by labelling them as *kafir* (non-believers) or arousing fear by saying that voters for non-Islamic parties would go to hell. This strategy aimed to discredit opponents based on religious identity. Negative campaigns escalated after the Wilopo cabinet collapsed in 1953, which created opposing roles for its main supporters (Masyumi-PNI), into coalition and opposition, in the succeeding Ali and Burhanuddin cabinets. The rivalry between the parties, in addition to PKI, determined the scope of the campaign appeals.²⁴⁹ A key issue in the campaign was the role of Islam in the state, which was furiously debated between Masyumi and PNI. A particular moment related to this was when President

²⁴⁶ Mochtar Lubis, “The Press in Indonesia,” *Far Eastern Survey* 21, no. 9 (1952).

²⁴⁷ *Indonesia Raya* was established in 1950 led by Mochtar Lubis with a motto ‘From the People, By the People, For the People.’ This newspaper and the editor seen as contributing significantly to the development of modern and secular media at that time even though it was initiated and supported financially by the army through personal connection rather than institutional. David T Hill, *Journalism and politics in Indonesia: a critical biography of Mochtar Lubis (1922-2004) as Editor and Author* (Routledge, 2010).

²⁴⁸ Hill, *Journalism and politics in Indonesia: a critical biography of Mochtar Lubis (1922-2004) as Editor and Author*.

²⁴⁹ Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*, p 10.

Soekarno, also founder of PNI, made a statement as he intended to answer a question posed by a group of attendees on a banner asking for an explanation whether the nation is a nationalist or Islamic state, during his official visit to Amuntai city in South Kalimantan on 27 January 1953. In his speech Soekarno reiterated firmly that the nation was a nationalist nation:

A nationalist nation where Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and even those not religious yet are living. It is true that the majority of Indonesians are Muslims, but some are not, like in Ternate, Toraja, and Dayak. If we establish, say, Islamic state, our brothers and sisters from Ambon will not join. We don't want that to happen. So, we want to form a nation from Sabang to Merauke, Indonesia.²⁵⁰

Using the speech as a background, KH Isa Anshary, chairman of Masyumi, reacted with furious admonitions of the leaders of non-Muslim parties, describing them as *munafik* (hypocritical Muslim) and *kafir* (unbelievers).²⁵¹ To their defence, PNI politicians iterated that they were proponents of Pancasila, and they also had a deep relationship with Islam. PNI elites accused Masyumi elites of opposing nationalist symbols, but Masyumi elites denied it, saying that their activism based on Islam was not contradictory to Pancasila. During one of its rallies, they declared that the statement from PNI and Permai (Proletarian People's Union) was an insult (*penistaan*) to Islam. This contention led to fragmented parties with different agendas. NU and PSII tended to remain silent and focused on the political and constitutional demands of Muslims. Socialist and Christian parties kept their distance from Masyumi, but the Communists stood firmly behind PNI.²⁵² Madinier argued that although Masyumi, whose key campaign slogan was anti-communist against all non-Muslim parties, never attacked NU, PSII, and Perti particularly on religious doctrine, it exploited the three's ambivalent positions towards PKI to effectively frame itself as the only legitimate power against communism.²⁵³

The rivalry between Masyumi and PKI often ended up in harsh politics involving slander. For example, at one of its rallies on 28 April 1954 held in Malang, a banner was shown at the podium from which PKI's secretary DN Aidit would deliver his speech saying, "Condemn the terrorist-bandits of the BKOOI and Masyumi."²⁵⁴ Aidit later explained to *Abadi* that PKI was not anti-

²⁵⁰ The complete statement was written in *Mimbar Pembangunan* Tahun VI, No. 2, Februari 1953 as quoted in Muhammad Iqbal, "ISU DASAR NEGARA INDONESIA MENJELANG PEMILU 1955: Studi Kasus Pidato Politik Soekarno Di Amuntai 27 Januari 1953," *negara Islam, nasionalis netral agama, pidato politik*, 2011 10, no. 2 (2011).

²⁵¹ Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*, p 11.

²⁵² Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*, p 11.

²⁵³ Madinier, *Islam and politics in Indonesia: The Masyumi party between democracy and integralism*, p 146.

²⁵⁴ *Abadi* 17 May 1954/30 April 1954

religion, but anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. Contrarily, He accused Masyumi of harming the religion itself saying:

The Prophet was not a man whose ideas were like Masyumi's ideas. His Islam was better than Masyumi's Islam. To vote for Masyumi is to wish for the world to go to hell. To join Masyumi is haram, whereas to join PKI is halal.²⁵⁵

PKI and PNI shared the same interests on certain issues and decided not to attack each other, at least openly at the national level. But the two parties consistently campaigned against Masjumi by associating it with Darul Islam and foreign plantation and mining businesses.²⁵⁶ Darul Islam was an Islamic rebellion led by the unbending R.M. Kartosoewirjo during the Indonesian revolution against the Dutch. It originated in West Java before spreading to other regions, and declared the establishment of "Islamic State of Indonesia" in 1949. Kartosoewirjo was one of the founders of the Masyumi party in 1945 and became its representative for West Java in 1947.²⁵⁷ PKI was fiercely antagonistic towards Masjumi, branding the other as an extremist, an alien and inimical to the widely hailed nationalist values. In response, Masjumi attacked PKI by accusing it of being subservient to Moscow, reiterating its role in the Madiun Affair;²⁵⁸ anti-religious; and denounced it as *kafir* (unbelievers). The attack was also waged on Masyumi's *Abadi* newspaper article saying that

However, these noble ideals by the communists are to be realized through communist revolutions and inhumane dictatorships through anti-God teaching

...²⁵⁹

Another pro-Masyumi media, *Hikmah* magazine, published a caricature depicting PKI as intending to get rid of the first principle of Pancasila, Belief in the Almighty God. A caricature

²⁵⁵ Abadi 17 May 1954

²⁵⁶ Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*.

²⁵⁷ Quinton Temby, "Imagining an Islamic State in Indonesia: From Darul Islam to Jemaah Islamiyah," *Indonesia*, no. 89 (2010).

²⁵⁸ Madiun Affair was a long enmity which ended in an armed conflict between the government of Republic of Indonesia and the long-time left-wing opposition group, People's Democratic Front (FDR) in East Java that claimed thousands of lives in September 1948. Musso integrated FDR into an expanded PKI upon his return from Moscow. Akiko Sugiyama, "Remembering and Forgetting Indonesia's Madiun Affair: Personal Narratives, Political Transitions, and Historiography, 1948–2008," *Indonesia* 92 (2011).; Feith, *The decline of constitutional democracy in Indonesia*, p 11.

²⁵⁹ Abadi 15 Februari 1955

depicting a buffalo and a man wearing a shirt with PKI on it cutting the head off the buffalo, representing *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* of Pancasila principles (Figure 8).



Figure 8 Negative campaign against PKI

(Source: *Hikmah*, 26 Juni 1954)

The Masyumi party relied heavily on Islamic belief and piety when attacking other parties. In particular, the *kafir* label was a central piece of ammunition for Masyumi to attack non-Islamic parties, regardless of their piety and adherence to Islam, such as PNI and PKI. Leaders of Masyumi even went as far as to say that they refused to provide members of PKI a proper Muslim burial rite.²⁶⁰ Madinier argues that although Masyumi declared itself as the sole party of the Islam community and cited that anyone who was a Muslim should vote for the Islamic party (Masyumi), it barely made any reference to Islam in its programs and policy preferences during the campaign, remaining over confident and boosting instead its image of inclusivity, which later explained its disappointing performance for the party elites at the election result.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*, p 13.

²⁶¹ Madinier, *Islam and politics in Indonesia: The Masyumi party between democracy and integralism*, p 202-07.

Parties also staged negative campaigns on policy issues. For example, special licences for imports issued by the Minister of Economic Affairs in the Ali cabinet were strongly attacked by both Masjumi and the Socialists, accusing it of being a wasteful and discriminatory policy. The Chairman of the Socialist Party of Indonesia (PSI), Syahrir, criticized the policy during his speech at the second congress of PSI on 5-12 June 1955 in Jakarta: "As a result of the special license policy, it has not only disrupted the people's economy but has disrupted the people's situation and has endangered society and the state in general."²⁶²

It was difficult for the Ali government to defend its policy because of its actual consequences, such as factory collapses, shortages of important imports, and increasing inflation. The position of the government was exacerbated by the criticisms raised by the opposition of corruption and imports of luxury cards.²⁶³ Furthermore, the Ali government was also attacked by the opposition on the issue of political appointments and dismissals, such as the lack of opposition representation, for example, Masyumi at the Central Electoral Committee, the delay of elections, the dependence of government on PKI's support in parliament, and the unexpected growth of PKI seen as the result of the involvement between the government and PNI.²⁶⁴

The election results showed that voters inclined towards moderate parties and favoured "middle-of-the road" appeals.²⁶⁵ Ultimately, religious-based parties were the losers when compared to the nationalist parties, such as the PNI. The results showed the successes of the top four political parties with the voters: Indonesian National Party (22.3%), Masyumi Party (20.9%), Nahdlatul Ulama (18.4%), and Communist Party (16.4%).²⁶⁶ These results led to the formation of four ideological blocks of parties with their own socio-religious basis: NU with traditional Muslim, Masyumi with modernist Muslim, PNI with the nationalists, and PKI with the Communists, which Geertz referred to as *aliran* (streams) politics.²⁶⁷ These four major parties were seen as representing two opposing political ideologies. PNI and PKI represented secular nationalism, while Masyumi and the NU represented Islamic nationalism. The former intended to establish a pluralist secular state, while the later pursued the establishment of an Islamic state based on syari'ah law.²⁶⁸ Although it is hard to know the exact effect of the fierce negative campaigns on

²⁶² "Slogan2 Koeksistensi dan Perdamaian Tak Dapat Mengengjangkan Rakyat Lapar," *Indonesia raya* (Jakarta), 13 Djuni 1955.

²⁶³ Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*, p 11.

²⁶⁴ Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*, p 12.

²⁶⁵ Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*, p 14.

²⁶⁶ The complete list of parties and share of votes can be seen in Feith, *The Indonesian Election of 1955*, p 58.

²⁶⁷ Geertz categorizes Javanese society into three groups namely *abangan*, *santri* and *prijaji* which show distinct sociological and religious characteristics and are distributed into different *aliran* above. *Politik aliran* literally means "stream or current, ... an ideologically defined political faction animated by rather far-reaching moral ambitions. In particular, an *aliran* consists of a political party surrounded by a set of sodalities – that is, voluntary organization – formally or informally linked to it." Clifford Geertz, *The social history of an Indonesian town* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965), 125.

²⁶⁸ Aris Ananta, Evi Nurvidya Arifin, and Leo Suryadinata, *Emerging democracy in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005).

voters, according to Feith, who wrote the key work on this period, a trend clearly emerged towards an extreme elite polarization or ideological polarization around the role of Islam in the state.²⁶⁹ This ideological contestation continued to shape politics and election campaigns in Indonesia for years to come.

After the election, the new republic was eclipsed by political conflict and crisis, an unexpected twist considering the achievement of the election. The ideological conflict culminated at the *Konstituante's* post-election meeting in Bandung aimed to formulate a permanent constitution for the new state, which faced impasse and failed. This led Soekarno to issue a presidential decree (Dekret Presiden) on 5 July 1959 that disbanded the *Konstitutante* and stated the return to the UUDS 1950 constitution.²⁷⁰ Further, Soekarno declared the installment of Guided Democracy in 1959, which led to a reduction of political parties from more than 40 to only 10, including the suspension of Masyumi through a presidential decree on 17 August 1960.²⁷¹ The 10 parties extended two ideological leanings, either secular nationalist, which intended to establish a pluralist secular state, or Islamic, which intended to establish an Islamic state based on *syari'ah* law.²⁷²

In conclusion, the negative campaigning in Indonesia's first democratically held elections of 1955 was driven by strong ideological party positions, particularly between Masyumi and PKI allying with PNI. Islam was a central factor in the campaigns, both as an ideology and religious identity. Masyumi led the Islamic parties in attacking other parties by labelling them as *kafir* (unbelievers), while some among them were Muslim. Generally, the evidence provided here shows how the negative campaign was waged openly through official campaign messages. At the same time, there was also relevant and useful information in the negative campaigning around ideology, cabinet politics, economic policy, and party track-records. The role of Islam in the state was central to the campaign and party ideological positions, and therefore negative campaigning around Islam could be seen as being highly relevant to governance and to the role of political parties in the context of the 1955 parliamentary cabinet.

²⁶⁹ Feith, *The decline of constitutional democracy in Indonesia*.

²⁷⁰ Hari Soegiman, "Tinjauan Pelaksanaan Pemilihan Umum 1992 dan Prospeknya," in *Pemilihan Umum 1992, Suatu Evaluasi*, ed. M Sudibjo (Jakarta: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1995).

²⁷¹ Masyumi was banned by the government for its involvement to overthrow the government in 1958.

²⁷² Ananta, Arifin, and Suryadinata, *Emerging democracy in Indonesia*.

2.2. Negative campaigning in New Order elections (1966-1998)

The New Order era entailed a period of 32 years of authoritarian regime under President Soeharto, beginning after an abortive coup in 1965. The New Order government banned the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), delayed and ultimately destroyed free and fair elections, and established the Golkar party as the political machinery of the state. The banning of PKI took place through the resolution of the Provisional People's Consultative Assembly (MPRS) in 1966, which stated that the teaching and ideology of Communism/Marxism-Leninism basically contradicts with Pancasila. It did not only ban the organization of PKI, but also Communism or Marxism-Leninism as an ideology. Article 2 of the resolution states,

Every activity to spread or develop the ideology or teachings of Communism/Marxism-Leninism in all its forms and manifestations in Indonesia, and the use of all kinds of apparatus and media for the dissemination or development of such ideas or teachings is prohibited.²⁷³

The People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) elected Soeharto as president in 1971, which in many ways formally marked the beginning of a long history of authoritarian government.²⁷⁴ Despite regular 'elections' under the New Order regime, the authoritarian political system and repressive electoral regulations obstructed political parties from free and fair campaigning, and led to regular victories for the Golkar party, which had all the resources of the state.

The New Order government established a hegemonic party system through several strategies, such as the creation of a repressive security apparatus to maintain political order and stability, the depolitization of the masses ("floating mass") to focus on economy, the diffusion of political parties, and the formation of electoral system and laws that insured the victory of Golkar.²⁷⁵ Also, Golkar controlled the counting process for votes, which led to manipulation of election results. The government excessively dominated almost all levels of the election process, as seen in the appointment of LPU (General Election Commission), PPI (Indonesian Election Committee), and Panwaslak Pemilu (Election Supervisory Committee). Additionally, covert partisanship of public

²⁷³ Ketetapan Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Sementara Republik Indonesia No.: XXV/MPRS/1966 Tentang Pembubaran Partai Komunis Indonesia. Pernyataan Sebagai Organisasi Terlarang Diseluruh Wilayah Negara Republik Indonesia Bagi Partai Komunis Indonesia Dan Larangan Setiap Kegiatan Untuk Menyebarkan Atau Mengembangkan Faham Atau Ajaran Komunis/Marxisme-Leninisme.

²⁷⁴ R. William Liddle, "The 1977 Indonesian Election and New Order Legitimacy," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1978).; Widjanarko Puspoyo, *Dari Soekarno Hingga Yudhoyono, Pemilu Indonesia 1955-2009* (Solo: PT Era Adicitra Intermedia, 2012).

²⁷⁵ Afan Gaffar, *Javanese voters: A case study of election under a hegemonic party system* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1989), p 37-63.

servants towards Golkar at almost all levels of governments betrayed the free and fair principle of election processes.²⁷⁶

The first New Order election in 1971, contested by 10 parties,²⁷⁷ saw a controlled and censored campaign where the military and government made strong efforts to ensure the victory of Golkar. The government also detailed many campaign restrictions—mostly directed strictly to other parties but not to Golkar. For example, it was prohibited to discuss the five principles of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, to slander, show disrespect to government officials, individuals, groups, and other countries. It also emphasized the ban of saying or doing anything that would allow the resurgence of the Old Order and PKI. Campaign teams were required to submit campaign materials (posters, pamphlets, fliers, and so on) for approval and to secure permits from police officers, local military commanders, and so on who would decide the place and time of campaigning. Moreover, ministers, governors, district, and sub-district heads actively campaigned for Golkar using government facilities.²⁷⁸ The use of *marhaenism* and Soekarno's name as campaign messages by the PNI led to another restriction by the military, saying it was unlawful.²⁷⁹ Mass rallies featuring music concerts and the distribution of printed materials were also common and continued to be employed in the following elections.

The New Order regime conducted five elections from 1971 until 1997 to elect members of parliament using a closed list proportional representation system. After 1971, these elections were contested by only three political parties namely PDI, PPP, and Golkar. Controlling political parties through fusion resulted in two parties remaining, namely PPP (a combination of Islamist parties, such as NU, Parmusi, PSII, and Perti on 5 January 1973), and PDI (a combination of nationalist parties, such as PNI, IPKI, Murba, Parkindo and Partai Katolik) on 10 January 1973. PKI was banned.²⁸⁰ Other oppressive ways to control political parties were obliging all parties to adopt Pancasila as their only ideology and appointing party chairpersons directly, such as in the case of PDI.²⁸¹

²⁷⁶ Syamsuddin Haris, *Menggugat Pemilihan Umum Orde Baru*, ed. Syamsuddin Haris (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia dan PPW LIPI, 1998).

²⁷⁷ The ten parties are PNI, NU, Parmusi, PSII, Perti, Partai Katolik, Parkindo, Murba, IPKI and Golkar. Soegiman, "Tinjauan Pelaksanaan Pemilihan Umum 1992 dan Prospeknya."

²⁷⁸ Gaffar, *Javanese voters: A case study of election under a hegemonic party system*, p 75-81.

²⁷⁹ Gaffar, *Javanese voters: A case study of election under a hegemonic party system*, 78-79.

²⁸⁰ Soeharto reduced the number of parties significantly from the previous election in 1973 into two namely PDI and PPP. These two parties and Golkar were obliged to embrace Pancasila as their sole ideologies. Golkar, formerly a group of anti-communist organizations, was established by Soeharto as the political arm of the Indonesian Armed Forces and later of the New Order regime. Golkar won all the six national elections (1971, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, and 1997) conducted during the new order era in a highly controlled poll. Soeharto was elected president by members of MPR through a majority vote. Ananta, Arifin, and Suryadinata, *Emerging democracy in Indonesia*.

²⁸¹ Fernita Darwis, *Pemilihan Spekulatif, Mengungkap Fakta Seputar Pemilu 2009* (Bandung: Penerbit Alfabeta, 2011), p 17.

These three parties contested an election for the first time in 1977. The contestants ran their official campaigns from 24 February until 24 April 1977.²⁸² The election was held on 2 May 1977 and was viewed as the New Order's power consolidation. It was taboo to talk about social identity issues, such as ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup issues (SARA), out of the fear of horizontal tension and chaos as defined by the government. SARA is an acronym for ethnicity (Suku), religion (Agama), race (Ras), and interest-based group (Antar Golongan). It was a rhetorical term used by the New Order regime to maintain order and stability. It was part of New Order security doctrine to control social struggles of any sorts politically and culturally. Issues related to SARA were framed as threats to national security and the integration and implementation of such policy was the domain of the military.²⁸³ The term SARA was founded by TNI Admiral (Ret.) Muhammad Sudomo in 1978/1980 on his position as commander of *Kopkamtib* (Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order). It was part of his strategy to deter conflict and suppress opposition to the government.²⁸⁴ After the collapse of the New Order regime, the term has been misused as being a negative connotation. SARA is actually a neutral or positive term. What was deplored during the reform era was discrimination based on SARA or pitting SARA against each other for political purposes. A renowned historian Anhar Gonggong told me that SARA should be even openly discussed at public spaces for the strengthening of Indonesia's true unity in diversity through recognition and accommodation. He explained,

When I was still a student, I said that SARA should be discussed in public. And because I demanded that, I was arrested several times for demonstrating against the ban. The New Order prohibited discussions because the government was afraid of clashes. Even though I am a Bugis person, they are Javanese people, they are Papuan people; that's SARA. Precisely that's how we become Indonesian. SARA is real. I'm Bugis, but I'm Indonesian. When people are prohibited from talking about SARA, in my opinion it is duping, not seeing the real facts of ourselves. That is our reality, the reality of Man. There are no humans on earth who don't have SARA on their own terms. Only their ways of managing it are different from us.²⁸⁵

282 "Memasuki Periode Kampanye," *Kompas* (Jakarta), 22 Februari 1977.

283 Leonard C Sebastian, *Realpolitik ideology: Indonesia's use of military force* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006).

284 *Komkaptib* was an agency formed by Soeharto soon after the 1965 tragedy and became its commander with the core goal is to restore security and order following the order he received from the President. R. William Liddle, "Soeharto's Indonesia: Personal Rule and Political Institutions," *Pacific Affairs* 58, no. 1 (1985).

285 Anhar Gonggong, Zoom Interview, 22 August, 2022.

The use of SARA as a political as well as security rhetorical device was initiated by Sudomo in 1973. At his press conference in Jakarta then deputy commander of *Kopkamtib*, Admiral Sudomo, asserted and reminded individuals, groups, and particularly the press not to inflame SARA issues in their activities. He urged the press, and everyone to be aware of SARA, which stands for issues of ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-social groups in society. He called on the press that anyone should not contradict SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-social power) in society. At the same time, he urged everyone to share responsibility for maintaining security and social stability, and cited that a threat to security could come from different actors, particularly the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI).²⁸⁶ The security doctrine continued from this time, and it was socialized to local levels throughout the reign of the New Order government.²⁸⁷

In the 1982 election, restrictions on campaigning were even more tightly stipulated in election regulations, which led to the abandonment of criticisms and negative campaigns against the government. For example, Government Regulation (PP) No. 41/1980, operational regulation of Election Law No.2/1980, explicitly stated that it was prohibited to run campaign activities that could imply insulting God, Nabi, and the secret books of religions, or against the religion of others.²⁸⁸ It also banned negative evaluation or contrasting the three political parties. Parties did not have the opportunity to show the failures, limitations, and wrongdoings of incumbents to dissuade voters from voting for the Golkar party. To attract potential voters, campaigning took the form of festivities with artists, rallies, carnivals, and other mass gatherings. As a result, campaigns were perceived as a *pesta demokrasi*, festive rather than as a democratic process to educate voters.²⁸⁹ The nickname was declared by Soeharto during his opening speech at the Governors/Mayors/Regents' National Meeting in Jakarta on Monday 23 February 1981. He said that the "Election must be felt as a merry making of democracy (*pesta poranya demokrasi*), as a responsible use of democratic rights and not turn into something tense and gripping."²⁹⁰ There is a sense that the government tried to frame elections peaceful and entertaining where everyone was happy as a basis of thwarting criticism and dissent, including negative campaigns.

Although under suppression, political parties still tried to find ways to persuade voters, using group-based appeals without criticizing other parties. For example, on its posters Golkar

²⁸⁶ "Peringatan Kopkamtib," *Kompas* (Jakarta), 15 September 1973.

²⁸⁷ For example, see "Pangkopkamtib kepada Laksus Daerah dan Wilayah: Ambil Langkah Tegas terhadap Gejolak Sosial," *Kompas* (Jakarta), 19 April 1980.

²⁸⁸ I compared elections laws from 1955 to 2019 including its operational regulation that specify the do's and don'ts in campaigning, among others, and selected the striking ones. See Government Regulation (PP) No. 41/1980.

²⁸⁹ Arbi Sanit, "Pemilihan Umum dan Sirkulasi Elit," in *Mengugat Pemilihan Umum Orde Baru*, ed. Syamsuddin Haris (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia dan PPW LIPI, 1998).

²⁹⁰ "Pemilu harus dirasakan sebagai pesta poranya demokrasi, sebagai penggunaan hak demokrasi yang bertanggung jawab dan sama sekali tidak berubah menjadi sesuatu yang menegangkan dan mencekam." As quoted in <https://tirta.id/pesta-demokrasi-istilah-pemilu-ciptaan-daripada-soeharto-dbqJ>

depicted itself as a party that were “Always fighting for the improvement of Hajj pilgrimage”; the PDI appealed to youth urging that “Young Generation don't be provoked by emotions, stay united to vote for PDIP,” and the PPP played the religion card by declaring themselves “The United Party of choice for Muslims,” and that “It is forbidden (*haram*) to choose a leader from the disbelievers (*orang-orang kafir*)” on their posters.²⁹¹ In addition to displaying posters, scholars observed that there were other main campaign activities of the three parties, particularly in Java, namely open meetings, parades, and displays of writings/drawings.²⁹² The installation of posters in public spaces were usually done at night by the parties' campaign teams; however, Golkar normally took more advantage of it thanks to their readiness and financial support to produce larger posters. In response, PDI and PPP would install their poster side by side but higher than that of Golkar's, creating messages that answer or denounce Golkar's messages.²⁹³

The use of Islamic rhetoric was strong, but it was usually employed for positive campaigning to woo Islamic voters. It was visible in the production of messages by the three political parties on posters and billboards in the 1982 election, which showed three tendencies. First, messages related to religion were used to appeal to Muslim voters. For example: “Islam is my religion, Kaaba is my choice” (PPP), “Ulama choose Golkar” (Golkar), “Islam is my religion, civil servant is my status, PDI is my choice” (PDIP). Second, messages potentially attacked rivals with indirect targets. For instance, “The sane choose Kaaba” (PPP), “My soul is not worth a shirt,” and “PDI doesn't force” (PDI). Third, the campaign messages were vague and far from real life problems.²⁹⁴

However, the lack of space and opportunity to criticize opponents and question the government policy led to bland and effortless campaigning. For example, 1992 and 1997 showed little initiatives from parties or the population towards election campaigns, in terms of campaign activities.²⁹⁵ Further, the selection of issues during the campaign indicated a pattern of recycled issues from previous elections, showing a rhetorical gridlock.²⁹⁶ The staleness of the campaigning was evident in 1997, where parties promised to alleviate poverty, promote education equity, and law enforcement by prosecuting corrupters.²⁹⁷ Consequently the

²⁹¹ Kutut Suwondo, Arief Budiman, and Pradjarta Dirdjosanjoto, *Pemilu dalam poster: Jawa Tengah 1982* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1987), p 66.

²⁹² Suwondo, Budiman, and Dirdjosanjoto, *Pemilu dalam poster: Jawa Tengah 1982*.

²⁹³ Suwondo, Budiman, and Dirdjosanjoto, *Pemilu dalam poster: Jawa Tengah 1982*.

²⁹⁴ Suwondo, Budiman, and Dirdjosanjoto, *Pemilu dalam poster: Jawa Tengah 1982*.

²⁹⁵ Harry Tjan Silalahi, “Evaluasi Pemilihan Umum 1992,” in *Pemilihan Umum 1992, Suatu Evaluasi*, ed. Sudibjo (Jakarta: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1995).

²⁹⁶ Nung Runua, *Dinamika Politik Indonesia* (Jakarta: PT. Bina Rena Pariwara, 1994).

²⁹⁷ J Kristiadi, T. A. Legowo, and Budi NT. Harjanto, *Pemilihan Umum 1997: Perkiraan, Harapan, dan Evaluasi* (Jakarta: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1997), p 78-128.

campaign tended to be a monologue where politicians saw Golkar's victory as inevitable and therefore the election campaign was largely procedural rather than competitive.²⁹⁸ This dull campaigning was promoted by the New Order government. The government urged supporters of parties to gather in a place, field, or building where they listened to political speeches from campaign officials or enjoyed traditional music concerts.²⁹⁹ The much-demanded dialogic campaigning was invisible either in the forms of public meetings or media reports and television programs.

Throughout the early decades of the New Order, the government controlled the mass media, in particular allowing only one state-run television news station, which bowed obediently to President Suharto, the Golkar party, and the military. A hope for more substantive and free campaigning emerged after the establishment of new private television stations as it could facilitate two-way and bottom-up communication. However, the five private televisions that went on-air between 1987 and 1995 were either associated with Suharto's family or to his cronies.³⁰⁰ It was visible during the election campaign that the television channels were not only unable to offer genuine debates, but that they were also partisan. Despite the claim that these media covered the campaign activities of the three political parties equally, there was bias towards the Golkar party. For example, Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia (TPI) reported the campaign activities of Golkar predominantly over the other two parties. The reason was that this television channel was owned by one of the Golkar' elite, Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana, daughter of the president. Further, for the whole media coverage, Golkar was advantaged by the higher number of campaign spokespersons sitting as ministers or other public figures, leading to strong coverage by the media.³⁰¹ Any changes to the media structure and television stations during the period did not change the discourse and dynamic of the election campaigns other than strengthening the position of the ruling party.

The New Order regime continued for almost 32 years based on the use of violence, repressive regulations, and propaganda. The government established propaganda through the use of ideological state apparatus, such as education, mass media, and even films representing the honesty of those in power.³⁰² Repeated narratives mobilized during the campaigns of the ruling

²⁹⁸ Fikri Yathir, "Kampanye Monologis," UMMAT, 26 Mei, 1997.

²⁹⁹ Ashadi Siregar, "Kampanye bagi Massa," D & R, 24 Mei, 1997.

³⁰⁰ David T Hill and Krishna Sen, *The Internet in Indonesia's new democracy* (Routledge, 2005).

³⁰¹ Kamarudin, Ahmad Muayad, and Telni Rusmitantri, "Wajah Kampanye di Layar Kaca," UMMAT, 26 Mei, 1997.

³⁰² "Phobia Kiri: Warisan abadi propaganda Orde Baru," <https://www.rappler.com/>, 2016, accessed 1 March, 2024, <https://www.rappler.com/world/indonesia/124845-phobia-kiri-warisan-abadi-propaganda-orde-baru/>; Wijaya Herlambang, *Kekerasan budaya pasca 1965: bagaimana Orde Baru melegitimasi anti-komunisme melalui sastra dan film* (Tangerang: Marjin Kiri, 2013); Saskia Eleonora Wieringa and Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, *Propaganda dan Genosida di Indonesia, Sejarah Rekayasa Hantu 1965* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2020).

party based on false information echoed the propaganda produced by the government, such as the succession of power from Soekarno, the event of G30S/PKI, communist/Marxist ideology, and the existence of Pancasila as a sole ideology. Vatikiotis argued that the government replayed the controversial G30S/PKI movie annually on state television TVRI to depict the communists as bad and barbarous and the army as virtuous and good.³⁰³ The regime manipulated people's understandings of history so that it could maintain its power and legitimacy for decades. Labelling political opponents or those disliked by the government as PKI or communist was a constantly employed political tool to delegitimize dissent and have reasons to obstruct criticism towards the government and its supporting political machinery, and to portray dissenting groups as threats or enemies of the state.³⁰⁴

A key narrative emerged during this time that became central to Indonesian election campaigns in the future—the trend within black campaigning of being labelled a communist. This became a major form of black campaigning used by the New Order government against political opponents. The dirtiest negative campaigning was the misrepresentation of people's pasts so as to favour those in power. The New Order regime declared PKI as the enemy of the state, and people were afraid to be called adherents of PKI. Another related label was 'atheist,' considered as an enemy of state and connected to communism by the state under the doctrine of Pancasila.³⁰⁵

In conclusion, negative campaigning in the New Order regime was conducted by the government to secure the victories of Golkar. The government could stage harsh and conspirative negative campaigning, but other parties were banned from criticizing the government and the military. Criticizing the government was responded to with intimidation, harassment, and physical punishment from the military. Some issues were strictly prohibited to be discussed, let alone criticized during elections, such as the president's family, Pancasila, and religion. It was taboo to talk about social identity issues, such as ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup (SARA) out of fear of government oversight and militaristic response. Despite illegitimate elections that were neither free nor fair, negative campaigning played a role in the nature of narratives during the New Order era. First, there were many top-down narratives coming from the government pertaining to state ideology, with the use of PKI or communist labelling of political opponents during elections and beyond by the government. This became a

³⁰³ Michael R. J. Vatikiotis, *Indonesian Politics Under Suharto: The Rise and Fall of the New Order*, Third ed. (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), p 2.

³⁰⁴ Herlambang, *Kekerasan budaya pasca 1965: bagaimana Orde Baru melegitimasi anti-komunisme melalui sastra dan film*; Timo Duile, "Atheism in Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 26, no. 2 (2018).

³⁰⁵ Duile, "Atheism in Indonesia."

powerful narrative so ingrained in the consciousness of Indonesian politics that it continued as a negative campaign narrative long after the fall of the New Order.

2.3. Negative campaigning at the first reformasi era's election (1999)

President Soeharto was forced to step down by a people power movement known as *reformasi* in 1998, ushering in a new era of political and societal freedom. Initially, Suharto was replaced by his vice president, BJ Habibie. However, because Habibie's government was perceived as a continuation of the New Order regime, the Indonesian public demanded an expedited election to democratically elect a new government. This led to the election on 7 June 1999.³⁰⁶ Contested by 48 political parties, the first election in the reform era was meant to select members of the DPR (People's Representative Council) using closed party-lists and a proportional representation system. Later the elected members of the DPR along with the DPD would select a president and vice president through majority voting. New laws on elections and political parties were passed allowing Indonesia's first free and fair elections since 1955.

Some old parties were reinstalled from the 1955 elections, such as PSII, Partai Kristen, Masyumi, and NU. Major players in the election were mostly parties of the New Order era, such as Golkar, PPP, the renewed PDIP, and newly established parties, such as PAN, PBB, and PK.³⁰⁷ Out of the 48 parties taking part in the election, 21 parties made their way to the parliament to select a president and vice-president. After a heated meeting at the parliament, Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri were appointed the new president and vice president. Other prominent candidates were Amien Rais, Wiranto, BJ Habbibie, Sri Sultan HB X, Akbar Tanjung, Nurcholish Madjid, and Try Sutrisno.³⁰⁸

Diversity of campaigning activities started to emerge during a short campaigning period from 19 May to 4 June 1999. Parties staged rallies, speeches on TV, as well as advertisements following scheduled campaigns.³⁰⁹ Political parties enjoyed the free press where national televisions, newspapers, magazines, and FM radio stations regularly covered campaign activities of political parties. The media had freedom to report based on their editorial policy without fear of government intervention too. News coverage, talk shows, dialogues, and political advertisements were common modes of the campaign activities of the parties racing to build a

³⁰⁶ Leo Suryadinata, *Elections and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002).

³⁰⁷ Suryadinata, *Elections and Politics in Indonesia*.

³⁰⁸ TEMPO, "Jangan Beli Kucing dalam Karung," *TEMPO*, 10 Mei 1999.

³⁰⁹ Kompas, *Kompas* 1999, Juni.

good image.³¹⁰ Specifically political ads were published as a reminder of the symbols, numbers, and chairpersons of parties and a call for voting for the intended party. At the same time, presidential candidates sought popularity by joining debates organized by universities, such as ITB and UI. At Universitas Indonesia, Amien Rais, Didin Hafidhudin, Sri Bintang Pamungkas, and Yusril Ihza Mahendra appeared in a debate in May 1999. During the debate, participants attacked each other but also gave statements that led to laughter. For example, Amien Rais said “Yusril is my younger brother. His own English is not yet that fluent,” to which Yusril replied “Now, who actually is arrogant?” But not all candidates were interested. Megawati Soekarnoputri refused to attend because “psywar” (‘perang urat saraf’) was not in accordance with eastern culture. Previous debates at ITB were broadcast on private TV stations, which gave them increased ratings.³¹¹

Some professionalization of campaigning entered the Indonesian election in 1999 with the presence of survey organizations, PR consultants, and political ads. To produce political ads, each party hired PR consultants and advertising agencies, with a rough budget of between six to nine billion rupiah. The campaign tools produced by these agencies were political ads, logos, public communication strategy, mars, jingles, and public events. PKB hired the Sudarto & Noeradi PR agency and Matari Advertising, PAN hired a PR consultant, Miranty Abidin, and Joko Santoso, a creative director of an ad agency, PKP hired PT Media Promo and Matari Advertising, Golkar hired Ida Sudoyo & Associates, a PR agency and Adkreasi, and WOW Production for its advertising, PDIP hired Adwork Euro RSCG for its advertising, and PPP hired Mandiri Advertising.³¹²

Given the fact that the electoral system still resembled the previous system where voters voted for parties rather than candidates, negative campaigning was directed more against political parties than candidates. The Golkar party was the target of most negative campaigns because of its status as the ruling party. For example, PPP accused Golkar in Simeuleu (Aceh) of intending to Christianise Indonesia and accused it of aligning with the ghost following its logo of a banyan tree (Mythologically, in Indonesia the banyan tree is synonymous with the home of evil spirits).³¹³ In Sigli, Golkar was also attacked by PPP, accusing them of being a party of *kafir* (non-believers of Islam).³¹⁴ Another attack came from PDI-P sympathisers in Jakarta, chanting

³¹⁰ Pax Benedanto, Ignatius Haryanto, and E Pudjiachrirusanto, *Pemilihan Umum 1999: Demokrasi atau Rebutan Kursi* (Jakarta: Lembaga Studi Pers dan Pembangunan, 1999).

³¹¹ Arif Zulkifli et al., “Calon Presiden sebelum Sampai Senayan,” *TEMPO*, 10 Mei 1999.

³¹² Benedanto, Haryanto, and Pudjiachrirusanto, *Pemilihan Umum 1999: Demokrasi atau Rebutan Kursi*.

³¹³ KPU, *Buku Evaluasi Pelanggaran dan Kecurangan Pemilihan Umum Tahun 1999*, 4 (Jakarta: Komisi Pemilihan Umum RI, 2000).

³¹⁴ KPU, *Short Buku Evaluasi Pelanggaran dan Kecurangan Pemilihan Umum Tahun 1999*, 8.

that Golkar was a depraved and corrupt party.³¹⁵ PPP's campaign spokespersons also spoke to its supporters, telling them that Golkar was outside of Islam and so was communist and infidel (*kafir*) too.³¹⁶ There were also accusations against Golkar for using state facilities for distributing money in exchange for votes known as "serangan fajar" (dawn attack). Some Golkar elites and ministers were accused of using their positions, facilities, and money to sway voters in the election.³¹⁷ In addition, Abdurrahman Wahid (PKB) was attacked by PPP spokespersons over his sight abilities.³¹⁸

In conclusion, negative campaigning in the 1999 election saw a greater ability to attack, and in most cases understandably criticise, the Golkar party for its past wrongdoings in the New Order. The key themes of attack centered around corruption, money politics, human rights, and abuse of power. At the same time narratives of Islamic piety and the allegiance to a (forbidden) ideology, the PKI, occurred regularly. These strategies included the use of the term *kafir* (non-believers) and labelling others as communists by the parties. These narratives were to continue as Indonesia began a new phase of elections from 2004, which involved direct presidential elections.

2.4. Negative campaigning in the direct presidential elections era (2004-2009)

The 2004 election is a milestone in the history of Indonesian democracy in two respects. First, it introduced direct presidential election. Second, the astonishing number of political parties (237 parties) established with different ideologies that were involved, although only 24 of them made their ways to join the legislative election.³¹⁹ The introduction of a direct presidential election was a major contextual factor that gave rise to a new form of campaigning because individual candidates had to compete directly with other candidates in winning people's votes. The president and vice president were directly elected by popular votes for five-year terms and could be nominated for another five years.

The 2004 election went two rounds on 5 July 2004 and on 20 September 2004. The legislative election was held separately on 5 April 2004. This election implemented two electoral systems: a district system for the presidential and members of DPD elections and an open list proportional

³¹⁵ KPU, Short Buku Evaluasi Pelanggaran dan Kecurangan Pemilihan Umum Tahun 1999, 110.

³¹⁶ KPU, Short Buku Evaluasi Pelanggaran dan Kecurangan Pemilihan Umum Tahun 1999, 111.

³¹⁷ Ruslam F. Mandayun and Jalil Hakim, "Awat Serangan Fajar," *TEMPO*, 9-15 February 1999.

³¹⁸ KPU, Short Buku Evaluasi Pelanggaran dan Kecurangan Pemilihan Umum Tahun 1999, 111.

³¹⁹ Puspoyo, *Dari Soekarno Hingga Yudhoyono, Pemilu Indonesia 1955-2009*.

representation system for legislative election in the context of a multiparty system.³²⁰ This direct election system in a democratic political system with the emergence of private television and political marketing meant a new form of campaigning.

In 2004, for the first-time presidential election was separated from legislative elections. The direct presidential election was regulated as being open only to a political party or a group with a minimum of 3% seat at the DPR or 5% popular votes at national level from the previous election. The first round was contested by five pairs and the second by two pairs, resulting in the win by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) and Jusuf Kalla with 60.62% of votes.³²¹ In the 2009 presidential election, the participants consisted of the incumbent SBY with a new running mate Boediono, Megawati Soekarnoputri pairing with Prabowo Subianto, and Jusuf Kalla with Wiranto as his vice-presidential candidate. SBY was the founder and patron of the newly established Democratic party (2001), whereas his running mate Boediono was an independent. Prabowo Subianto was the founder of the Gerindra party, running on the nationalist political platform. Both Jusuf Kalla and Wiranto were elite figure of the Golkar party before the latter went on to establish his own People's Conscience Party (Hanura) in December 2006. The official campaign periods for the 2004 presidential election went from 11 March to 1 April, but candidates and parties had started their campaign activities much earlier before this official date by displaying party's flag, having party gatherings, holding declarations, giving donations, and so on.³²²

The campaign in 2004 was formally defined by the new election law of (UU) No. 23/2003, stating that the presidential election campaign was defined as entailing activities to convince potential voters by communicating the candidates' vision, missions, and programs. Article 36 of the law said that these campaign activities could be carried out through closed meetings, open face-to-face dialogue, dissemination of information through print and electronic media, radio and television broadcasting, dissemination of campaign material to the public, the display of campaign props in public places, public meetings, public debates, and other activities in line with the law.³²³ This law did not rule out candidates or parties criticizing their opponents as part of

³²⁰ Juri Ardiantoro F, *Yang Perlu Anda Tahu tentang Pemilu 2004* (Jakarta: KPU Provinsi DKI Jakarta, 2003).

³²¹ The first-round contenders are Wiranto and Salahuddin Wahid (22.15%), Megawati Soekarnoputri and Hasyim Muzadi (26.61%), Amien Rais and Siswono Yudo Husodo (14.66%), Hamzah Haz and Agum Gumelar (3.15%). At the second round the pair of Megawati Soekarnoputri and Hasyim Muzadi only secured 39.38% of the votes.

³²² Agust Riewanto, *Ensiklopedia Pemilu, Analisis Kritis Instropektif Pemilu 2004 Menuju Agenda Pemilu 2009* (Wonogiri & Yogyakarta: Lembaga Studi Agama dan Budaya & Fajar Pustaka, 2007), p 17.

³²³ Election Law of (UU) No. 23/2003

the activities during the campaign. In comparison, in the context of the US election, the federal election campaign laws stipulates that the federal election activity, amongst others, means

A public communication that refers to a clearly identified candidate for Federal office (regardless of whether a candidate for State or local office is also mentioned or identified) and that promotes or supports a candidate for that office, or attacks or opposes a candidate for that office (regardless of whether the communication expressly advocates a vote for or against a candidate)³²⁴

However, article 38 of the law UU No, 23/2003 explicitly prohibited candidates from questioning Pancasila as ideology and the 1945 Constitution, insulting someone, religion, ethnicity, race or group, and other candidates. Inciting and bringing people into conflict and disturbing public order were considered as violations against the election law and subject to criminal sanctions.

Modern campaign techniques were adopted in the 2004 elections, such as hiring political consultants, airing television ads, joining TV debates, and relying on surveys when designing campaign activities, which brought a professionalization to campaigning in Indonesia. These new approaches were attributed to the rocketing popularity of SBY ahead of his candidacy after the involvement of political consultant Denny JA, executive director of Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI) and the production of TV political ads as a result.³²⁵ Mietzner observed that the unprecedented influence of the opinion polling since 2004 had forced political parties to nominate a candidate for running an election based on popularity as revealed through a pre-nomination survey.³²⁶ The first survey polling organization was Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI), established in 2003. LSI conducted an electability survey ahead of the election that was validated in the real election results when SBY won. At the same time pre-nomination surveys were also held by IFES, LP3ES, and Soegeng Sarjadi Syndicate, which showed a promising candidacy for SBY. The first political marketing agency that helped candidates in campaigning was Lingkaran Survei Indonesia, who signed professional agreements with political parties.³²⁷

³²⁴ *Federal Election Campaign Laws (Compiled by the Federal Election Commission, February 2019).*

³²⁵ A public service advertisement regarding peaceful elections was broadcast on national television stations authorized by SBY's office, the Coordinating Ministry of Politics and Security Affairs of Indonesia, which sparked criticism from politicians of the ruling party because it was perceived as a covert campaign of SBY as a presidential candidate. Arif Zulkifli et al., "Akrobat Politik SBY," *TEMPO*, 8-14 Maret 2004.

³²⁶ Mietzner, "Political opinion polling in post-authoritarian Indonesia: Catalyst or obstacle to democratic consolidation?."

³²⁷ Ufen, "Electoral Campaigning in Indonesia: The Professionalization and Commercialization after 1998."

Furthermore, the 2004 election started the airing of presidential debates on national TV for the first time,³²⁸ and also the use of a quick count for predicting election results.³²⁹ A survey predicting the election results was held by LP3ES and National Democratic Institute (NDI) by conducting a quick count at 2,500 polling stations.³³⁰ This showed that election campaigning seemed not to be controlled by political parties as it had been before 2004. The direct presidential election in 2004, local election in 2005, and legislative election in 2009 gave rise to the influential role of polling organizations and political consultants in Indonesian democracy. They did not only help parties but displaced them as the central actors of election campaigning.³³¹ Opinion polling supported candidate's campaigns before, during, and after a campaign. After a candidate was named, candidates and their teams compiled at least three important information points from which to design a campaign: the popularity of their candidate, voters preferences (like and dislike), and their pressing issues.³³² This was a first step of oppositional research, which means learning the weaknesses and strengths of opponents based on the opinions of the potential voters: what they liked or disliked about them, what positive and negative issues they associated with them, reasons why they would vote for them or not, and so on. The surveys, which were held during and after a campaign, were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign strategy, which might include attacking opponents to improve it (this is discussed more extensively in Chapter 4).

Television marked a new phase of electoral campaigning, with the massive publication of ads, polling results, and candidates in 2004. Despite the high demand for radio and newspapers, television was the most influential channel that parties and candidates used to promote themselves. Live events and political ads became staples of presidential campaigns, full of emotional and staged appearances of candidates. Observers³³³ found two main trends in the TV mediated-campaigns. First, television exposed the political row between SBY and Megawati Soekarnoputri and depicted SBY as a victim of political competition after a controversial TV ad where SBY made a statement about the citizens' needs for a free, safe, and democratic election. He was accused of using his ministerial status to campaign for his candidacy in the coming presidential election while sitting as a minister. Second, because of the massive coverage by

³²⁸ "Saat Debat Pilpres Diadakan untuk Kali Pertama di Indonesia," Kompas.com, 2019, accessed 28 May 2019, 2019, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2019/01/17/10354791/saat-debat-pilpres-diadakan-untuk-kali-pertama-di-indonesia?page=all>.

³²⁹ "Pemilu 2004 dan Sejarah Quick Count Pertama di Indonesia," tirto.id, 2019, <https://tirto.id/pemilu-2004-dan-sejarah-quick-count-pertama-di-indonesia-dmD5>.

³³⁰ Nezar Patria et al., "Setelah Keduanya Melaju," TEMPO, 5-11 Juli, 2004.

³³¹ Qodari, "The Professionalisation of Politics: The Growing Role of Polling Organisations and Political Consultants."

³³² Hasan Nasbi, In-person Interview, 18 January, 2021; Sirajudin Abbas, In-person Interview, 27 January, 2021; Usep Saepul Ahyar, In-person Interview, 13 December, 2022.

³³³ Lukas Luwarso, Samsuri, and Tri Agus Susanto Siswowardjo, *Media dan pemilu 2004 (SEAPA bersama Koalisi Media untuk Pemilu Bebas dan Adil, 2004)*.

television stations, Golkar succeeded in rebuilding its reputation from a political machine of the New Order to a reformist party, particularly after the first introduction of the Golkar convention in 2003.

The 2004 presidential election signified a fierce political contest. The dynamic surrounding the election was influenced by a conflict between Megawati Soekarnoputri and SBY prior to the election. The conflict, which led to the resignation of SBY as a minister, was instigated by his intention to run as a candidate in the following election without informing the president. The move was deemed as inappropriate by the president because he was still a minister. In his defense, SBY admitted he did not see any reason to report his intention as he was not yet a candidate. As a result, there were many meetings where he was supposed to be invited and present but was not invited or informed by the president. When SBY did not receive any response from the president to his letter for clarification and suggestion, he decided to resign for the sake of ethics and professionalism.³³⁴ The conflict escalated after PDI-P elite Taufik Kiemas who happened to be the husband of the president responded to a group of journalists, saying that "It would be better if SBY directly talked to the president, and not to the media. How come a four-star general acts like a child."³³⁵ This statement exacerbated the sour relation between the president and SBY, which brought popularity to the character of SBY as well as his newly born Democratic Party.³³⁶ My personal interview with SBY's consultant at the time recalled how they played the moment to increase the likeability of SBY:

I divided the campaign into 3 parts. Official campaigns and unofficial campaigns. The unofficial campaign is before the KPU determines a permanent candidate. Electability is an accumulation of the candidate's name and likeability. This level of fame has a huge influence on society. Then, there are four quadrants of candidates at elections: known and liked, like SBY in 2004; known but disliked; unknown but liked; and unknown and not liked. In the 2004 presidential election, I said to Mr. SBY, 'Sir, what you lack is just popularity; if you are known you will automatically be liked by the voters.' So, I gave advice to do fame in the form of a political advertisement, which was then read by PDIP as a manoeuvre. Then conflict arose and a political attack came out with the statement the "General is like a child." But this attack then snowballed and actually increased

³³⁴ TEMPO, "Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono: "Menurut Etika, Saya Harus Mundur"," TEMPO, 15-21 Maret 2004.

³³⁵ D Danny Hamonangan Simanjuntak, "Rival-rival" Politik SBY (Jakarta: Penerbit NARASI, 2008).

³³⁶ Akbar Faizal, Partai Demokrat & SBY: Mencari Jawab sebuah Masa Depan (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005).

SBY's popularity from 60% to 90% and his electability to number one among other candidates.”³³⁷

Some observers argued that the intention of SBY to contest the 2004 election was seen as a threat to the victory of Megawati Soekarnoputri in the election. Unsatisfied with her defeat, in the 2009 presidential election Megawati Soekarnoputri contested the election along with her former minister, the incumbent SBY. Another contestant was Vice President Jusuf Kalla, running with his own party. The election did not go into a second round because SBY won in a landslide victory with 60.8% votes (Megawati's was 26.79% and Jusuf Kalla only 12.41%).

In contrast to previous elections, the 2009 presidential election was contested by three candidates nominated by a coalition of parties: the incumbent SBY, the incumbent vice president Jusuf Kalla, and former president Megawati Soekarnoputri. The incumbent president won the election conducted on 8 July 2009, gaining 60.8% of the votes. Campaign strategies were dominated using banners, billboards, ads, and songs. There were also websites of the candidates and televised debates. Additionally, professionalization of campaigning went deeper in 2009 because of the high use of polling, political consultants, and television ads by candidates and political parties. According to Urbaningrum, the former chairperson of PD, the incumbent SBY ran two styles of campaigning with their respective media. First, “serangan darat” (ground campaign), where PD staged campaigns through canvassing, public gatherings, and public forums. Second, “serangan udara” (air campaign), where they ran advertisements through newspapers, radio, magazine, television, posters, cellular phones, and the internet, in addition to free coverage of party events and the candidate by the news media.³³⁸ Like the other candidates,³³⁹ SBY used a campaign website with participatory features, such as donating, signing up, getting souvenirs, commenting, and polling.³⁴⁰

Although general convention holds that challengers attack more frequently than incumbents, political conflict among political elites before the election determined the course of campaigns in the 2004 presidential election. Incumbent Megawati Soekarnoputri paired with Muslim figure Hasyim Muzadi to seek a second term; they did not receive much attacks from other candidates. In the first round of the election, five candidates received some level of criticism from opponents before it got more intense in the second round when two pairs competed to be the worthiest of the people's votes. In contrast to conventional wisdom, challengers were fiercely attacked with

³³⁷ Amost Inage, In-person Interview, 27 December, 2020.

³³⁸ Urbaningrum, *Revolusi Sunyi: Mengapa Partai Demokrat dan SBY Menang Pemilu 2009?*, p 94-95.

³³⁹ Official campaign websites of Megawati and Jusuf-Kalla are www.megaprabowo.com and www.jklebihbaik.com

³⁴⁰ Official campaign website of SBY is www.sbypresidenku.com

black campaigns. For example, prior to the legislative election on 5 April 2004, flyers were distributed across the country promoting a black campaign against SBY, which accused him of being an agent for the CIA and that his party was pursuing Christianisation. Another slanderous piece of information against SBY was that he was accused of having a plan to fight whoever intended to implement syariah law in the country. The flyers also urged Muslims not to vote for the Democratic party.³⁴¹

In the meantime, the incumbent Megawati was attacked by unofficial campaign actors in 2004 when a group of kyai (Islamic cleric) opposed the idea of a woman being president.³⁴² This was seen as a tactic to sway voters towards their male candidate. However, Megawati and her running mate an Islamic figure, Hasyim Muzadi, made it to the second round at the election.³⁴³ National televisions reported this attack against Megawati widely after NU released a fatwa to inform people that it was *haram* (forbidden) to vote for a woman to be president. A television channel quoted a religious leader saying “...tidak akan sukses atau bahagia suatu kaum menyerahkan kepemimpinannya kepada seorang Wanita.” (“...will not be successful or happy a people surrendering their leadership to a woman”).³⁴⁴ Other campaigns covered by televisions were the case of polygamy of Hamzah Haz, SBY’s family’s conversion to religion, and Wiranto’s use of the AFI singing contest VCD to campaign.³⁴⁵

Wiranto, along with other ex-military candidates, faced strong negative campaigns too. The most intense was a movement by students, NGO activists, and artists resisting presidential candidates who were ex-military, such as SBY, Wiranto, and Agum Gumelar. However, this movement was allegedly supported by a politician that had nominated a civilian candidate in the election.³⁴⁶ This negative campaign did not work because the public tended to favour the ex-military candidate SBY instead of the civilian candidates, who faced serious trust issues among voters. And of note, all the presidential candidates had ex-military figures in their campaign team’s inner circle. Worried by the damaging effect on their candidate, the Golkar party denounced the act and called it ‘black propaganda’ by opponents. Meanwhile, PDI-P politician, Jacob Nuwa Wea, as Minister of Manpower admitted to welcoming student representatives at his residence and giving some money but denied his involvement in and acknowledgement of

³⁴¹ Faizal, Partai Demokrat & SBY: Mencari Jawab sebuah Masa Depan.

³⁴² "Hasyim: Fatwa Haram Pilih Mega Bagian dari Kampanye," Detik.com, 2004, accessed 8 March, 2024, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-160788/hasyim-fatwa-haram-pilih-mega-bagian-dari-kampanye>.

³⁴³ Urbaningrum, *Revolusi Sunyi: Mengapa Partai Demokrat dan SBY Menang Pemilu 2009?*, 265.

³⁴⁴ Irawan Saptono et al., *Pemilu di Layar Kaca: monitoring berita pemilu di media televisi pada Pemilu 2004* (Jakarta: Institut Studi Arus Informasi (ISAI), 2005).

³⁴⁵ Saptono et al., *Pemilu di Layar Kaca: monitoring berita pemilu di media televisi pada Pemilu 2004*, p 359-60.

³⁴⁶ W. Y. Hanibal Wijayanto et al., "Lagu Sumbang Soal Militer," TEMPO, 31 Mei - 6 Juni 2004.

the issues or strategies of the movement.³⁴⁷ A second negative campaign against Wiranto was about his direct involvement in the establishment of PAM Swakarsa, propagated by Kivlan Zein. Despite this, there was a lack of coverage on substantial issues around the election campaigns, such as corruption eradication, human rights issues, and social welfare.³⁴⁸

According to Urbaningrum, who are part of the SBY's campaign team, it was not only the candidates who became the target of black campaigns but also their spouses. SBY's running mate, Boediono, was attacked with identity related disinformation by accusing Boediono's wife of being a Christian in 2009. A similar attack was directed against Ani Yudhoyono in the 2004 election.³⁴⁹ Another strategy of opponent attacks on SBY was the propagation of Java and Non-Java candidates led by challengers questioning the representativeness of the SBY-Boediono pair, who both were Javanese.

In the final weeks of the campaigns in 2009, both Megawati-Prabowo and Jusuf Kalla-Wiranto waged negative campaigns against SBY-Boediono. First, members of the DPR from a challenger parties coalition, mainly PDIP and Golkar, submitted a formal inquiry into allegedly problematic voter listing for the legislative election.³⁵⁰ One initiator of the inquiry from the PDIP and secretary of Megawati campaign team, Hasto Kristiyanto, declared that success of the inquiry proposal would make the problematic voters list issue a constant media agenda until the second round of election.³⁵¹ Second, Boediono was attacked over the issue of neoliberalism. He was accused of being a strong proponent of neoliberalism as a fierce enemy of the '*ekonomi kerakyatan*' (people's economy), which was a campaign slogan of Megawati. To the opponents of SBY, neoliberalism was seen as a bad thing, as bad as communism, not only just denying the role of the government in the economy. Anti-neolib campaign came from both challengers, distributed in flyers, banners, TV ads, and even demonstrations.³⁵² This anti-neolib sentiment was propagated by the leaders of the Islamic parties, such as PKS, PPP, and PAN, because of their disappointments towards SBY for choosing a non-party figure at the expense of their own preferences.³⁵³ In addition, SBY-Boediono was attacked with religion-based negative campaigning related to Islamic piety. It was the amplification of *hijab* as compulsory for the waives of presidential candidates. This came from the Jusuf Kalla-Wiranto campaign after PKS joined the pair because loyal sympathizers of PKS would find it hard to vote for candidates

³⁴⁷ Widiarsi Agustina and Sunariah, "Wiranto, Jacob, dan Propaganda Hitam," *TEMPO*, 31 Mei - 6 Juni 2004.

³⁴⁸ Saptono et al., *Pemilu di Layar Kaca: monitoring berita pemilu di media televisi pada Pemilu 2004*, p 74-77.

³⁴⁹ Urbaningrum, *Revolusi Sunyi: Mengapa Partai Demokrat dan SBY Menang Pemilu 2009?*, p 266-67.

³⁵⁰ "DPR Setuju Hak Angket DPT," *ANTARA*, 2009, accessed 8 March, 2024, <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/142148/dpr-setuju-hak-angket-dpt>.

³⁵¹ Wahyu Dhyatmika et al., "Perang di Balik Selembar Kain," *TEMPO*, 1-7 Juni 2009.

³⁵² Dwidjo U Maksum et al., "Pucuk Dicita, Neolib Tiba," *TEMPO*, 2009, p 30.

³⁵³ Pandaya, "Neoliberalism becomes empty campaign rhetoric," *The Jakarta Post*, 28 May 2009.

whose wives did not wear hijabs, to which Jusuf Kalla responded, "Well, just vote for me".³⁵⁴ Ani Yudhoyono and Herawati Boediono, both the wives of SBY and Boediono, respectively, were Muslims but did not wear hijab in daily life. Undeterred by the negative campaigns, elites of the Democratic party believed that the attacks against SBY were a blessing that made the party more popular regardless of its infancy.³⁵⁵

In conclusion, negative campaigning in the direct election periods of 2004 and 2009 became more visible than before, mostly directed towards SBY as challenger (2004) and as incumbent (2009). Unlike in previous elections, this period's negative campaigning was mainly directed towards the individual candidates rather than policies or parties nominating them, and it showed a shift in the targets of political negative campaigns in Indonesia. Like the previous elections, Islam and religious piety strongly defined the narrative of negative campaigning in these elections. However, these were narratives that were usually attacking the individual candidate for not being pious, or unIslamic. They were not based much around party platforms. Other terms such as 'neolib' were used against Boediono to diminish his reputation, while the use of gendered slander was used against Megawati, and the wives of SBY Boediono. The personalisation of negative campaigning was the key trend that emerged in 2004 and grew in 2009, and it set the scene for continuous growth in this space for political campaigners and professional companies and volunteer groups in future elections.

The focus of negative campaigning on character of the candidates rather than on policy has to do more with systemic factors particularly political system and its losing ground ideology towards Indonesia's reform era. My interview with Burhanuddin Muhtadi, a professor of political scientist and renowned pollster, showed that other than the global trend of party dealignment, New Order regime's suppression of political ideologies contributed in a way to the policy campaign crisis on the basis of that policy preferences are excavated from political ideology. He explained,

Voters prefer personality rather than policy, and this is not a cause of candidates but rather a result of a weak political party system in a sense that differentiation between parties is increasingly blurred in terms of policy and ideology. This is not a unique phenomenon in Indonesia, but occurs in other parts of the world such as the United States, Europe, Canada—a phenomenon of what is called party dealignment. Politicians become more personality-driven. These personal factors are related to integrity, empathy, assertiveness, competence, and

³⁵⁴ Dhyatmika et al., "Perang di Balik Selembar Kain," p 26-30.

³⁵⁵ Faizal, Partai Demokrat & SBY: Mencari Jawab sebuah Masa Depan.

others. Of course, these factors mean nothing if the candidate is unknown. So positive popularity is the key in elections because it will have an impact on electability. If it is popular but negative, it is not good for electability. Therefore, negative campaigns play at the campaign level to reduce the level of popularity of this positive campaign with negative campaigns. A campaign without ideology will not immediately bring about the death of democracy. Elections are not only related to ideological battles, but whether the competition is free and fair, then there is democracy. But for the battle to be of good quality there must be a battle of ideas, policies. This battle of ideas should come from the diverse ideologies held by political parties which something have disappeared in Indonesia. Politics in Indonesia is not based on clear cleavage in society as in the West there is left and right. The political cleavage that emerged in Indonesia was based on religion vs. nationalism. During the Old Order there were various ideologies, but unfortunately the New Order regime suppressed the leftist ideology, and the parties were simplified, so that what remained was only the religious basis between one party and another.³⁵⁶

The summary of pre-digital era's negative campaigning can be comparatively shown in the Table 1 below:

³⁵⁶ Burhanuddin Muhtadi, In-person Interview, 14 January, 2021.

Tabel 1 Comparative summary of negative campaigning at pre-digital era

No	Elements	First national election (1955)	New Order elections (1966-1998)	Reformasi era's election (1999)	Direct presidential election's era (2004-2009)
1	Political context	- Post-independent transition - Multi-parties system with diverse ideologies - Representative democracy - Coalition parliamentary government - Ideological tension particularly between Islam, Nationalism, and Communism - The influence of cold war - First legislative election	- Authoritarian rule with dominant executive power - Unification of parties with single ideology of Pancasila - Political repression and violation of human rights - Focusing on economic development - Indirect presidential election	- Post-authoritarian politics - Political liberalization and institutional reforms - Decentralization - The return of multiparty system (48 parties) - Civil liberty and freedom of the press - Indirect presidential election - Professionalization (survey, political marketing consultants)	- Reform era - The rise of alternative candidates - Campaign media focusing on commercial media - The central role of candidate than party - The inception of direct presidential election - Professionalization - Popularity-driven candidacy
2	Source	- Party elites	- State, Political party	- Candidate, Political party	- Candidate, Campaign team
3	Key negative message	- Unfaithful, Deviant, and enemies of Islam, Infidel (<i>kafir</i>), a forbidden (<i>haram</i>) party	- Communists is bad and barbarous, Prohibited campaign that could imply insulting God, Nabi, and the secret books of religions, or against the religion of others, Banned negative evaluation or contrasting the three political parties	- A party of <i>kafir</i> (non-believers of Islam), Corrupt and depraved party, Physical disability (blind sighted), Corruption, money politics, Human rights, and Abuse of power	- Agent for the CIA, Pursuing Christianisation, Women should not become our leaders, Anti Ex-military, Anti-neoliberalism, Hijab is compulsory for women
4	Method of attack	- Labelling, arousing fear, Association of opponents with politically denounced principles, values, or foreign organization.	- Labelling	- Labelling	- Black campaign, Labelling, Fear arousal
5	Campaign media	- Newspaper, Graffiti, Caricature, Public gatherings, Partisan newspapers or magazines, Posters, and Banners.	- Public gathering, Speeches, Posters	- Television, Political ads, Mass rallies, Posters, Billboards	- Television (Debates), Political ads, Mass rallies/Demonstration, Posters, Billboards, Flyers, Mobile phone, Website
6	Target of attack	- Political party as the main target, Politicians, Ministers	- Party	- Party (mainly Golkar), Candidate	- Candidate, Candidate's family, Political party

Source: author' s analysis

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the history of negative campaigning in Indonesia and the origin of black campaigning in Indonesia's pre-digital-era elections from 1955 to 2009. It shows that as the electoral system changed towards the end of the pre-digital era, negative campaigns became directed against the character of the candidates rather than the party or policy. Overall, from 1955 to 2009, Islam continued to be a leading narrative of negative campaigning by attacking opponents, parties, and candidates, as unfaithful, deviant, and as being enemies of Islam.

In the 1955 parliamentary election, all parties regardless of their ideologies had the same opportunities to attack others freely. Negative campaigning was driven by political parties against other parties around the issues of ideology, Islam, cabinet performance, economic policy and party track-records. The media commonly used to run negative campaigns was public gatherings, partisan newspapers or magazines, posters, and banners. But campaign themes were mainly stirred by Islam as an ideology and identity, overshadowed by the global competition of two ideologies, namely liberalism and communism. As an ideology, Islam was put forward against Pancasila as a more suitable ideology for the nation. As an identity, Islamic piety was used to label other parties in a negative light. The ideological contestation led the nationalist party of PNI, Islamic parties of Masyumi, PSII, and NU, and Communist Party of Indonesia into constant political animosity. For example, the Masyumi party said that leaders of PNI and other non-Islamic parties were infidel (*kafir*), which marked the identity based negative campaigning. Also, PKI accused Masyumi as being a forbidden (*haram*) party in response.

As the political system changed into an authoritarian regime in the New Order era (1966-1998), negative campaigning was dominated by the government and its state apparatus. The opposition did not have the same opportunities to wage negative campaigns because of the diverse control and manipulation, leading to the sole victory of the Golkar party. The prohibition to talk about issues such as SARA, government bodies, state ideology, the diffusion of political parties, depolitization of citizens, and suppression of media led to dull campaigning, which benefitted the incumbent party. An unusual way of restricting arguments and criticisms was fanning the election as *pesta demokrasi*, which entailed festivity, peace, and amusement rather than competitive democratic conduct. More equal negative campaigning started to appear in the 1999 election after the establishment of new parties and open campaigning thanks to the *reformasi*. Parties and candidates started to adopt pre-nomination polling, which marked the

professionalization of campaigning in Indonesian politics along with the involvement of political consultants, public relations professionals, and advertising practitioners, it was mainly used for positive campaigning at that time. The election campaign technology was used for branding parties and their presidential candidates. The negative campaigns were mostly directed at the Golkar party for its wrongdoings in the past with relevant and useful information. However, PPP staged negative campaigning against Golkar with irrelevant and useless information by describing it as the party of *kafir*.

From the 2004 to 2009 elections, negative campaigning was different in terms of the source and target because of the introduction of direct elections for the presidential election, leading to candidate-driven campaigning. Policy-based negative campaigning against the incumbent as well as the challenger candidates was visible. However, the multi-party direct presidential election started to show a significant shift towards a growth of negative campaigning in Indonesia's elections. The political context, candidates, personalization of politics and professionalization of campaigning helped intensify the tactics. Narratives were based around communism and the PKI, foreign threats, infidels, hijab, haram, and so on, which tended to be more ad-hominem attacks rather than substantial policy criticisms. Methods of negative campaigning are commonly labelling or name-calling, arousing fear to evoke fear and hate against the target, and association of opponents with politically denounced principles, values, or foreign organization.

This chapter has contributed two important conclusions. First, negative campaigning has a long and varied history in Indonesia. Clearly, negative campaigning as a tactic did not emerge because of the internet or social media, as some commentators or politicians sometimes state. Similarly, certain messages that dominate a negative campaign, such as Islamic piety or the communist bogey-man, have a long history in Indonesia prior to the digital era. As I have shown, an election campaign based on religion and Islam and the role of the state occurred in 1955, long before Jakarta's recent contentious gubernatorial elections of 2017. Similarly, a black campaign attacking a candidate for being a communist occurred long before the Jokowi PKI communist narrative that occurred in 2014, which is discussed later. The point is that negative campaigning in the digital era does not occur in a vacuum. While this chapter has explained that negative campaigning is shaped by the political context and historical timeframe in which we examine it, this chapter has also established the base on which future negative campaign narratives are employed even if the methods and tactics and those involved in it are vastly different.

Chapter 3 Negative campaigning in the digital era

This chapter analyses negative campaigning in the early adoption phase of digital media in Indonesia by looking at local elections in Jakarta in 2012 and 2017 and presidential election in 2014. This chapter argues that digital media enabled more direct participation of citizens in electoral campaigning, which in turn introduced the new actors and new mechanics to negative campaigning. The higher involvement of citizens—from mobilization to narrative creation to message distribution — made waging negative campaigns become more extensive, thanks to the affordances of digital media technologies. The new actors in this era were buzzers, influencers, micro-celebrities, and volunteers. The increasing role of these unofficial actors exacerbated a shift towards more identity attacks. Negative campaigning at the early digital era of Indonesia's election confirmed more deeply the character attacks of negative campaigns in Indonesia. To investigate innovation in negative campaigning in the digital era, its influence, and narrative continuity, this chapter analyses the cases of 2012 and 2017 Jakarta elections and the 2014 presidential election.

3.1. Introduction: Indonesia's new digital-era elections in the global context

This section explains how digital media drives innovation in negative campaigning. I start by explaining the relationship between digital media and politics, followed by how digital media shapes campaigning, and then discuss how online negative campaigning emerged in the beginning of the digital era. The material that I analyze for this chapter (2012 -2017) occurred at a time when there was much hope for the role digital media could play in a democracy. Digital media enables ordinary citizens to participate in politics to support or directly oppose a candidate during elections. The campaign involvement of ordinary citizens occurring through a network-based organization began to be facilitated by social media platforms. Therefore, the digital era introduced new mechanics, actors, and characteristics of campaign messages.

The digital era constitutes a period where human activities are driven by digitalized activities in the field of economic, social, and political realms. In the political context, it revolutionized how political information was produced and distributed by political actors and received by citizens and intensified communication between politicians and citizens in an unprecedented scale and

level of interactivity.³⁵⁷ Digitalization of information transformed the dissemination of political information during elections and beyond with a nearly unlimited quantity and format of information that can be quickly reshared on social media. The digital architecture of social media, composing of a network structure, functionality, algorithmic filtering, and datafication, affects how campaign actors decide the audiences they try to reach, form, and content of the messages they produce, the diffusion patterns of these messages, and how financial resources are allocated for the digital campaigning.³⁵⁸ Online interactions among users generates network-based communication that is powerful for reaching and persuading audiences through the mechanisms of peer influencing and the bandwagon effect. Specifically, dissemination of messages could effectively target selected audiences using big data on the characteristics and online behaviour of the audience.³⁵⁹ Digital media's direct innovation of negative campaigning brought network power, ease of entry, big data, and the digitalization of political information in all its variety.

Writing as early as 2008, some scholars argued that digital media reinvigorated civic life due to the unprecedented ease in seeking information and expressing opinions.³⁶⁰ Studies in 2014 showed that the use of social media was strongly and positively correlated with political engagement among young people.³⁶¹ By 2018 scholars found that both friendship and interest driven online activities paved the ways for greater online and offline political engagement.³⁶² Although not entirely replacing the traditional media, digital media entails unique characteristics which shape today's electoral campaigns. First, it allows different forms of political engagements through online polls, debates, blogging, social networks, and so on. Second, it significantly lowers the cost of participation for citizens both in terms of time and effort. Third, the internet breeds informed electorates thanks to the wealth of political information available online, both positive and negative information. Fourth, online media is interactive, which is essential during electoral campaigns. And finally, the online media makes campaign and the political system

³⁵⁷ Andreas Jungherr, Gonzalo Rivero, and Daniel Gayo-Avello, *Retooling politics: How digital media are shaping democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

³⁵⁸ Michael Bossetta, "The Digital Architectures of Social Media: Comparing Political Campaigning on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat in the 2016 U.S. Election," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 95, no. 2 (2018).

³⁵⁹ Kyle Endres and Kristin J. Kelly, "Does microtargeting matter? Campaign contact strategies and young voters," *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 28, no. 1 (2018).

³⁶⁰ Matthew James Kushin and Masahiro Yamamoto, "Did Social Media Really Matter? College Students' Use of Online Media and Political Decision Making in the 2008 Election," *Mass Communication and Society* 13, no. 5 (2010).

³⁶¹ Michael Xenos, Ariadne Vromen, and Brian D. Loader, "The great equalizer? Patterns of social media use and youth political engagement in three advanced democracies," *Information, Communication & Society* 17, no. 2 (2014).

³⁶² Joseph Kahne and Benjamin Bowyer, "The Political Significance of Social Media Activity and Social Networks," *Political Communication* 35, no. 3 (2018).

more accessible to average citizens, which opens more space to discuss politics,³⁶³ especially in exclusive political systems like Indonesia's.

In Indonesia throughout these early years of the digital era, many online citizens or 'netizens' channelled their outrages into grassroots movement by embracing the digital media to establish movements such as "Coins for Prita", "Cicak vs Buaya" defending the KPK, Teman Ahok, *Kawal Pemilu* and others new forms of political participation. The much-disillusioned section of the society, particularly the youth, begin to seek for change thanks to the affordances of social media and created networked young citizens³⁶⁴ to retain power through connective action. These digitally enabled and decentralized social movements for general causes diffused into the political realm yielding hybrid electoral campaigning.³⁶⁵

The new political participation formed a network-based power that deviated from traditional political power. It relied on personalizing engagement that facilitated communication and coordination with "flexibility in how, when, where, and with whom individuals may affiliate and act."³⁶⁶ Bennett and Segerberg found that the connective actions which implement more personalized communication strategies maintain a stronger network than those that do not.³⁶⁷ Also, these networking young citizens embody innovative characteristics such as less likely to become members of political parties or trades unions, more likely to participate in non-hierarchical networks, project orientated, reflexively engage in lifestyle politics, self-actualizing, and their social relations are increasingly enacted through a social media networked environment.³⁶⁸ Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube allowed users to not only seek information but also interact with others through their online expressions.³⁶⁹ These activities were underpinned by a culture of co-production, which is a crucial feature of digital media in the context of electoral campaigning. User-generated content could provide meaningful information that citizens might not be able to acquire elsewhere. Also, its open and collaborative nature could lower the barriers of entry into politics, particularly for less politically sophisticated groups.³⁷⁰ The logic behind the digital era of connective action entailed co-production and

³⁶³ Daniela V. Dimitrova et al., "The Effects of Digital Media on Political Knowledge and Participation in Election Campaigns: Evidence From Panel Data," *Communication Research* 41, no. 1 (2014).

³⁶⁴ Brian D. Loader, Ariadne Vromen, and Michael A. Xenos, "The networked young citizen: social media, political participation and civic engagement," *Information, Communication & Society* 17, no. 2 (2014).

³⁶⁵ Andrew Chadwick, *The hybrid media system: Politics and power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³⁶⁶ W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, "DIGITAL MEDIA AND THE PERSONALIZATION OF COLLECTIVE ACTION," *Information, Communication & Society* 14, no. 6 (2011): p 771.

³⁶⁷ Bennett and Segerberg, "DIGITAL MEDIA AND THE PERSONALIZATION OF COLLECTIVE ACTION."

³⁶⁸ Loader, Vromen, and Xenos, "The networked young citizen: social media, political participation and civic engagement," p 145.

³⁶⁹ Kushin and Yamamoto, "Did Social Media Really Matter? College Students' Use of Online Media and Political Decision Making in the 2008 Election," p 613.

³⁷⁰ Kushin and Yamamoto, "Did Social Media Really Matter? College Students' Use of Online Media and Political Decision Making in the 2008 Election."

sharing based on personalized expression. As this personalized expression was recognized and shared by others, participation developed as a self-motivating activity that multiplied the sharing networks.³⁷¹ Sharing networks by ordinary citizens gave birth to unofficial electoral campaigns, in addition to official campaign on the internet.

The most dynamic aspect of politics modernized by digital media was the way parties and politicians run their campaigns during elections. Digital media had been used in election campaigns for various purposes from organizational structures and work routines, a presence in online information spaces, support in resource collection and allocation, and symbolic uses for electoral rhetoric.³⁷² At election times, politicians and parties had more digital capital to utilize to mobilize and communicate with their supporters as well as to persuade other voters while bypassing gatekeeper of the news media. New phrases such as “online campaigning,”³⁷³ “cyber campaigning,”³⁷⁴ or “digital campaigning”³⁷⁵ began to be proposed to capture the new conduct of campaigning with the advent of social media. Digital electoral campaigning was digitally assisted or internet-enabled political campaigning, which both expanded and revolutionized aspects of the mass media era of electoral campaigning, related to the roles of parties, politicians, citizens, and media in elections.³⁷⁶ Digital media enabled the use of new tools and styles of campaigning for candidates and political parties,³⁷⁷ allowing political parties and politicians to establish campaign websites, mobilize social media accounts for engagement and interactivity, as well as setting campaign message dissemination on private messaging applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Messenger. These new technologies were commonly used for communicating, mobilizing, and dialogue with potential voters, bypassing mainstream media.³⁷⁸ Its use could also be to represent being modern, be visible to other politicians, to get coverage from the media, and to organize the campaign.³⁷⁹ The introduction of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Weblog, Instagram, and the like

³⁷¹ W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, “THE LOGIC OF CONNECTIVE ACTION,” *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 5 (2012).

³⁷² Andreas Jungherr, “Four Functions of Digital Tools in Election Campaigns,” *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 21, no. 3 (2016).

³⁷³ Karolina Koc-Michalska, Rachel Gibson, and Thierry Vedel, “Online Campaigning in France, 2007–2012: Political Actors and Citizens in the Aftermath of the Web.2.0 Evolution,” *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 11, no. 2 (2014).

³⁷⁴ Rachel K. Gibson and Ian McAllister, “Does Cyber-Campaigning Win Votes? Online Communication in the 2004 Australian Election,” *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 16, no. 3 (2006).

³⁷⁵ Daniel Kreiss, “Digital Campaigning,” in *Handbook of digital politics*, ed. Stephen Coleman and Deen Freelon (United Kingdom: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015).

³⁷⁶ Kreiss, “Digital Campaigning.”

³⁷⁷ Maurice Vergeer, Liesbeth Hermans, and Steven Sams, “Online social networks and micro-blogging in political campaigning: The exploration of a new campaign tool and a new campaign style,” *Party Politics* 19, no. 3 (2011).; Vergeer, Hermans, and Sams, “Online social networks and micro-blogging in political campaigning: The exploration of a new campaign tool and a new campaign style.”

³⁷⁸ Darren G Lilleker et al., “Informing, engaging, mobilizing or interacting: Searching for a European model of web campaigning,” *European Journal of Communication* 26, no. 3 (2011).

³⁷⁹ Rune Karlsen and Eli Skogerbø, “Candidate campaigning in parliamentary systems: Individualized vs. localized campaigning,” *Party Politics* 21, no. 3 (2013).

allowed multimodal, cross-referencing, and interactive campaign communication while connecting with candidates through following, likes, shares, retweets, and so on.³⁸⁰

As social media enabled ordinary citizens' direct participation in content production, so did it allow them to participate in campaign communication directly. Participating in campaigning increased upon the arrival of the internet. Campaign tasks that were carried out by parties and candidates on social media, such as promoting issue positions, demonstrating beneficial personality traits, and improving name recognition,³⁸¹ were gradually driven by ordinary citizens who participated in supporting or opposing a candidate or party. Citizen-driven social media campaigns were not only decentralized but also produced and distributed without much restriction by elite control. A candidate's social media campaign tended to be hierarchical, guided by elites to discipline supporters in disseminating campaign messages consistently, and showed a controlled interactivity as a consequence.³⁸² If parties and candidates tended to utilize the broadcast function of an online campaign, citizen-based campaigns not only interacted and discussed, but also criticized issues and candidates with other followers or potential voters.

The increasing adoption of digital media by both politicians and citizens alike empowered a new type of campaign organization that was driven by citizens rather than parties. The new trend was exemplified by 'citizen-initiated campaigning' that Barack Obama established with his MyBO website during the 2008 US election. Politicians and parties surrendered some of their control over electoral campaigns, adopting a more decentralized, flexible, supporter-based campaign by giving them a co-production role in the campaign through digital media, although their activities could also take place offline.³⁸³ Ordinary citizens participated in promoting the presidential candidacy of Bernie Sanders in 2016 through both official and unofficial campaign management by producing and distributing different messages on social media platforms. The official digital campaign exercised a standardized organizational message, while the unofficial campaign focused on personalized messages with bottom-up control. The unofficial digital campaign produced messages that were more accessible to voters, such as the use of memes

³⁸⁰ Darren G. Lilleker et al., "Social media campaigning in Europe: Mapping the terrain," *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 14, no. 4 (2017).

³⁸¹ Tetsuro Kobayashi and Yu Ichifuji, "Tweets That Matter: Evidence From a Randomized Field Experiment in Japan," *Political Communication* 32, no. 4 (2015).

³⁸² Jennifer Stromer-Galley, *Presidential campaigning in the Internet age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

³⁸³ Gibson, "Party change, social media and the rise of 'citizen-initiated' campaigning."

with humorous contents.³⁸⁴ Ordinary citizens actively produced and distributed messages through their role as 'citizen marketers' of political candidates.³⁸⁵

The influential impact of the unofficial digital electoral promotion was revealed when the crowd-based campaign resorted to attacking opposing candidates. This participatory culture of the information environment changes the battleground for the electoral race from elite-driven mass media to citizen-driven digital public sphere, with its own rewards and punishments. Social media allowed ordinary citizens to campaign against a candidate or a party. For example, Hosch-Dayican et al. found that Twitter enabled citizens to attack parties and politicians in tweets during the 2012 Dutch parliamentary election. They showed that citizens staged more negative campaigning than candidates through tweets and retweets criticising certain policies of a party, sharing negative news reporting about parties or leaders, reacting to leaders' statements over particular issues on TV interviews or debates, and expressing frustration towards political elites.³⁸⁶ Falasca et al. showed that users of Facebook become an active 'digital political labour' by distributing through sharing and liking political ads of parties and exerting the power of user-generated content in criticising or giving negative comments to parties' campaign messages on Facebook during the 2014 Swedish election.³⁸⁷ In Indonesia, the emerging citizen-initiated based campaigning looked more informal than what was happening in the US and UK elections in that political volunteers relied more on an unofficial networked organization of supporters rather than on registration through official websites of the candidates. In the Indonesian context, it is the candidates who outsourced part of their core campaign tasks to unofficial actors without any explicit formal cooperation or direct funding support. This, in turn, leads to much more top-down driven messages, a problem which is manifested in the growth of more negative campaign messages, as we shall see later in this chapter.

3.2. The downside to new technologies and the emergence of negative campaigning

The negative side of a social media-users based campaign is that it is hard to control the direction and meaning of the message being shared and this may differ from what was intended. The rise of populist politicians and parties in Western democracy electoral campaigns has seen

³⁸⁴ Penney, "Social Media and Citizen Participation in "Official" and "Unofficial" Electoral Promotion: A Structural Analysis of the 2016 Bernie Sanders Digital Campaign."

³⁸⁵ Joel Penney, *The citizen marketer: Promoting political opinion in the social media age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³⁸⁶ Hosch-Dayican et al., "How Do Online Citizens Persuade Fellow Voters? Using Twitter During the 2012 Dutch Parliamentary Election Campaign."

³⁸⁷ Falasca, Dymek, and Grandien, "Social media election campaigning: who is working for whom? A conceptual exploration of digital political labour."

an increase in the use of psychometric profiling, dark ads, bots, trolls, and fake news, indicating intrusive and manipulative campaign communication—‘subversive campaigning’, as opposed to ‘scientific campaigning.’³⁸⁸ Tapsell found emerging underground subversive social media campaigning that promoted identity-based false information against candidates during elections in Southeast Asia. According to him, during the 2014 to 2019 social media campaigning in Indonesia created two streams of campaigning online, namely one focusing on promoting policy issues through an official campaign and one mobilizing religion and ethnicity sentiments to attack opponents through an unofficial campaign.³⁸⁹

Specifically, digital media has accelerated the innovation and use of negative campaigning globally. Staging negative campaigns on digital media, particularly social media, is more desirable for a number of reasons. As negative campaigning is driven by cost and benefit analysis, politicians staging negative campaigning on social media could avoid backlash by setting up anonymous identities or outsourcing their online campaign operation to paid campaign actors. The employment of negative campaigning on social media benefits the campaign actors in terms of logistics, frequency, scale, as well as risk.

Social media is capable of delivering highly emotional loaded contents, which are a key aspect of negative campaign messages, thanks to its multimodal content affordances. Social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube can encompass eye catching video, descriptions, attention-grabbing sound, and hyperlinks to a landing page of the issue being amplified with which users can interact directly. Scholars began to write about how negative campaign was becoming more prominent on social media as campaign actors set to evoke more negative emotions and generate more dramatization that tended to attract more likes, shares, and comments, making negative campaign messages travel farther and deeper in social networks and reach a wider audience.³⁹⁰

Indeed, scholars started to write about the worrying trends emerging around the world as a result of digital media. They tended to identify these trends via a number of key terms. First was “post-truth,” referring to “the primacy of unverified or outright fabricated claims in political debate, lack of general regard for truth within contemporary societies, dominance of emotion at the expense of knowledge etc.”³⁹¹ This term became popular after the Oxford English Dictionary selected it

³⁸⁸ Roemmele and Gibson, "Scientific and subversive: The two faces of the fourth era of political campaigning."

³⁸⁹ Tapsell, "Social Media and Elections in Southeast Asia: The Emergence of Subversive, Underground Campaigning."

³⁹⁰ Ulrike Klinger, Karolina Koc-Michalska, and Uta Russmann, "Are Campaigns Getting Uglier, and Who Is to Blame? Negativity, Dramatization and Populism on Facebook in the 2014 and 2019 EP Election Campaigns," *Political Communication* 40, no. 3 (2023).

³⁹¹ Ignas Kalpokas, *A Political Theory of Post-Truth* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-97713-3>.

as word of the year in 2016. It gained popularity alongside the rise of Donald Trump and other politicians with the Brexit referendum. During these politically intense moments, disinformation was used to manipulate media and voters, and social media played a significant role in the wide-scale production and distribution of disinformation by politicians and their supporters in various forms, such as fake news, hoaxes, and other fabricated contents. The digital media made it even harder to tell the truth from lies, enabled by advanced high-tech production mechanisms, particularly when the information came from a source of authority. Second, was “computational propaganda.” Computational propaganda was used to manipulate information by various actors, particularly states and politicians around the world with unprecedented complexity. Computational propaganda combines “social media platforms, autonomous agents, and big data tasked with the manipulation of public opinion”³⁹² for mostly political ends. Computational propaganda became a problem because it was commonly used to maintain the status quo by authoritarian governments through deception and manipulation of citizens or to damage political opponents during electoral campaigning with large-scale disinformation.³⁹³ Third, was “microtargeting.” On one hand, research suggests that microtargeting may improve political participation by effectively identifying and communicating campaign messages that better inform target voters and motivate them to vote accordingly.³⁹⁴ On the other hand, microtargeting poses a threat of manipulation when candidates and parties target specific voters with tailored information, true or false, that maximises, or minimises, voter engagement depending on their campaign goals.³⁹⁵ Targeted political campaigns use data on users’ communication activities and demography without their consents. Often, microtargeting exacerbates group animosity due to the selective exposure of problematic information. One scholar even warned that microtargeting thwarts public deliberation and facilitates the spread of misinformation.³⁹⁶

As mentioned, this chapter examines how digital media from 2012 to 2017 changed the role of mass media in electoral politics. Media innovation facilitated media convergence both in terms of production and business models. Media convergence can be understood as “the process whereby new technologies are accommodated by existing media and communication industries and cultures”³⁹⁷ influence political information ecosystems. The consequence of media convergence is that “we are entering an era where media will be everywhere and we will use all

³⁹² Woolley and Howard, “Political Communication, Computational Propaganda, and Autonomous Agents: Introduction.”

³⁹³ Woolley and Howard, *Computational propaganda: Political parties, politicians, and political manipulation on social media*.

³⁹⁴ Gregg R. Murray and Anthony Scime, “Microtargeting and Electorate Segmentation: Data Mining the American National Election Studies,” *Journal of Political Marketing* 9, no. 3 (2010).

³⁹⁵ Borgesius et al., “Online Political Microtargeting: Promises and Threats for Democracy.”

³⁹⁶ William A. Gorton, “Manipulating Citizens: How Political Campaigns’ Use of Behavioral Social Science Harms Democracy,” *New Political Science* 38, no. 1 (2016).

³⁹⁷ Tim Dwyer, *Media Convergence* (England: McGraw-Hill Education, 2010).

kinds of media in relation to each other.”³⁹⁸ In a converged media, content production in one media could be reused by another media. In the US, while media convergence introduced production efficiency and customer satisfaction through various alternatives of content on a single platform, it also concerningly established an alarming concentration of the ownership of mainstream media by a few elites.³⁹⁹ The same trend was also occurring in Indonesia where big media corporations dominated various media outlets with different platforms at national and local levels, which were often exploited for the political interest of the owners.⁴⁰⁰ In election times, converged media established a hybrid media system that influenced election campaigning with visibility, engagement, and efficiency. Nevertheless, new media had not replaced the old media despite some adjustment in revenues. New media, old media, and social media tacitly exercised mutually beneficial relations in production and dissemination of negative campaign messages during the elections. In the previous mass media era, it would have been a complex process for candidates to run negative campaigning against opponents because it would require massive resources, knowledge of the opponent, and calculation of backlash possibility. The internet and social media make waging attack campaigns easier, faster, and cheaper because of the nearly no-barrier to entry that means anyone can be a source of negative campaigns.

This section has shown that digital media introduced both positive and negative impacts on how politicians, citizens, and media played their roles during election campaigns. Like so many other new technologies, there were positive and negative effects on democracy and transparency, and the scholarship at the time reflected the janus-faced nature of digital media. This chapter now turns to Indonesia, to examine new digital technologies’ impact on negative campaigning. Specifically, I look at three elections from 2012-2017 and explain how negative campaigning empowered by digital media allowed ordinary citizens to campaign for or against a candidate during elections efficiently and effectively. New actors—buzzers, influencers, or cyber troops—emerged to stage negative campaigning by exploiting the flexible features of social media platforms with anonymity, hyperlinks, and hybridity during election campaigning. Political elites were delegating their intent to employ negative campaigning against opponents to these new actors in this digital era of campaigning, using computational mechanisms. With the production of multimodal content combined with its no barrier to use, negative campaigning on social media

³⁹⁸ Henry Jenkins, "The cultural logic of media convergence," *International journal of cultural studies* 7, no. 1 (2004).

³⁹⁹ Jenkins, "The cultural logic of media convergence."

⁴⁰⁰ Ross Tapsell, "Platform convergence in Indonesia: Challenges and opportunities for media freedom," *Convergence* 21, no. 2 (2015).; Ross Tapsell, *Media Power in Indonesia: Oligarchs, Citizens and the Digital Revolution* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017).

began to be massive and faster, achieving high engagement and allowing the influence of powerful attack messages. It is these elections that we now turn to for evidence of these claims.

3.3. The 2012 Jakarta election: The inception of online negative campaigning

In many respects, online campaigning in Indonesia started in 2012, including deploying negative campaigning through social media in the Jakarta direct gubernatorial election. This section explains the use of negative campaigning at the 2012 Jakarta election. It shows the characteristics of the candidates, how negative campaign messages and narratives were produced, campaign actors, and which social media were used during the campaigns. In particular, this chapter demonstrates the inception of online negative campaigning in Indonesia electoral politics where buzzers, and its subsequent actors, came into being in Indonesia's negative campaign operation to disseminate problematic information online through mostly anonymous social media accounts. The initial use of social media for negative campaigning was already tainted by identity issues related to religion and ethnicity, particularly towards the challenger candidates, with policy issues attack on the incumbent candidates. The use of *kampanye hitam* was also visible at this election.

The 2012 Jakarta election was the second direct election for the capital province since the system was introduced in 2005. Prior to 2005, governors and mayors across the country were elected by members of the provincial legislative council (DPRD). As of 2012, a party or a group needed 15% of seats at the provincial legislative council (DPRD) or of the total popular votes to nominate a candidate.⁴⁰¹ By the time of the 2012 election, Jakarta local council was dominated by Democrats and PKS, with 53% of the total 94 seats. To win the election, a candidate should secure 50% plus one of the eligible votes for one or two rounds of the election. The 2012 Jakarta election was contested by six pairs of candidates in the first round held on 11 July 2012, and two candidates went forward to the run-off at the second round on 20 September 2012, namely incumbent Fauzi Bowo – Nachrowi Ramli nominated by the ruling party PD and endorsed by PAN, PKB, Hanura, and PDS and challenger Joko Widodo – Basuki Tjahaja Purnama nominated by PDIP and Gerindra party. After their candidate lost the first round, Golkar and PKS threw their supports behind the incumbent candidates in the second round. Although the final alliances did not show a stark split of ideology, it was clear that all Islamic parties had gathered on one side, the incumbent. Despite that, Joko Widodo and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama

⁴⁰¹ "UU No. 12/2008 Tentang PERUBAHAN KEDUA ATAS UNDANG-UNDANG No. 32/2004 Tentang PEMERINTAHAN DAERAH," (2008).

won as governor-vice governor elect for 2012-2017 term. The winners were expected to bring reforms in the public services in Jakarta for which they were well known and favoured in their previous positions that urged them to contest the election.

The candidates came from very diverse backgrounds. Joko Widodo was mayor of Solo. He had become a member of the nationalist party PDIP in 2004 before contesting the mayoral election in Solo. He was born in Solo on 21 June 1961. He comes from a modest Javanese family and devout is a Muslim with moderate and secular tendencies. In his early career after graduating from university he worked for a state-owned company in the field of forestry in Aceh in 1986.⁴⁰² As mayor of Solo, he was considered successful with reform in public service programs for five years boosting his electoral victory for a second term with 90% of the votes in 2010. For instance, making a citizen ID card usually took two months, but during his term it only took 1 hour.⁴⁰³ Jokowi's running mate, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or Ahok was born and spent his childhood in East Belitung with his two siblings. He is a Christian and of Chinese descent. He completed a master's degree in management from Prasetya Mulya Business School in Jakarta in 1994. In 2005 he contested the regent election in East Belitung and won, where he became famous with a firm stance towards corruption and other issues in public services under his leadership brand "Clean, Transparent, and Professional (BTP)".⁴⁰⁴ In 2009 he was elected as a member of DPR from Golkar, which began his journey in national politics and is known to Jakarta's elites. One observer argued that the rise of Jokowi and Ahok in Jakarta politics is an anomaly seen as the public expression of the longing for new politics sparking a wave of populism, a symbol of resistance against Indonesia's elitist politics.⁴⁰⁵

Fauzi Bowo was born and grew up in Jakarta. He is a Muslim and comes from a family with a mixture of Javanese and Betawi traditions. He graduated from the University of Indonesia in architecture in 1969. He also graduated from German universities in 1977 and 2000 until doctoral level. He spent most of his professional career working as a civil servant at Jakarta municipality administration since 1977 before contesting the first direct Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2007, which he won with nearly 58% of votes.⁴⁰⁶ Nachrowi Ramli was also born and raised in Jakarta. He is a Muslim and of Betawi descent. He went to a military academy and graduated in 1973. His professional career started as military personnel in the field of

⁴⁰² Bimo Nugroho and Ajiyanto Dwi Nugroho, *Jokowi, Politik Tanpa Pencitraan* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2012).

⁴⁰³ Nugroho and Nugroho, *Jokowi, Politik Tanpa Pencitraan*.

⁴⁰⁴ Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, *Merubah Indonesia, The Story of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama* (Jakarta: Center for Democracy and Transparency, 2008).

⁴⁰⁵ Boni Hargens, "Kebangkitan Populisme: Sebuah Pengantar," in *Ahok, Kobi Jakarta Baru* (Jakarta: Visimedia, 2013).

⁴⁰⁶ "Fauzi Bowo," medeka.com, accessed 9 August, 2023, <https://www.merdeka.com/fauzi-bowo/profil>.

intelligence, and he became head of the Indonesian National Cryptographic Agency (LSN) in 2002. After retiring, he entered politics by joining the Democratic Party.⁴⁰⁷

This election set a new milestone in Indonesia's local elections that affected how the campaigning is organized. First, for the first time a non-Jakartan, and unrelated to political elite candidates, ran and won the election in Jakarta. As many scholars have pointed out, Indonesian politics are very Jakarta-centric and controlled by the oligarchs with strong business interests.⁴⁰⁸ The rise of Jokowi sparked hopes but evoked suspicion among elites at first. Likewise, Jokowi sparked division inside the PDIP that nominated him. The chairwoman of PDIP, Megawati, supported by the younger generation of the party, were inclined to nominate Jokowi. But Taufik Kiemas, also the husband of Megawati, disapproved of the option because he preferred another candidate. Only through a long negotiation did PDIP in one voice select Jokowi as their presidential candidate.⁴⁰⁹ The decision was in part reached by the massive grassroots support that demanded for him to be nominated, helped by the media that boosted his popularity. Secondly, the adoption of social media in campaigning. In 2012, there were more than 3.5 million internet users in Jakarta or 36.9% of its total population and they mostly used their mobile phones (76%).⁴¹⁰ Although the financial and political support of Jakarta oligarchs contributed to the nomination of Jokowi, it was the adoption of digital media by youth-based voluntarism in producing and distributing campaign content online that gave Jokowi a cutting edge from his rival.⁴¹¹ Third, the emergence of organized voluntarism started to build connective action for electoral politics. Organized voluntarism was nothing new in Indonesian politics, but only recently it had transformed in a non-ideological network. And fourth, as this section argues, it saw the beginning of online black campaigning based on narratives used in pre-digital-era elections by a participatory less formalized but influential campaign teams.

The main actors of campaigning were candidates and volunteers staging rallies, meetings, outdoor media dissemination, and online campaigns. Campaigns were also supported by political consultants who administered surveys to capture voters' preferences and the popularity of their candidates. Most importantly, online campaigns were organized by online campaign volunteers now known as buzzers. Later, it became a political tool to either promote one's own political causes or to attack those of one's opponents through the dissemination of negative

⁴⁰⁷ "Nachrowi Ramli," *viva.co.id*, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.viva.co.id/siapa/read/248-nachrowi-ramli>.

⁴⁰⁸ Richard Robison and Vedi Hadiz, *Reorganising power in Indonesia: The politics of oligarchy in an age of markets* (London: Routledge, 2004).

⁴⁰⁹ "Kronologi Mandat Megawati untuk Jokowi," 2014, accessed 7 August, 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2014/03/15/0830489/Kronologi.Mandat.Megawati.untuk.Jokowi>.

⁴¹⁰ APJII, *Profil Pengguna Internet di Indonesia 2012* (Jakarta: APJII, 2012), <https://www.slideshare.net/internetsehat/profilinternetindonesia2012indonesia>.

⁴¹¹ Tapsell, "Indonesia's Media Oligarchy and the 'Jokowi Phenomenon'."

information on various social media platforms. My investigation shows that one of the original inceptions of buzzers was as a service formed and provided by a political consultant based in Jakarta. The creation of these buzzers (paid troops) was established by a national political consultant company in 2010 without partisan affiliation with any political party or politicians. A manager of the cyber troop explained the characteristics of its early members to me in a personal interview:

So, there was a political consultant company in Jakarta which provided services for parties and politicians that decided to form a group of “paid troops” (*pasukan berbayar*) for its longer business plan. A friend of mine who worked at the institution invited me to join as I was free. I was asked to interview and recruit people. At the end, there were 3 teams, each having 10 members. They are mostly fresh graduates, mostly male, some are former activists, coming from Jakarta and outside Jakarta to work fulltime like regular employees from 9 am to 6 pm. We facilitated them with an office, laptop, and a blackberry smartphone. They are paid 5 to 8 million rupiah per month and a monthly incentive following their performance amounting up to 12 million rupiah of monthly salary. My main tasks after recruiting were coordinating routinely and briefing of amplification agenda for each day. These groups could be seen as the seed of political buzzers today.⁴¹²

This manager claimed that they did not use false information or disinformation as many do today despite the fact that UU ITE was not in place at that time. If they found any of their paid troops employing a fake account on Twitter or Facebook, they would get fired because it ruined their business model in terms of engagement—fake accounts received low engagement. At that time, anyone could hire their services regardless of their political affiliations. However, the manager admitted that its strategies may have been applied in elections afterwards. Talking about strategies that these paid troops used, this manager explained:

As paid troops, we received orders from the consultant agency’s representative in the form of a project to execute. Every project has a different goal depending on the client. But the overall goal could be subsumed under three strategic actions: first, to flood social media timeline (Facebook and Twitter) and comment columns of online news media and blog particularly Detik.com,

⁴¹² Buzzer Manager, Zoom Interview, 12 December, 2022.

Vivanews.com, and *Kompasiana* of which regularly returned high engagements. The goal is to stir up information to make it murky. Second, to amplify a narrative about the success of a party or a politician on social media and blogs. Third, to attack a target based on the client's order. These attacks could be done "without using the brain" such as: "Wow, you corrupt leader!" or "You traitorous party!" in addition to systematically designed narratives. We ran negative campaigns but not black campaigns or hoaxes.⁴¹³

Before it was used in the political arena, an investigation revealed that a buzzer was originally used for commercial promotion in 2009. By the time it entered politics, the image of the buzzer tended to be negative as "actors who are paid to produce negative contents on social media."⁴¹⁴

Candidates and their campaign teams use various methods to get their messages across to as many as possible voters. Candidates organized campaign activities both offline, such as canvassing, political ads, meetings, as well as televised debates, and online on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, which could run officially from 24 June to 7 July 2012. The campaign messages cantered on the issues of character—it was more prevalent than issues of policy during the campaigns. Issues of chronic problems in Jakarta, like traffic jams, flooding, education, and medical care, were addressed relatively the same by all candidates without any foreseeable concrete solutions to the flooding and traffic bottlenecks.⁴¹⁵ To promote themselves, Jokowi-Ahok's campaign produced and disseminated popular culture videos on YouTube as positive campaigning to brand the candidates as different, clean, and pro-change.⁴¹⁶ They introduced *Kartu Jakarta Sehat*, giving free medical care for poor families and showcased the locally built car called Esemka.⁴¹⁷ On the other hand, the incumbent capitalized on their cultural backgrounds by branding themselves as 'native Betawi Muslims'.⁴¹⁸ In addition, an Islamic group organized a declaration of support for Fauzi-Nachrowi by taking an oath under Al-Qurna in South Jakarta.⁴¹⁹

Alongside the positive campaigns, candidates also ran negative campaigns. For example, the incumbent was attacked by associating PD with the *Wisma Atlet* corruption scandal that was

⁴¹³ Manager, Zoom Interview, 12 December, 2022

⁴¹⁴ M. Rinaldi Camil Klara Esti, Natasha H. Attamimi, *Di Balik Fenomena Buzzer: Memahami Lanskap Industri dan Pengaruh Buzzer di Indonesia* (2017), <https://cipg.or.id/id/publication/buzzer-2/>.

⁴¹⁵ Ken Miichi, "The Role of Religion and Ethnicity in Jakarta's 2012 Gubernatorial Election," (2014).

⁴¹⁶ Tapsell, "Indonesia's Media Oligarchy and the "Jokowi Phenomenon".

⁴¹⁷ Miichi, "The Role of Religion and Ethnicity in Jakarta's 2012 Gubernatorial Election."

⁴¹⁸ Miichi, "The Role of Religion and Ethnicity in Jakarta's 2012 Gubernatorial Election."

⁴¹⁹ Setri Yasra et al., "Pilkada DKI: Agama Yes, Prabowo No," *TEMPO*, 17 September 2012, <https://majalah.tempo.co/read/laporan-utama/140550/agama-yes-prabowo-no>.

being investigated. The incumbent candidate Fauzi Bowo was a member of the Board of PD. The corruption scandal at *Wisma Atlet* implicated Anas Urbaningrum, then chairperson of the PD. The challenger was attacked by amplifying the long controversy of the involvement of Gerindra party's chairperson, Prabowo Subianto, with human rights violations in the past. Both candidates played the religion card in their campaign rhetoric. For example, as reported by the media, Ustad Yusuf Mansur tweeted about trustworthy leadership and related it to Jokowi who left his position as mayor of Solo before the end of his term. Twitter accounts supporting Jokowi responded saying, "Remember, Ustadz, the substance and timing of your words like that, don't think we are stupid," by @kurawa. Another response was "How much do you get paid by Foke? You're a fake ustad," by @asbabul_junub. A group of student organizations staged a protest at the harsh tweet and urged supporters of candidates to stop insulting their cleric.⁴²⁰ The use of religious sentiment was less common in challenger's campaigns but highly offensive in the incumbent's attacking of the challenger. The use of negative campaigning occurred mostly online, and most were directed against Jokowi-Ahok. For examples, the famous superstar dangdut and religious singer Rhoma Irama urged mosque goers to vote for Fauzi Bowo, a candidate who had the same faith, and mentioned that Ahok and the mother of Jokowi were Christians.⁴²¹ The statement during the lecture he gave at the Al Isra Mosque in Jakarta further said that

Joko Widodo (Jokowi) becoming governor is just a steppingstone. So, the one who will lead Jakarta will be Basuki Tjahaja Purnama who is ethnic Chinese and Christian. If the capital of a Muslim-majority country is led by Christians, we will be embarrassed in international eyes.⁴²²

Also, there was a rumor that the challenger candidates received funding from the Vatican.⁴²³ Unauthorized banners that either encouraged Jakartans to vote for Muslim leaders or attacked Ahok for his ethnicity circulated around Jakarta.⁴²⁴

In the meantime, there was a meme circulating online where Fauzi Bowo's (also known as Foke) image was associated with Hitler, while Jokowi was associated with Barack Obama, the US

⁴²⁰ "HMI: Jangan Hina Ustadz dan Ulama Kami! Yusuf Mansur Dicaci Pembela Jokowi di Twitter," Rakyat Merdeka, 2012, accessed 22 April, 2024, <https://rmol.id/read/2012/09/09/77413/hmi-jangan-hina-ustadz-dan-ulama-kami>.

⁴²¹ "Rhoma Sebut Jokowi Muslim Tapi Keluarganya Kristen

", Jawa Pos, 2012, accessed 24 April 2024, <https://m.jpnn.com/news/rhoma-sebut-jokowi-muslim-tapi-keluarganyakristen>.

⁴²² "Ceramah Rhoma Irama Jangan Pilih Ahok Dibahas di Panwaslu," BeritaSatu, 2012, accessed 24 April, 2024, <https://www.beritasatu.com/news/63788/ceramah-rhoma-irama-jangan-pilih-ahok-dibahas-di-panwaslu>.

⁴²³ "Jokowi-Ahok Terima Uang dari Gereja Vatikan 70 Juta Dollar AS?," Tribunnews, 2012, accessed 24 April, 2024, <https://jambi.tribunnews.com/2012/07/18/jokowi-ahok-terima-uang-dari-gereja-vatikan-70-juta-dollar-as>.

⁴²⁴ Yasra et al., "Pilkada DKI: Agama Yes, Prabowo No."

president at that time. For example, anonymous Twitter accounts shared the meme on 17 September 2012, with a caption message “#Similar But Not The Same. Joko Widodo Vs Barack Obama, Fauzi Bowo Vs Adolf Hitler. "Smile is Beautiful" (see Figure 9).⁴²⁵ Earlier a video had been distributed on YouTube posted by an account name Malesbanget.com on 23 November 2010. The video, cut and taken from a movie called “Downfall” (2004), was captioned “Hitler Angry with Foke,” and though it used the real soundtrack it was doctored with subtitles in Indonesian which in short said in a comedic way that Hitler was angry with Foke who declared himself master over Jakarta but that it had turned out to be disaster.⁴²⁶



Figure 9 Association of candidates with world figures

(Source: https://twitter.com/__aih/)

⁴²⁵ https://twitter.com/__aih/status/247537122343522306

⁴²⁶ Malesbanget.com (Malesbanget.com), 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sISpMJVF20A>.

In summary, candidates of the 2012 Jakarta election waged black campaigns driven by volunteers, but only at random intervals, over the themes of religious and ethnic identities using labelling and association techniques.

Although both candidates employed online campaigning, its potential was only fully utilised by the Jokowi-Ahok campaign.⁴²⁷ Ahmad and Popa found that a combination of integrative participatory political marketing and the online political campaigning helped by strong voluntary campaigners resulted in a powerful underground, air war (radio and TV), and online war of campaigning led to the victory of Jokowi-Ahok.⁴²⁸ The campaigns were dominated by ethno-religious sentiments and the mobilization of conventional and digital media by both oligarchic power on the one hand and citizens on the other. I argue that the 2012 Jakarta election started to see non-official campaigning both offline and online but not as large-scale as it would be in the succeeding elections. It set the foundation for black campaigning by unofficial actors too. The online negative campaigning by unofficial campaigns, like in previous elections, focused on the theme of identity, particularly religious and ethnic sentiments directed against challenger candidates, which defied the conventional wisdom. In addition to the direct election context, the characteristics of the candidates became key predictors to whether they would be the target of black campaigns, such as being the challenger, Christian, Chinese, and/or a non-Jakarta figure.

This election marked the dawn of new actors in political campaigning, the locally called buzzers. A political consultant who coordinated volunteer groups for Jokowi-Ahok, Hasan Nasbi (CEO, Cyrus Network), told media that the win of Jokowi-Ahok was inseparable from the solid, underground, and well-organized campaign team (Relawan Jakarta Baru). This team worked to reduce the strengths of rivals, infiltrated opponent voters, managed social media accounts, and attacked opponent candidates.⁴²⁹

There was much debate in the scholarship about this election. Some lauded it as the “triumph of democracy” over negative ethno-religious campaigns.⁴³⁰ Some others saw it as the timely emergence of populist leaders (Jokowi) amidst wide dissatisfaction with the way bureaucracy worked in local democracy in Indonesia.⁴³¹ However, the role of electoral professionalization

⁴²⁷ <https://mediaindonesia.com/megapolitan/70627/perang-digital-warnai-pilkada-dki-jakarta-2017>

⁴²⁸ Ahmad and Popa, "The social media usage and the transformation of political marketing and campaigning of the emerging democracy in Indonesia."

⁴²⁹ "150 Laptop Kendalikan Relawan Bawah Tanah," *Tribun Sumsel*, 2012, accessed 10 March, 2023, <https://sumsel.tribunnews.com/2012/09/22/150-laptop-kendalikan-relawan-bawah-tanah>.

⁴³⁰ Miichi, "The Role of Religion and Ethnicity in Jakarta's 2012 Gubernatorial Election.," Sandra Hamid, "Indonesian politics in 2012: coalitions, accountability and the future of democracy," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 48, no. 3 (2012).

⁴³¹ Abdul Hamid, "Jokowi's Populism in the 2012 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 33, no. 1 (2014).

had successfully packaged the nearly unknown political product to most Jakartans to become a desired figure and to win the contest. After winning, the low-profile politician detached from the Jakarta-based oligarchic political dynasty, and preferred *blusukan* (impromptu visit) as his leadership style—Joko Widodo was seen as a potential candidate presidential. It was the massive support of volunteers and mass media treating him as a media darling that successfully convinced PDI-P's chairwoman, Megawati Sukarnoputri, to nominate him as candidate for the 2014 presidential election.⁴³²

This section has shown that the inception of online negative campaigning on social media by buzzers (paid troops) that will later drive the operation of computational propaganda in the digital era occurred at the 2012 Jakarta gubernatorial election. The campaign actors already used social media with anonymous accounts on Twitter and Facebook, following the needs of buyers, politicians, or candidates. The attack messages and negative narratives were mainly based on character attacks on identity issues, particularly religion and ethnicity. However, despite the large-scale attacks, the challenger candidate won the election thanks in part to the mobilization of social media campaigning targeting social media users/voters in Jakarta.

3.4. The 2014 presidential election: The rise of character attacks

This section investigates the key attack messages and narratives of negative campaigns at the 2014 presidential elections. The core negative campaign messages centered around personal identity issues disseminated online and offline by campaign operatives. The 2014 direct presidential election was conducted in the second term of the SBY government, and the incumbent could not run for another term. The presidential election was preceded by legislative elections (DPR, DPD, and DPRD) on 5 April 2004. The presidential election itself was held in two rounds in July and September. In this election, negative campaigning fully shifted towards different campaign strategies driven by influencers, buzzers, and volunteers thanks to the utilization of digital media, deepening professionalization of the campaigning, rising religious conservatism, and heated political infighting among party elites prior to the election. In what follows I discuss the characteristics of candidates, attack messages and negative narratives, and methods employed by campaign actors in this election.

⁴³² Winters observed, however, that his success in the Jakarta election was mainly due to the solid financial support from oligarch behind him. See Jeffrey A Winters, "Oligarchy and democracy in Indonesia," *Indonesia*, no. 96 (2013).

The 2014 election was contested by two candidates satisfying the legal prerequisite for a party or coalition of parties securing at least 20% of the seats in parliament or 25% of the national vote at the previous legislative election to nominate a candidate.⁴³³ The first candidate was Joko Widodo after stepping down as governor of Jakarta and being nominated by the PDIP with the supports of Hanura, Nasdem, and PKB. The rise of Joko Widodo to national politics was lauded by many as the fruit of reform when a mayor in Solo, Central Java could become governor of Jakarta and then president. In the whole process his rise to national politics was seen as a product of two factors: the elites' decision given his distinct qualities as a politician and the role of social actors like individual volunteers and grassroots organizations.⁴³⁴ Jokowi ran his campaign with a brand as a political outsider and as a down-to-earth man of the people while retaining support from networks of grassroots volunteers and intrepid political activists.⁴³⁵ The second candidate was Prabowo Subianto, who was nominated by Gerindra, Golkar, PPP, PKS, PAN and the Democrats. The candidates' characteristics and nominating parties set their campaign conduct apart. I would propose four significant factors that shaped electoral campaigning in the 2014 presidential election that are relevant for this thesis on negative campaigning: personalization of politics, professionalization of campaigning, media partisanship, and the beginning of the online disinformation outbreak.

The 2014 race reconfirmed the demise of political parties and the rise of the personalization of politics in Indonesia. People trusted individual candidates more than political parties, which made it difficult for political parties to nominate their own cadres. SMRC's survey showed that in June 2013, only 31% of respondents had trust in political parties.⁴³⁶ In response, parties looked for outside figures who had capacity and popularity among citizens based on data from national surveys, which led to the candidacy of Joko Widodo on one hand and coalitions of parties on the other. Prabowo Subianto also mostly dominated his campaign with his personal appeals, mimicking the styles of the first Indonesian president Soekarno in speaking and campaigning suit. Consequently, presidential candidates had more influence than parties in deciding the issues and styles of the campaigning.

The uses of surveys, consultants, and political marketing for campaigning indicated a strong professionalization of campaigning. As a result, the goal of campaigning was very much focused

⁴³³ UU No. 42/2008 Tentang Pemilihan Umum.

⁴³⁴ So Yoon Lee, "An Urban Explanation of Jokowi's Rise: Implications for Politics and Governance in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 40, no. 2 (2021).

⁴³⁵ Tyson and Purnomo, "President Jokowi and the 2014 Obor Rakyat controversy in Indonesia."

⁴³⁶ SMRC, *Kepercayaan Publik pada KPK, DPR dan Parpol*, Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (2019), <https://saifulmujani.com/kepercayaan-publik-pada-kpk-dpr-dan-parpol/>.

around evoking emotions based on fear and hatred towards the target candidate. Also, the mobilization of television as a campaign tool was stronger than before. Media oligarchs were divided in supporting either Joko Widodo or Prabowo as seen in the partisan tendencies of their media's coverage of the election. Tapsell found that editorial interventions from media owners and chief editors were common to cover or not to cover presidential candidates. On one hand, Metro TV and RCTI tended to cover Joko Widodo in a favourable light but either dropped any coverage of Prabowo Subianto or depicted him in a negative tone. On the other hand, ANTV, TVOne and its subsidiary outlets covered Prabowo's campaigns in a positive tone. However, not only these explicit party-related outlets declared partisan support, but also news outlets that had been long seen as beacons of journalism, showing the strong media polarization in Indonesia's electoral democracy.⁴³⁷ As we shall see later in this chapter, the involvement of mainstream media companies in spreading certain negative (and politically partisan) campaign messages was central.

The election saw an unprecedented use of negative campaigning for attacking opponents. Attacking opponents with identity-based disinformation was probably best exemplified by the publication of the controversial *Obor Rakyat* tabloid in 2014. The tabloid directly attacked presidential candidate Joko Widodo with notorious smears accusing him of being "a bad Muslim," "a puppet president," and "serving the interest of Chinese financiers."⁴³⁸ A deceptive message in the tabloid that went viral during the campaign was an obituary announcing he was dead (Figures 10 and 11). Interestingly, the prominent sponsors of the dirty campaigns against Joko Widodo were unofficial campaign teams. Prabowo Subianto, on the other hand, was attacked for his past position as a former military commander.

⁴³⁷ Tapsell, *Media Power in Indonesia: Oligarchs, Citizens and the Digital Revolution*, 73-88.

⁴³⁸ Tyson and Purnomo, "President Jokowi and the 2014 *Obor Rakyat* controversy in Indonesia."

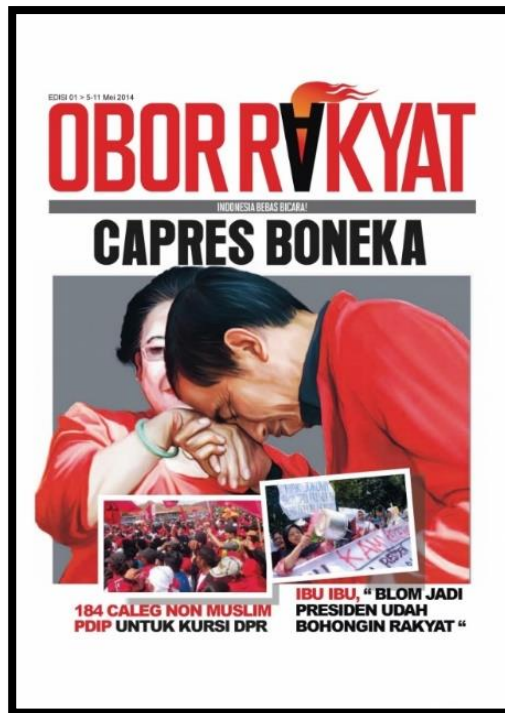


Figure 10 Front page of *Obor Rakyat* Tabloid

(Source: Obor Rakyat tabloid)



Figure 11 Attack Messages of *Obor Rakyat* Tabloid

(Source: Obor Rakyat tabloid)

There were five prominent attack messages against Joko Widodo at this election. First, the spectre of PKI. A tabloid called *Obor Rakyat* wrote an accusation that Joko Widodo was a PKI

descendant by claiming that his father was Oey Hong Leong, a Chinese name. The same article also depicted that Joko Widodo's factual parents were members of some former PKI's mass organizations. A similar attack message against Joko Widodo over the issue of PKI was made in the book *Jakarta Undercover*. Both attack messages (by *Obor Rakyat* and *Jakarta Undercover*) seemed to try to exploit the fear and horror of accusations against PKI in the 30 September movement (G30S/PKI), which had been declared a banned party or ideology in Indonesia. Another use of the communism issue was to trigger a strong sentiment of rejection due to the association between communism and atheism established by the New Order regime and long held among some Muslim voters ever since. In short, even though Joko Widodo was a Muslim, opponents still tried to mobilize the strategy of labelling his image with issues that Islam is against to evoke fear and hatred from the group and to position him as a threat. It seems that these ad-hominem attacks were formulated based on what most of the voters disliked rather than on what politicians thought was a strong weakness of his.

Second, is the issue of Chinese descent. Joko Widodo was portrayed as having Chinese ethnicity, which was also false information. This attack message was packaged claiming a fake Chinese name for him of "Oey Hong Liong". The *Obor Rakyat* tabloid first distributed the message at a national scale before later being reported by mainstream media and shared on social media platforms. The use of this narrative was meant to spark hate from the majority of voters towards Joko Widodo, exploiting a lingering problematic ethnic relation in Indonesia. Meanwhile, a blog published on 20 May 2014 entitled "Ridwan Saidi : Bapaknya Jokowi Bernama Oey Hong Liong" defended that Jokowi's Chinese name is Wie Jo Koh.⁴³⁹ This was dirty campaigning in the form of fake news, which is a totally false claim.

Third, belonging to a Christian family. Another false information used to attack Joko Widodo was accusing him of being a Christian. In the same *Obor Rakyat* tabloid, Jokowi's name was added to be Herbertus Joko Widodo indicating a commonly Christian name.

Fourth, being a puppet presidential candidate. The first edition of *Obor Rakat* featured a cover story "CAPRES BONEKA" (puppet presidential candidate). This attack message was based on allegations that Jokowi was not the real leader who designed and decided policies and strategies. The "capres boneka" labelling was twisted from the "petugas partai" status given to Joko Widodo as a member of the party. He was depicted as being a puppet for the real master, the chairperson of PDIP, the party which nominated him, to which Megawati Soekarnoputri

⁴³⁹ "Ridwan Saidi : Bapaknya Jokowi Bernama Oey Hong Liong," VOA Islam, 2014, accessed 11 October, 2023, <https://www.voa-islam.com/read/indonesiana/2014/05/20/30233/ridwan-saidi-bapaknya-jokowi-bernama-oey-hong-liong/>.

responded by saying it was a black campaign.⁴⁴⁰ The message aimed to discredit the image of Joko Widodo as a presidential candidate by picturing him as powerless and controlled. The attack message was used by Prabowo Subianto in some of his public speeches, including during a grand campaign at Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta saying that "We will choose a leader who is not a puppet leader. Do you want to be led by a puppet or not?"⁴⁴¹ Joko Widodo tended to respond to these allegations quite easily. One time, he responded lightly, saying "I don't feel it, just ignore it. I am not a puppet. If it's a puppet of the people, yes, I am."⁴⁴²

Fifth, voting for Jokowi is *haram* (forbidden). The attack was triggered by an official notice (*maklumat*) issued by The Indonesian Ummah Ulema Forum (FUUI) under a key argument that the couple were considered disturbing and threatening the existence of the Muslim community in Indonesia.⁴⁴³ The notice was then used as an attack message towards Joko Widodo – Jusuf Kalla candidacy on social media, including Twitter (see an example in Figure 12).

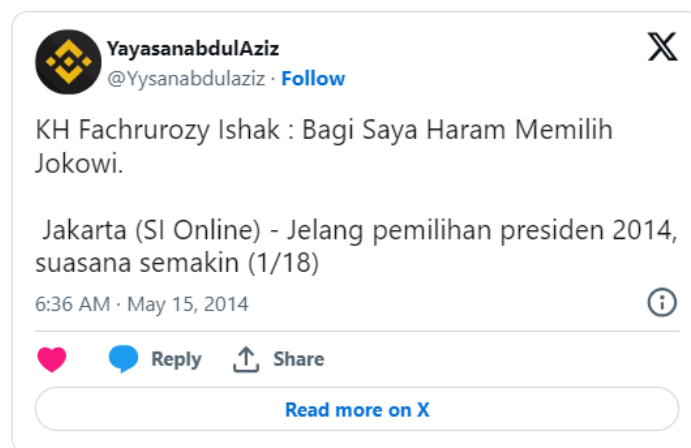


Figure 12 Attack against Jokowi using the Haram issue

(Source: Twitter)

In the meantime, key attack messages against Prabowo Subianto could be seen as occurring in five topics: human right violations, being a Christian, having a disharmonious family, bad

⁴⁴⁰ "Megawati bantah rumor Jokowi capres "boneka"," ANTARA, 2014, accessed 11 October, 2023, <https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/441310/megawati-bantah-rumor-jokowi-capres-boneka>.

⁴⁴¹ "Prabowo: Apa Mau Dipimpin Boneka?," Republik Merdeka, 2014, accessed 11 October, 2023, <https://politik.rmolid/read/2014/06/22/160515/prabowo-apa-mau-dipimpin-boneka>.

⁴⁴² "Disebut Capres Boneka, Jokowi: Saya Tidak Merasa," Republika, 2014, accessed 11 October, 2023, <https://news.republika.co.id/berita/n37i3f/disebut-capres-boneka-jokowi-saya-tidak-merasa>.

⁴⁴³ "Alasan Forum Ulama Haramkan Memilih Jokowi-JK," Republika, 2014, accessed 11 October, 2023, <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/n7zvp7/alasan-forum-ulama-haramkan-memilih-jokowijk>.

temper, and being a bad guy.⁴⁴⁴ First, human rights offender accusations. The accusation came not only from observers and opposing elites, but also from buzzers and influencers campaigning against Prabowo on social media. One of the dirtiest attack messages on the topic was posted on Twitter by Ulin Yusron, who was known to be Joko Widodo's key influencer. In the Tweet Prabowo was depicted as Adolf Hitler with his formal SS military uniform entitled "The Fascist, the kidnapper, the hothead #TempestLeak" on 28 June 2014 (see Figure 13).⁴⁴⁵



Figure 13 Attack against Prabowo using Hitler issue

(Source: Twitter, quoted in www.portal-islam.id)

Second, he came from a Christian family. The accusation was made based on Prabowo's family's religion, which is Christian (see for example Figure 14).⁴⁴⁶ However, Prabowo himself is a Muslim. The use of this attack message followed a guiding narrative to persuade Muslim

⁴⁴⁴ "Tabloid Pink" Menyudutkan Prabowo Beredar di Jawa Barat dan Jakarta," Kompas.com, 2014, accessed 18 August, 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2014/06/18/2125200/Tabloid.Pink.Menyudutkan.Prabowo.Beredar.di.Jawa.Barat.dan.Jakarta.>; "Tim Advokasi Prabowo-Hatta Laporkan Spanduk Bernada Kampanye Hitam," Bawaslu RI, 2014, accessed 18 August, 2023, <https://www.bawaslu.go.id/en/berita/tim-advokasi-prabowo-hatta-laporkan-spanduk-bernada-kampanye-hitam>.

⁴⁴⁵ "Erick Thohir Angkat Tim Sukses Jokowi Yang Pernah Menghina Prabowo Jadi Komisaris BUMN ITDC," Portal Islam, 2020, accessed 16 October, 2023, <https://www.portal-islam.id/2020/10/erick-thohir-angkat-tim-sukses-jokowi.html>.

⁴⁴⁶ Moh. Yahya (@itsmr_ene), "IBUNYA #PRABOWO KRISTEN, ADIK #PRABOWO KRISTEN. Kok kalian menutup mata akan hal itu, dan malah mencari-cari masalah ke #Islam an #Jokowi," 5 July, 2014, https://twitter.com/itsmr_ene/status/485419344990461952.

voters, which was the majority not to vote for non-Muslim leaders. At the same time, he was also attacked as “anti-Christian” because he was a Muslim.⁴⁴⁷



Figure 14 Attack against Prabowo using a religious issue

(Source: https://twitter.com/itsmr_ene)

Third, being a bad guy. Sympathizer of opponent candidate and a public figure, Wimar Witoelar, attacked Prabowo Subianto on Facebook by associating him with publicly perceived bad guys, such as corrupt politicians, terrorists, and hardline Muslim organization leaders (Figure 15).⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁷ "Prabowo: Saya Difitnah Anti Kristen, Itu Tidak Benar!," Detik.com, 2014, accessed 18 August, 2023, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-2610866/prabowo-saya-difitnah-anti-kristen-itu-tidak-benar>.

⁴⁴⁸ "Soal 'Gallery of Rogue' yang Diunggah Wimar, Ini Kata FPI," Detik.com, 2014, accessed 18 August, 2023, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-2613138/soal-gallery-of-rogue-yang-diunggah-wimar-ini-kata-fpi>.



Figure 15 Attack against Prabowo on a personality issue

(Source: Detik.com)

Negative campaigns against candidates were delivered in strategic attacks to yield a maximum and longer impact on voters. The first method used was labelling, like the use of “petugas partai” (party official) and the second was arousing fear, for example, the accusation against Jokowi of being a member of PKI, and pictures of Prabowo as Hitler and being associated with world criminals. Key influencer of Jokowi-Amin, Eko Kunthadi said that certain types of negative campaigns are better to be responded with more fearful appeal to get the upper hand. He explained,

If we can reply to the opponents' negative campaign, we will answer it. I myself agree with negative campaign. At least I'm not making baseless accusations. I prefer to share my political aspirations with the people. This can only be healthy if society is rational. However, black campaigns simply cannot be fought rationally. So, my theory is: fight fear with fear. We will not be able to deal with fear arousal campaign tactics with rational argument. If, for example, opponents campaign against us like "Jokowi is anti-Islam", and if those opponents talk about upholding the Kilafah if winning, I will attack them with: 'Oh, those who

will uphold the Kilafah are like ISIS, blah...blah....' like that. So, you have to counter it. Don't be silent, but with something more fearful messages.⁴⁴⁹

Fourth, family disharmony. Prabowo was married to Siti Hadriyanti Rukmana, daughter of the former Indonesian president Soeharto, but they divorced in 1998 after the collapse of Soeharto's regime. The narrative of a disharmonious family was used by Prabowo's political opponents to frame his political candidacy as incompetent and inappropriate to being a president. Other candidates used this narrative more softly, presenting a harmonious family as a prerequisite for a happy life in their public speeches and appearances to contrast their married status with that of Prabowo's own.⁴⁵⁰

Fifth, having a bad temper. Prabowo was labelled as an angry person (*pemarah*), which was judged based on his public speeches and his reaction to journalists on a few occasions.⁴⁵¹ The bad temper character was often associated by opponents with arrogant and even authoritarian figure (see Figure 16). The issue was also raised in the news media, for instance, an online news media reported "Voters Don't Want an Angry President Like Prabowo" on its website.⁴⁵²



Figure 16 Attack on Prabowo's temper

(Source: Twitter)

⁴⁴⁹ Eko Kunthadi, In-person Interview, 15 January, 2021.

⁴⁵⁰ "Kerap Singgung Istri, JK Dinilai Tengah Serang Prabowo," Kompas.com, 2014, accessed 11 October, 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2014/05/31/1546497/Kerap.Singgung.Istri.JK.Dinilai.Tengah.Serang.Prabowo>.

⁴⁵¹ "PILPRES 2014 : Ini Rekaman Prabowo Marah-Marah ke Reporter TV," Solopos, 2014, accessed 16 October, 2023, <https://news.solopos.com/pilpres-2014-ini-rekaman-prabowo-marah-marah-ke-reporter-tv-518478>.

⁴⁵² "Pemilih Tak Mau Punya Presiden Pemarah Seperti Prabowo!," Republik Merdeka, 2014, accessed 16 October, 2023, <https://rmol.id/read/2014/03/25/148544/pemilih-tak-mau-punya-presiden-pemarah-seperti-prabowo>.

Sixth, having dual citizenship. Following the downfall of Soeharto's authoritarian regime in 1998, Prabowo moved to Jordan, and the accusation was that he changed his citizenship to that of a Jordanian citizen. However, his close aides debunked the issue, saying that Prabowo had never requested or asked for a citizenship. A citizenship was offered to him by the Jordanian kingdom, but he declined it.⁴⁵³ Regardless of the truth, the issue was spread through public debates both online and offline to discredit the credibility and loyalty of Prabowo as a presidential candidate; it was first questioned by a group named *Asosiasi Pengacara Pengawal Pancasila* (APPK), which asked KPK to investigate the issue. Indonesia alone does not recognize a dual citizenship system.⁴⁵⁴ The 1945 Indonesian Constitution also requires a presidential or vice presidential candidate to be an Indonesian citizen since birth and to have never accepted another citizenship of his own free will.

The focus of negative campaigning on character attacks during the 2014 election may have been motivated by the fact that personality rather than policy was still the most deciding factor in electability based on several accounts—the negative campaign tactics primarily intended to damage the most valuable characteristics that voters could see in a candidate. From my personal interviews, some political consultants and pollsters elaborated why it was the case. For example, Eskon Ruketo (not his real name), a pollster CEO in Jakarta explained that

Personality is the most important. This falls within the capabilities of the candidate. Is he/she an honest person, caring for society, has intellectual capacity, and so on. In Indonesia, based on the data I have seen, if there are policy factors that have an influence, then the incumbent wins. When we ask how satisfied the public is with the incumbent, if the public tends to be satisfied, he will be re-elected. Then, if asked what the reason is for choosing a candidate, the answer is because his performance has been proven. In surveys since 2004, the two main reasons for voting among citizens are: first, caring for the people, and second, honesty, free from corruption. Then, smart, firm, and other factors are next. Overall, In Indonesia, I would say both personality and policy

⁴⁵³ "Gerindra: Prabowo Tak Pernah Mengajukan Kewarganegaraan Yordania," *detik.com*, 2014, accessed 16 October, 2023, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-2591268/gerindra-prabowo-tak-pernah-mengajukan-kewarganegaraan-yordania>.

⁴⁵⁴ "Status Kewarganegaraan Prabowo di Yordania Dipertanyakan," *Suara.com*, 2014, accessed 16 October, 2023, <https://www.suara.com/news/2014/05/24/173320/status-kewarganegaraan-prabowo-di-yordania-dipertanyakan>.

are equally influential, but the weight is different, and each context is different, for example in local elections and general elections.⁴⁵⁵

Another opinion suggested that there was a gap between what ideally was good for democracy with policy-oriented campaigns and what actually occurred in the Indonesian context with respect to the electoral context and acceptability of voters. Sirajudin Abbas, CEO of SMRC explained,

So far, character variables are still very important. I don't think the public has the time and analytical capacity to understand policy programs or ideological lines of candidates or parties. Figures or parties cannot sell ideologies that are too contrasting. In Indonesia, ideologies are less prominent in determining political identity and orientation, or in mobilizing action, because they all accept Pancasila. No one wants to take a firm position. What is often the main differentiator is the leadership style of the character. Like Mr. SBY who is charismatic, priayi, and keeps his distance from society compared to Mr. Jokowi who is in sharp contrast.⁴⁵⁶

The production and dissemination of attack messages during the 2014 presidential election mobilized massive social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, as well as messenger applications, like WhatsApp and Telegram. The digital media, however, still relied on or was supported by conventional media campaigning, particularly with the issue of generation and distribution when reaching highly specific target audiences, like Islamic school students.

This section has shown that negative campaigning at the 2014 presidential election adopted the use of digital media to produce and distribute attack messages against candidates. However, most of the key attack messages about candidates consistently centered on the character or personality of the candidates, particularly related to identity issues. This electoral period marked a new level of negative campaigning with unprecedented character attacks on the candidates at the national level.

⁴⁵⁵ Eskont Ruketoh, In-person Interview, 25 November, 2020.

⁴⁵⁶ Abbas, In-person Interview, 27 January, 2021

3.5. The 2017 Jakarta election: An incumbent's defeat because of negative campaigning

This section analyses negative campaigning that cost an incumbent candidate a second term at the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election. The effectiveness of negative campaigning staged by the challenger candidate using selected narratives was reinforced by the characteristics of voters and the target candidate, who came from a minority group. It argues that negative campaigning was effective because of the negative narratives on ethnic and religious identity attacks combined with astonishing black campaigns (*kampanye hitam*) against the incumbent, who was a double minority candidate. The unofficial campaign of the challenger used anti-non-Muslim rhetoric amid rising Islamic conservatism in Jakarta supported by strong mobilization to demean the incumbent with negative campaigning but also false information to stir up fear and anger among Jakarta voters at the same time.

The 2017 direct Jakarta election was contested by three pairs of candidates on 15 February. As stipulated by the law, the race went into a second round since there was no candidate who secured 50% of the votes on 19 April. The final round was contested by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, or popularly known as Ahok, paired with Djarot Saiful Hidayat (Djarot) from the PDIP against challenger Anies Rasyid Baswedan (Anies) paired with Sandiaga Uno (Sandi). As incumbent, the pair of Ahok – Saiful was supported by mainly nationalist parties, such as PDIP, Golkar, Hanura, and Nasdem. Ahok himself was a Christian and of Chinese ethnicity, but Saiful was Javanese and a Muslim. On the other hand, the challenger candidate pair, Anies – Sandi, were supported by PKS and Gerindra party. Other parties like Demokrat, PPP, PKB, and PAN, who previously supported AHY – Sylvie, threw their support behind the challengers, Anies – Sandi. Anies and Sandi were both Muslims.

Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) took over leadership of the Jakarta administration from Joko Widodo, who resigned as governor and rose to presidency in 2014. Ahok continued to declare an open and transparent governance as a fundamental strategy to combat long-rooted corruption in Jakarta. He criticised public servants in Jakarta in his unscheduled visits and shared the recordings on YouTube. He published his monthly pay slip on his website, auctioned public servant positions, fired disobedient public officials, and disobeyed corrupt requests by politicians to prove his commitment to administering social welfare for Jakarta residents. It did not take long for him to accumulate enemies, particularly members of the local council (DPRD)

representatives of political parties, which to him were acutely corrupt.⁴⁵⁷ His strong stance on corruption in politics was balanced with close interactions with residents at the governor's office and outside and wide transparency of his activities and salary through his website. Moreover, some of his policies had never been happily accepted by all in Jakarta. Observers predicted that political attacks would make it hard for him to win given his controversial projects, such as a reclamation project, the eviction of settlements, and allegations of corruption surrounding the Jakarta government's purchase of Sumber Waras Hospital despite his popularity, not to mention attacks on his Chinese ethnicity and Christian religion.⁴⁵⁸

The enmity between him and other political parties led to fickle political support for the coming election and he was uncertain of running for second term. A group of volunteers named Teman Ahok (Friends of Ahok)⁴⁵⁹ organized a movement to collect copies of ID cards of Jakarta residents as a requirement of the law for an independent candidate. After obtaining public support for his outspoken leadership style as proven by the collection of the IDs, Ahok decided to run in the election as an independent. However, the PDI-P decided to nominate him coupled with a member of PDI-P, Djarot Saiful Hidayat. Teman Ahok campaigned for Ahok using memes, short videos on websites, and social media, depicting the exceptional transformation and changes that Ahok had brought to Jakarta. Tapsell⁴⁶⁰ argued that this trend exemplified how digital media could be used by ordinary citizens for advocating changes and challenging elite power.

Anies Rasyid Baswedan, the challenger candidate, was a university lecturer and rector who was Minister of Education in Joko Widodo first administration after the 2014 election. He was known to be a moderate Muslim and stated he remained a pluralist, but his regular encounters with Islamist groups and controversial speeches on the issue of religion and ethnic identities drove the impression that the election was a battle between Islamist and nationalist groups.⁴⁶¹

The elites of the parties campaigned for their respective candidates, supported by volunteers to operate online campaigns, including attacking opponents. All candidates operate accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram using eye persuasive hashtags (Table 2). The campaign teams were also helped by political consultants and polling organizations for data, political

⁴⁵⁷ Marcus Gunawan, *Ahok, Kobi Jakarta Baru* (Jakarta: Visimedia, 2013).

⁴⁵⁸ Charlotte Setijadi, Deasy Simandjuntak, and Dirk Tomsa, *Candidates, Coalitions and Prospects for the 2017 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election* (ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, 13 October 2016).

⁴⁵⁹ Salvatore Simarmata, "Teman Ahok: Connective action and the demise of political parties," *The Jakarta Post*, 8 August 2015, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/08/08/teman-ahok-connective-action-and-demise-political-parties.html>.

⁴⁶⁰ Tapsell, *Media Power in Indonesia: Oligarchs, Citizens and the Digital Revolution*.

⁴⁶¹ "Jakarta election: Christian governor concedes to Muslim rival," BBC, 2017, accessed 16 October, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39636974>.

mapping, and campaign strategies. As the divisive campaigning got worse, candidates looked to their party leader patrons to sway voters. Ahok – Djarot turned to Megawati, who personally ordered PDIP members to defend Ahok after the controversial video went viral on social media. AHY – Sylvi looked to former president Yudhoyono. Anies – Sandi sought guidance from Prabowo, who declared an intention to contest the 2019 presidential election.⁴⁶²

Table 2 Official social media accounts of candidates

	Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono & Sylviana Murni	Basuki Tjahaja Purnama & Djarot Saiful Hidayat	Anies Baswedan & Sandiaga Uno
Social media accounts	Facebook: Agus Sylvi For DKI 1 Twitter: @AugsSylviDKI Instagram: AugsSylviFor DKI1	Facebook: Ahok Djarot Twitter: @AhokDjarot Instagram: ahokdjarot	Facebook: Anies Sandi, #jakartamajubersama, Anies Baswedan, Suara Anies, Relawan Anies, Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno Twitter: @jktmajubersama @AniesBaswedan @Suaranaies @Relawananies @sandiuno
Key positive hashtags	#JakartaUntukRakyat	#JakartaPunyaSemua #BesokGueAhok #Ba2ukiDjarotMenang	#jakartamajubersama #CoblosNomor3 #SalamBersama #AniesSandi dan #MajuBersama
Nominating parties	Democrat, PPP, PKB, PAN	PDIP, Golkar, Hanura, NasDem	PKS, Gerindra

(Source: Tirto, KPU Jakarta, Twitter)

⁴⁶² "Jakarta's gubernatorial election wash-up," East Asia Forum, 2017, accessed 16 October, 2023, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2017/04/26/jakartas-gubernatorial-election-wash-up/>.

The main campaign activities were community visits, meetings, televised debates, and online campaigning. For the second round, the campaigning focused more on social media campaigning because the Election Commission banned the display of campaign pros and mass rallies because of a lack of dialogue in the campaign communication.⁴⁶³ In addition to the success teams of candidates, political consultants and volunteer groups also played crucial roles in the campaign. Among political consultants and survey organizations that were involved in the campaign were PolMark Indonesia, Populi Center, and Cyrus Network. It is not easy to unveil how these organizations specifically played their factual roles in negative campaigns winning the candidates, but the two most recurring general themes were the role of surveys in winning an election and how surveying was possibly used in planning negative campaigns.

A researcher at Populi Center, Usep Saepul Ahyar, who was a political consultant, told me that the role of surveys in the initial candidacy of a candidate was varied:

The roles of survey in candidacy can be elaborated in several steps from mapping popularity, acceptability, and electability of potential candidate; Then, to hold self-evaluation for incumbent candidate; Next to map voters by media habits, demographics, factors that influence them to vote according to voting behavior theories namely sociological, psychological, rational /logical. This would include what are the desirable characteristics of a leader. In short, it aims to provide a complete picture of voters' preferences and potential candidate electability. At the end, the potential candidates can be recommended to run or not to run and then to develop a strategy when it has been decided to move forward.⁴⁶⁴

When asked about negative campaigning at the 2017 Jakarta election, Usep argued that he tended to see it as predominantly *kampanye hitam* with its success being driven by exceptional factors in the Jakarta electoral context. It implied that political consultants might have played a role in constructing attack campaigns against specific candidates during the election. He went on,

In DKI Jakarta, this strategy is perfect, because of the characteristics of the voters and the background of the candidates. The narrative, the society,

⁴⁶³ "Pilkada DKI, Anies - Sandi Fokus Kampanye di Media Sosial," 2017, accessed 16 October, 2023, <https://pilkada.tempo.co/read/857241/pilkada-dki-anies-sandi-fokus-kampanye-di-media-sosial>.

⁴⁶⁴ Ahyar, In-person Interview, 13 December, 2022

characteristics of the candidate, and the populist issues in the society determined the success of this strategy. It's smart, and it's good, and we know who the consultant is. If a black campaign like that is carried out stupidly without a narrative, it will not be effective, as is the case in DKI Jakarta. Once it was used in the 2019 presidential election, it was ineffective because the religious background of the other candidates was also unclear.⁴⁶⁵

Hasan Nasbi, Founder of political consultant firm in Jakarta, Cyrus Network, who became political consultant to Jokowi in 2012 and 2014, explained how survey is used during election campaign:

So far, surveys have been mostly used to see electability positions, even though the survey can support many things. From surveys we can find out why our candidate is not popular among women, or why we have “homework” (not selling well) with certain ethnic groups, what programs we can offer that are suitable for them, or why people who are social media savvy don't like us: maybe this group know about our disgrace on social media. These underpin field campaign methods, schedules and strategies, and issue building; for example, by knowing key issues we know which communities to campaign with priority issues related to human health, education, and others, for instance. The next step is to submit these results to the Success Team of the candidate.⁴⁶⁶

Another CEO of a Jakarta-based survey organization, Eskont Ruketoh (pseudonym), who are also an academic and was often invited as a speaker before political candidates for campaign strategies in various regions, made it very clear how surveys could be used in negative campaigning:

Surveys can be used in negative campaigns. In this sense, it is not the survey itself, but the findings in the survey. The survey will try to find all the factors that might influence an election. This includes what the opponent's weaknesses are, what issues could be detrimental to the opponents. For example, there is a candidate who is attacked with an issue. The candidate, for example, says everywhere that he cares about the young generation. Then in the survey there was a finding that this candidate was actually a drug user or something. This is

⁴⁶⁵ Ahyar, In-person Interview, 13 December, 2022

⁴⁶⁶ Nasbi, In-person Interview, 18 January, 2021

in stark contrast to what is narrated. Well, that has a lot of potential to be used. So, surveys can recommend what issues will be used to attack opponents. Of course it is very possible. Although it depends on the candidate whether to use it or not, and in what way to carry it out.⁴⁶⁷

My personal interview with the CEO of PolMark Indonesia, Eep Saifullah Fatah, who was a consultant for Anies-Sandi in the 2017 election explained the application of the survey in early work he was involved with:

Back in 2017 we started to be involved in preparations for the DKI Jakarta regional election, starting from January 2016; We started conducting a survey in collaboration with one public figure. In this survey, we have begun to find data that, in the opinion of Jakarta residents, the leader of Jakarta at that time had 3 serious problems: one, his behavior was not good; two, it does not unite and tends to be the opposite; three, not assertiveness, caring and defending the citizens. This has to do with personality. At the same time, when we ask what problems must be immediately addressed in Jakarta. It was different from what most people had thought. The first problem is job opportunities, the expensive cost of living, then complete and quality education, and others. There are also issue of traffic jams, but that's far down the list. This is related to work promises. So, whoever wants to win must follow these three main issues.⁴⁶⁸

As the campaign grew online, volunteer groups consolidated their power to dominate the campaign. A prominent volunteer group supporting Anies-Sandi was Anies-Sandi Digital Volunteer (INSIDER). Coordinator of INSIDER, Anthony Leong, said that

Social media is the most effective means for campaigning considering that the number of internet users in the country reaches 63 million people and is dominated by active users of social networks. Currently, technology has an important role in changing people's judgments about something so that it is more effective in attracting voters.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁷ Ruketoh, In-person Interview, 25 November, 2020

⁴⁶⁸ Eep Saifullah Fatah, In-person Interview, 6 January, 2021.

⁴⁶⁹ "Pilkada DKI, Anies - Sandi Fokus Kampanye di Media Sosial."

In the meantime, a prominent volunteer group behind Ahok-Djarot was JASMEV (Jakarta Ahok Social Media Volunteers), a reactivated volunteer group from the previous election. JASMEV had 200,000 cybertroop or buzzers working on various social media platforms. The group was maintained through WhatsApp group communications to discuss and share campaign materials on Facebook and Twitter. Some of the buzzers were identifiable on Twitter based on contents such as @Nanabilaindah, @ebbess, @sindir, and @lasMardiyah, to name just a few. In addition to buzzers, the Ahok-Djarot campaign was supported by prominent national influencers, such as Joko Anwar⁴⁷⁰ and Addie MS, @kangded78, and Hariadi.⁴⁷¹ Despite their dominant role in the earlier Ahok nomination, campaign volunteers were second tier to political elites in the official campaign. Tapsell argues that non-party actors dissipated in 2017 as compared to 2012 election for two reasons: first, Ahok decided to run as a party nomination rather than independent candidate; second, campaign messages were less relevant and difficult to select due to the potential resistance or backlash in criticizing Muslim groups openly.⁴⁷² Another pair of candidates, Agus-Sylvi, had an online volunteer group called “KaribAGUS” initiated by his school friends in Magelang. Additionally, the Anies-Sandi pair was supported by an online volunteer group under the name of jakartamajubersama.com, organized by their success team.⁴⁷³

The election was seen as the most ruthless election campaign, mainly because of the attack messages, negative narratives used against candidates, violence, and a series of religious mass mobilizations in Jakarta, particularly against the incumbent candidate. There was an allegation of the politicization of religion to denounce the electability of incumbent candidate. The allegation emerged after a video was spread on social media in which a political consultant of Anies-Sandi, Eep Saifullah Fatah, gave a speech citing the success story of the FIS party in Aljazair which was used in defeating Ahok and winning the Jakarta election. In my personal interview, Eep denied the allegation that he exploited religious differences to win the election, adding that he also had a good relationship with Christians, and some of his extended family members were devout Christians. However, from his interview with Tirto.id he seemed to admit that there was a politicization of Mosque in his answer:

I just want to cite an event where a mosque network was used and was effective in the past. For people who study politics, the FIS victory in Algeria was very

⁴⁷⁰ "Buzzer Ahok Kewalahan Hadapi Isu 'Al-Maidah'," Tirto.id, 2017, accessed 10 February, 2023, <https://tirto.id/buzzer-ahok-kewalahan-hadapi-isu-al-maidah-cncl>.

⁴⁷¹ "Adu Strategi Pasukan Medsos Cagub DKI Jakarta," Tirto.id, 2016, accessed 15 October, 2023, <https://tirto.id/adu-strategi-pasukan-medsos-cagub-dki-jakarta-b44t>.

⁴⁷² Ross Tapsell, "'Bottom up' campaigning failed Ahok, and it might fail Jokowi.," *New Mandala*, 24 July, 2018, <https://www.newmandala.org/bottom-campaigning-failed-ahok-might-fail-jokowi/>.

⁴⁷³ "Perang di Media Sosial untuk Merebut Jakarta," Tirto.id, 2016, accessed 15 October, 2023, <https://tirto.id/perang-di-media-sosial-untuk-merebut-jakarta-b44r>.

surprising. When I was in America, I once read an analysis about FIS's victory which was completely unexpected. It turns out that FIS has a visible network, namely mosques. So actually, I want to highlight how mosques are used in political events and can be functional. Then what I want to underline is not the Islamic party, but the mosque. Especially Friday prayers. Because at that time it was the preachers in Algeria who called for the people to uphold their rights. That's the actual context.⁴⁷⁴

In the end, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama and Djarot Saiful Hidayat lost after facing massive negative campaigning on racial and religious issues despite his high approval rating.⁴⁷⁵ Lim found that the 2017 Jakarta election was full of negative campaigning and fake news, especially in social media spreading hate speech accusing Ahok of being an infidel, forbidden, and immoral.⁴⁷⁶ Sumaktoyo found that both ethnicity and religion played significant effects on the Jakarta election but the ethnicity sentiment played a stronger influence than the religious one.⁴⁷⁷ Other contestants also experienced black campaigning but more so on different issues.

The key attack messages against Ahok were that he was infidel because he was a Christian and a Chinese. The Jakarta election was not the first time he had encountered such attacks. The same negative message was used against him in the East Belitung Regent election in 2005 where local leaders mobilized voters to not vote for him.⁴⁷⁸ Infidel or “kafir” is a religious term which could mean various things.⁴⁷⁹ However in the context of political competition, it means someone who does not believe in Islam. In early 2019, NU, the largest Muslim organization, agreed on the banning of the use of the word “kafir” towards non-Muslim in the Alim Ulama National Conference and the NU National Conference on 27 February – 1 March 2019 in West Java. The main reason for the ban was to maintain the unity of the nation. Abdul Moqsiith Ghazali, the leader of the conference, explained that giving a label of kafir to other

⁴⁷⁴ "Eep Saefulloh Fatah: "Saya Tidak Mengkapitalisasi Sentimen SARA"," *Tirto.id*, 2017, accessed 15 October, 2023, <https://tirto.id/saya-tidak-mengkapitalisasi-sentimen-sara-cso6>.

⁴⁷⁵ Joe Cochrane, "Election in Indonesia's Capital Could Test Ethnic and Religious Tolerance," *The New York Times*, Feb. 3 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/13/world/asia/indonesia-jakarta-governor-election.html>.

⁴⁷⁶ Lim, "Freedom to hate: social media, algorithmic enclaves, and the rise of tribal nationalism in Indonesia."

⁴⁷⁷ "Will religion influence voters' choices in the Jakarta election?," *Indonesia at Melbourne*, 2017, <http://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/will-religion-influence-voters-choices-in-the-jakarta-election-on-15-february/>.

⁴⁷⁸ Rudi Valinka, *A Man Called #AHOK* (@kurawa, 2016).

⁴⁷⁹ For example, simple explanation of various meanings and uses of the term is here: "Dari 'Kaphe' Ke Kafir: Istilah Yang Bikin Heboh dan Radikal?," *republika.co.id*, 2019, accessed 14/11, 2019, <https://khazanah.republika.co.id/berita/q02ov3385/dari-kaphe-ke-kafir-istilah-yang-bikin-heboh-dan-radikal>.

Indonesians, who actually contributed equally to the creation of the state of Indonesia, was not a wise action.⁴⁸⁰

Ahok was also accused of representing interests of Chinese conglomerates who wished to take control of national politics in Indonesia.⁴⁸¹ Anti-Chinese attacks were used to evoke hateful and hostile emotions towards ethnic Chinese in Indonesia citing historical discriminatory treatment under the Dutch colonialism. The Dutch rulers categorized elements of the society into three levels: European as the first class, *Timur Asing* (Arab, India, China, etc.) as the second class, and the Inlander (*pribumi*) as the lowest class. Historians believed that the Chinese (Tionghoa) ethnic group arrived in Java for trade long before the Dutch's arrival, but what was popularly known about the Chinese originated from the era of the Dutch East Indies. The Dutch traders needed Chinese traders as their business partners, who were skillful middleman or distributors, to distribute products from cities to the inlanders living in villages. The relations did not always go that smoothly. For example, in 1740 there was a mass killing of Chinese by the Dutch in Batavia which was followed by formal physical separation based on race forcing Chinese to live in their own villages.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸⁰ "NU akan Sosialisasikan Penghapusan Sebutan Kafir untuk Nonmuslim," Tempo.co, 2019, accessed 14/11, 2019, <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1181384/nu-akan-sosialisasikan-penghapusan-sebutan-kafir-untuknonmuslim>.

⁴⁸¹ <https://www.jurnas.com/artikel/10571/Ahok-Dituding-Punya-Misi-Konglomerasi-China/>

⁴⁸² See chapter 1, 2, and 3 Onghokham, *Anti Cina, Kapitalisme Cina, dan Gerakan Cina: Sejarah Etnis Cina di Indonesia* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2008).



Figure 17 An edited video posted on Facebook to attack Ahok

(Source: Facebook, quoted in *Kompasiana.com*)⁴⁸³

Ahok, who was a double minority candidate by ethnicity and religion became an easy target of derogatory attacks or dirty campaigns based on religious issues. In response, he made a statement to address the identity attack against him during his official visit to Seribu Island, and he later uploaded the video of his talk to the Jakarta administration's website. However, the video was edited and reposted on Facebook by Buni Yani (who was later found guilty of spreading hate speech and sentenced to 1.5 years imprisonment), which triggered anger among Muslim voters. This post (Figure 17) immediately went viral and covered by conventional media, which also caused large demonstrations demanding the prosecution of the governor for blaspheming Islam.

⁴⁸³ "Hentikan Perdebatan Agama karena Ahok," Kompasiana, 2016, accessed 10 February, 2023, <https://www.kompasiana.com/harwono/58005d11aa23bd6e0d8b4567/hentikan-perdebatan-agama-karena-ahok>.

There were also stronger anti-Ahok campaigns after the Al Maida 51 case in Jakarta as political opponents seemed capitalized on the case. On Twitter, harsh identity attacks were circulating, some even with threatening tone, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Selected Tweets Attacking Ahok

No	Account	Tweet	Date
1	@ariski93	There will be no mercy for those infidels who are blasphemers against Islam #BasukiEnd hanging, stoning. #AhokenemyofIslam, his supporters are also enemies of Islam.	10/10/2016
2	@septi_arifah2	In the name of Allah, let's kill people who insult the Koran #killahok #tangkapahok... (at Merdeka Palace) — https://path.com/p/27Tic4	04/11/2016
3	@UG_Moody	I'm still #antiAhok. I don't have the right to vote in the #PilkadaDKI but at least I can use my voice to #rejectAhok & support #imprisoningAhok.	16/02/2017
4	@Bakar55778917	Change the system, change the regime. Back to the original 1945 Constitution. Limit China's derivative political and economic movements. Natives must rise up #AntiAhok	24/03/2017
5	@DeddyDermawan80	People whose hearts and souls are evil, even if they are polished with honey, are still evil #evilahokcampaign #evilahokads	11/04/2017
6	@jakarta_pilkada	SECOND ROUND OF THE DKI ELECTION PUBLIC DEBATE @Irakoesno Conclusion: #Ahok's projects are more profitable for China, while #Anies is pro-small people program	13/04/2017

(Source: Twitter)

In the meantime, key attack messages about Anies accused him of upholding Syariah law if elected. A fabricated letter was circulating around March 2017, stating,

By asking for the grace of Allah SWT and the intercession of Rasulullah Muhammad SAW, I ANIES BASWEDAN and I SANDIAGA UNO DECLARE

READY TO LEAD DKI JAKARTA with the values of ISLAMIC SYARIAT and listening to the advice of the Musafirs and Ulama.⁴⁸⁴

Furthermore, brochures were circulated in Jakarta containing false accusations against Anies-Sandi entitled “10 Anies-Sandi lies” (Figure 18).



Figure 18 Anti-Anies-Sandi Flyer

(Source: Kompas.com)⁴⁸⁵

Anies responded to attacks against him with humor; in interviews asking his reactions, he would respond with puzzles where the answers would evoke laughter. The activities were recorded and shared on his personal Twitter (@aniesbaswedan) everyday using a hashtag #TweetJahat (#evil tweet).⁴⁸⁶ For example, one attack he responded to was from the account @SundaElfrida who had replied to a tweet by Anies with “Manusia berhati Iblis” or “Man with a Devil’s heart.”⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁴ <https://pilkada.tempo.co/read/857338/beredar-kontrak-politik-soal-syariat-islam-anies-itu-fitnah>

⁴⁸⁵ <https://megapolitan.kompas.com/read/2017/02/13/12465971/tim.anies-sandi.desak.polisi.tangkap.dalang.brosur.kampanye.hitam>

⁴⁸⁶ <https://www.medcom.id/pilkada/news-pilkada/VNnzL0JN-cara-anies-hadapi-serangan-di-media-sosial>

⁴⁸⁷ <https://twitter.com/SundaElfrida/status/841192570151550976>

However, he did not respond to attacks accusing him of upholding Syariah law in Jakarta if he won (see Figure 19 for an example).⁴⁸⁸



Figure 19 Anti Anies-Sandi Tweet on Syariah Law

(Source: Twitter)

Prominent attack messages against Anies-Sandi were related to Islam and its implementation. Like anti-Syariah law, the following example also associated Anies-Sandi with the Caliphate and ISIS, which were depicted here as the enemy of Pancasila (Figure 20).⁴⁸⁹ The image of radical Islam associated with Anies-Sandi putting the pair in an unfavourable light was also part of an opponent's campaign, saying that "Syariah-based Jakarta means ousting other religions from

⁴⁸⁸ <https://twitter.com/Tanpaagama/status/854099413060296704>

⁴⁸⁹ <https://twitter.com/TurnBackWahabi/status/850749171929726976>

Jakarta?” (Figure 21)⁴⁹⁰ Some examples of the similar attacks on Twitter can be seen in Table 4.



Figure 20 Anies-Sandi Associated with Caliphate and ISIS

(Source: Twitter)

⁴⁹⁰ <https://twitter.com/bikoarjuna/status/849283875394039808>



Figure 21 Syariah-based Jakarta Tweet

(Source: Twitter)

Table 4 Selected Tweets Attacking Anies Baswedan

No	Account	Tweet	Date
1	@emirzarry	#Anies, what are you talking about... just being a minister you was fired	13/01/2017
2	@budikst	Candidate Pair 3 made false promises or didn't understand the rules? Maybe both. Don't be lied to by Uncle Anies & Sandi! #DP 0% @pandji	17/02/2017
3	@graciawindy	#DP 0% BI Says Anies-Sandi's No DP KPR Program Violates the Rules https://shorturl.at/hyJK5	17/02/2017
4	@naqsya77	Haram oi... not <i>muhrim</i> . How comes the initiators of #JakartaBersyariah violated Sharia.	25/03/2017

(Source: Twitter)

By looking at the attack messages against both candidates, it can be seen that some common methods used in the negative campaigning were arousing fear, guilt by association, and labelling. The arousal of fear can be seen in the use of ISIS, Caliphate, and the refusal of Islamic burial. The guilt by association was also seen with the use of the ISIS image. Labelling was very commonly used against Ahok with his minority identity by using the label infidel.

The negative campaign reflected the reasons behind voters' decisions to vote for each candidate. Public opinion surveys showed that the main reason to vote for Ahok-Djarot was "There is real evidence of the results of his work" while the main reason to vote for Anies-Sandi was "The person is smart and educated," and for Agus-Sylvi it was them being "Firm and authoritative." However, for the three candidates, the voters' third reason to vote for the candidate was that they "Follow the same religion as me," and this is where Anies-Sandi gained 12%, while Ahok-Djarot gained 0% (SMRC, January 2017).⁴⁹¹ Another public opinion survey by LSI showed an increasing trend of rejecting non-Muslims from becoming public office holders from 2016 to 2018. In 2018 around 52% of Muslim citizens objected to a non-Muslim becoming the governor, and 59% to one becoming president (LSI, August 2018).⁴⁹² This demonstrated the strong religious sentiment in the political decisions of voters.

Taufik Hidayat, member of Democrat Party, who campaigned for the Agus-Sylvi ticket at the first round emphasized that the 2017 Jakarta election was marked by massive identity attacks that later would fall into broader context. He explained:

This digital campaign is very vulnerable to being exploited by a number of people to spread black campaigns, slander and hoaxes to downgrade those who are considered opponents, to downgrade a figure so that the candidate himself is considered better in the eyes of the public. This is very dangerous. In 2015, long before 2017, the campaign had started with content and narratives of identity polarization. Maybe the Indonesian people have heard the statement 'It is better to be an uncorrupted infidel than a corrupt Muslim.' That was in 2015. That's dangerous! That was the beginning of the division of this nation. The tagline threatened the unity of the Republic of Indonesia. The campaign used the words 'infidels' and 'Muslims', in the context of the 2017 Jakarta election. These sentences went viral. But that sentence is a trigger for disharmony in our

⁴⁹¹ SMRC, *DEBAT DAN ELEKTABILITAS PASLON PILKADA DKI (Temuan Survei 14 – 22 Januari 2017)*, Saiful Mujani Research Center (Jakarta, 2017), <http://www.saifulmujani.com/blog/2017/01/27/debat-berpengaruh-signifikan-pada-dukungan-pemilih-dki>.

⁴⁹² LSI, *Tren Persepsi Publik tentang Demokrasi, Korupsi, dan Intoleransi*, Lembaga Survei Indonesia (Jakarta, 2018), <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ORslWKYn57NAkzQIOhN3rEwq9rRXf4eN/view>.

democracy with the existing identity polarization. I really regret that it takes identity politics through infidels and Muslims polarization. Then the residue of the statement conveyed by certain groups to win their favored candidate has expanded into the 2019 election stage with wider issues.⁴⁹³

The effectiveness of negative campaigning in the 2017 Jakarta election can be attributed to at least three factors. First, the strong resonance between attack messages and voters' key values being threatened—a religions' sacredness being at stake. The composition of Jakarta voters by the time was 85% Muslim. And in an LSI Denny JA survey, 71.4% Jakarta voters said that choosing a leader who shared their religion was important.⁴⁹⁴ Consequently, framing Ahok as a non-Muslim candidate had ruined his reputation in the eyes of the majority of voters, not to mention with the outbreak of the Al-Maida case. Second, the role of fabricated information through doctored video posted on Facebook was important. Third, the role of social media and mainstream media distributing the audio-visual content across media platforms reaching Jakarta voters, which is a Muslim majority capital, was important. Religious sentiment had been a driving force in political participation in Indonesia ever since the first election in 1955 (see Chapter 2). Research showed that Muslim voters in Jakarta were more opposed to Ahok than non-Muslim voters, and the opposition was driven more by Ahok's ethnicity than his religion.⁴⁹⁵

This section has shown that the use of negative campaigning tactics caused the defeat of the incumbent candidate. Negative campaigning needs momentum to capitalize the right attack messages for the right target audience. The effectiveness of negative campaigning staged by challenger candidates was facilitated by characteristics of voters and characteristics of the target and legitimising the influence of negative campaigns. Characteristics of voters showed there were a majority of Muslims and with characteristics of the target opposite to this position/identity were exploited. For many Indonesians (and some foreign observers) the 2017 election was the height of negative campaigning in Indonesia to date. The fervent and overt use of race and religion in a campaign, coupled with the increasingly problematic role that digital media was playing in the campaign led many to see the Jakarta 2017 as a watershed moment in Indonesian politics. It is hard to imagine another Chinese Christian candidate running for a prominent

⁴⁹³ Taufik Hidayat, Zoom Interview, 29 April, 2022.

⁴⁹⁴ "Ketika Para Pemilih Muslim Cenderung Dukung Agus," *Tirto.id*, 2017, accessed 14 December, 2023, <https://tirto.id/ketika-para-pemilih-muslim-cenderung-dukung-agus-cizE>.

⁴⁹⁵ Nathanael Gratias Sumaktoyo, "ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS IN INDONESIAN POLITICS: EVIDENCE FROM THE 2017 JAKARTA GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 21, no. 1 (2021).

political position in Indonesia in the future, given the extraordinary negative nature of the campaign, and the subsequent jailing of Ahok, effectively ending his political career.

The 2014 election marks the dominant role of character attacks in Indonesia's election. By definition character can be understood as “a relatively stable set of a person’s traits rooted in a culture’s moral, cognitive, behavioural, and emotional standards.”⁴⁹⁶ Another scholar defines character as “the moral aspects of an individual’s behaviour and experience.”⁴⁹⁷ Character attack is a long-term campaign which may be composed of various communication acts, a series of efforts and assaults, beyond just a single character assassination event against a politician. Character attacks may be used in different types by attackers from fear mongering or fear arousal, allegations, labelling, ridiculing, and apposition. In Indonesia's digital era elections, most of these methods of character attacks were employed to paint opponents in a negative light on their identities. Character attacks are perceived as having stronger emotional appeal with voters.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that digital media modernized negative campaigning through production and distribution mechanisms as well as through innovations in campaign actor democratization thanks to the affordances of social media platforms. This finding contributes to the main argument of the thesis by showing that digital media boosted the production and dissemination of negative campaigning against candidates and was heavily focused on character rather than policy issues. The character attacks were employed in various types following the goals and methods applied from allegations, fear arousing, labelling, ridiculing, and apposition of target candidates. The introduction of new actors in the digital era democratized negative campaigning in a positive sense, but also opened wide the chance for the dissemination of malicious information due to the anonymous nature of social media platforms. Negative campaigning could bring electoral victory but only when the attack messages, personal, and contextual factors were satisfied, explaining the partial effectiveness of negative campaigning in Indonesia.

⁴⁹⁶ Martijn Icks et al., "Character Assassination: Theoretical Framework," in *Routledge Handbook of Character Assassination and Reputation Management*, ed. Martijn Icks Sergei A. Samoilenko, Eric Shiraev, Jennifer Keohane, and Eric Shiraev (New York and London: Routledge, 2019).

⁴⁹⁷ Eric B Shiraev et al., *Character Assassination and Reputation Management: Theory and Applications* (New York & Oxon: Routledge, 2022).

The key argument of this chapter is that digital media enabled the direct and full participation of ordinary citizens in electoral campaigning, which led to influential unofficial campaigning for candidates. Along with promoting their favoured candidate, citizens also waged negative campaigns against opposing candidates with some level of anonymity and automation on social media platforms. The level of citizen involvement in the campaigning, from mobilization to narrative creation to distribution, was unprecedented, which gave candidates' some leverage in the surge of electoral activism in Indonesia's direct local election era at national and local levels.

Candidates, then, were assisted by new actors in digital politics driven by electoral activism. The new actors in electoral campaigning in the digital era were mostly informal actors: buzzers, influencers, micro-celebrity, and volunteers. However, the increasing role of unofficial actors in Indonesia's election campaigning seemed to exacerbate the conduct of campaigns, reproducing narratives from previous elections targeting the characters of candidates. Nevertheless, regardless of the new campaign, actors, and more choices of digital media campaigning, negative campaigning resulted in different outcomes at different elections.

The core mechanics of negative campaigning at this early stage was distributing attack messages on social media by partisan influencers and organized buzzers using negative information about the candidates that at some level resonated with the voters. The campaign actors applied anonymity in their operations by using fake names and other identities as well as fake intentions on various social media platforms. As this new mechanism was logistically low cost, negative campaigns on social media involved huge numbers of actors who were intentionally organized to freely attack opponent candidates without meaningful gate-keeping oversight. Counterattacking also became faster and easier to stage. Overall, the campaign narrative and attack messages were still centered on character attacks, focusing on the candidate's personality rather than their policies or programs.

One of the key consequences of these elections throughout this period from 2012-2019 was Indonesia's clear democratic decline. Freedom House consistently ranked Indonesia as a 'partly free' country from 2017 to 2022.⁴⁹⁸ Freedom on the internet scored at only 51 (partly free) out of 100, mainly due to restricted access to social media platforms, harassment, doxing against journalists, and even criminal charges being made against dissenters.⁴⁹⁹ Freedom of speech was suppressed, particularly for those who had different views from the government over policy

⁴⁹⁸ See <https://freedomhouse.org/country/indonesia/freedom-world/2017>

⁴⁹⁹ See *Freedom on the Net 2019*, Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/indonesia/freedom-net/2019>.

and public issues.⁵⁰⁰ In line with these trends, a global democracy index released by a economist intelligence unit demonstrated that Indonesia's democracy was flawed,⁵⁰¹ which some scholars argued had been caused by both political elites and social groups alike.⁵⁰² Scholars concluded that Indonesia's democracy had been declining or backsliding.⁵⁰³

A significant consequence of the democratic decline could be seen in the lack of public trust in political institutions. Diamond observed that agents of destruction in most democratic regressions were "elected political leaders, greedy for power and wealth, who knock away various types of constraints on their power and enlarge and entrench it in undemocratic ways."⁵⁰⁴ Political elites at various institutions suffered from severe public distrust in Indonesia. National public opinion surveys from 2014 to 2021 regularly showed that DPR, DPD, and political parties were consistently the three least trusted public institutions.⁵⁰⁵ Scholars argued that at the root of this was that political parties failed to deliver their democratic roles. Scholars found that Indonesian political parties avoided competition and converged into a similar stance to get accommodated in government.⁵⁰⁶ They also had been influenced by oligarchs⁵⁰⁷ and had a dysfunctional funding system that made them vulnerable to manipulation by external forces.⁵⁰⁸ Indonesia's political parties also lacked ideological differences.⁵⁰⁹ Moreover, trust in news media as a source of political information was also falling, from 72% in 2014 to 62% in 2019.⁵¹⁰

Indonesians experienced rising religious sectarianism and conservatism over the last ten years or so, where people were more inclined to identify with their social group and express their values and resistances to the political system.⁵¹¹ Importantly, an Islamization of dissent in Indonesia has become established.⁵¹² This trend seemed to increase after the 2014 national and 2017 Jakarta elections, where voters were mobilized on their ethno-religious identity by the

⁵⁰⁰ "Digital attacks bedevil government critics," The Jakarta Post, 2021, accessed 15 October, 2023, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2021/05/19/digital-attacks-bedevel-govt-critics.html>.

⁵⁰¹ See Democracy Index 2019, <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index/>

⁵⁰² Thomas Power and Eve Warburton, *Democracy in Indonesia: From Stagnation to Regression?*, ed. Thomas Power and Eve Warburton (Singapore: ISEAS, 2020).

⁵⁰³ Thomas P. Power, "Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia's Democratic Decline," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 54, no. 3 (2018).

⁵⁰⁴ Larry Diamond, "Democratic regression in comparative perspective: scope, methods, and causes," *Democratization* 28, no. 1 (2021).

⁵⁰⁵ *Kinerja Presiden, Penanganan Covid-19, Pemulihan Ekonomi pasca-Pandemi dan Peta Elektoral Terkini*, Indikator Politik Indonesia (2021), <https://indikator.co.id/rilis-survei-indikator-05-desember-2021/>.

⁵⁰⁶ Ambardi, *Mengungkap politik kartel*; Dan Slater, "Party Cartelization, Indonesian-Style: Presidential Power-Sharing and the Contingency of Democratic Opposition," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 18, no. 01 (2018).

⁵⁰⁷ Robison and Hadiz, *Reorganising power in Indonesia: The politics of oligarchy in an age of markets*.

⁵⁰⁸ Marcus Mietzner, *Money, power, and ideology: Political parties in post-authoritarian Indonesia* (Singapore: NUS press, 2013).

⁵⁰⁹ Aspinall et al. Mapping the Indonesian political spectrum.

⁵¹⁰ Quoted in Ross Tapsell, "The media and democratic decline," in *Democracy in Indonesia, From Stagnation to Regression*, ed. Thomas Power and Eve Warburton (Singapore: ISEAS, 2020).

⁵¹¹ Syafiq Hasyim, "Fatwas and Democracy: Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, Indonesian Ulema Council) and Rising Conservatism in Indonesian Islam," *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 8, no. 1 (2020).

⁵¹² Vedi R. Hadiz, "Indonesia's missing Left and the Islamisation of dissent," *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2021).

political elites. The persistent Islamic mobilization for electoral purposes occurred amid a rising intolerance, particularly towards minority groups in Indonesia.⁵¹³ Scholars found that Indonesian citizens held illiberal tendencies more than the political elites.⁵¹⁴

The 2014 presidential election, first and foremost, created long lasting animosity towards elites caused mainly by harsh negative campaigning against candidates, particularly with the publication of *Obor Rakyat* and the rejection of election results by the losing candidates, accusing the election process of being illegal.⁵¹⁵ The results of the election led to the coalition government following a seat-seeking behaviour and the president-elect anticipating parliamentary attacks from the opposition. The new administration, “Kabinet Kerja” (Work Cabinet), received huge support from political parties sitting at DPR namely PDI-P, Golkar, PKB, PPP, Nasdem, and Hanura, constituting 60% of the total seats, which made it reasonably easy to pass laws. This pushed Gerindra, PKS, Demokrat, PAN, PPP, and PBB into opposition. Furthermore, there were 34 members of the cabinet appointed by the president to focus on infrastructure development, human development, and bureaucratic simplification as part of his campaign’s promises.⁵¹⁶

In conclusion, contextual factors were important when understanding the impact of negative campaigning in Indonesia from 2012-2017. These factors included declining democracy, increasing conservatism, the direct electoral system, and political alliances and rivalries from previous elections in 2014 and 2017. These accumulative factors influenced elite behaviours when choosing narratives and staging their negative campaigns in their efforts to maximize votes in the digital era of campaigning.

⁵¹³ Vedi R. Hadiz, "Imagine All the People? Mobilising Islamic Populism for Right-Wing Politics in Indonesia," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 48, no. 4 (2018).; Marcus Mietzner, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, and Rizka Halida, "Entrepreneurs of Grievance Drivers and Effects of Indonesia's Islamist Mobilization," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 174, no. 2/3 (2018).

⁵¹⁴ Edward Aspinall et al., "Elites, masses, and democratic decline in Indonesia," *Democratization* 27, no. 4 (2020).

⁵¹⁵ "Prabowo-Hatta Tolak Pelaksanaan Pilpres 2014," TEMPO, 2014, accessed 15 October, 2023, <https://pemilu.tempo.co/read/594919/prabowo-hatta-tolak-pelaksanaan-pilpres-2014>.

⁵¹⁶ "Kabinet Kerja: Penetapan, Susunan, dan Program Kerja," Kompas.com, 2021, accessed 15 October, 2023, <https://www.kompas.com/stori/read/2021/04/22/165246979/kabinet-kerja-penetapan-susunan-dan-program-kerja>.

Chapter 4 Computational attack: Negative campaigning at the 2019 presidential election

This chapter examines the actors, mechanics, narratives and methods of negative campaigning at the 2019 presidential election. The chapter argues that the 2019 presidential election saw a new mechanic of negative campaigning using computational techniques to stage attack campaigns against opponents—what I call *computational attack*. The findings show that unofficial actors used computational attack with automation, fake accounts, social media platforms and its algorithms, with coordinated behavior on social media to amplify attack messages and negative narratives against opponents in the context of the hybrid media system. However, it is important to remember that computational propaganda, as defined by scholars, does not only mean using bots. In fact, in Indonesia computational propaganda, and negative campaigning broadly, is still dominated by human agents—buzzers and influencers. These unofficial actors produced and disseminated attack messages utilizing human operators as well as bots to amplify negative narratives against opponents using methods such as arousing fear, ridicule, labelling, and apposition. The key narratives used to attack opponents through fake and authentic social media accounts revolved around character and identity issues, including accusing them as disobedient to Islam, being opponents of Islam, being subservient to foreign interests, lacking integrity, being proponents of communism (PKI), and being unfaithful men. This chapter proceeds as follows: first, I explain what computational attack means informed by a conceptual understanding of computational propaganda. I then move on to explain the electoral context and the key players in the campaign teams. I then look at the specific employment of computational attack, key narratives, and methods. Finally, I examine the influence of a hybrid media system, which impacted how computational propaganda messages were spread.

4.1. Introduction

Innovation in new media technology has brought new concepts to describe the emerging problem such as disinformation, misinformation, and fake news. One such term is computational propaganda. The concept of computational propaganda was popularised by Howard and Wooley in 2016, who defined it as “as the assemblage of social media platforms, autonomous

agents, and big data tasked with the manipulation of public opinion.”⁵¹⁷ According to them, key components of computational propaganda are autonomous agents or software programs, social media with its big data, and the goal of influencing politics through ideological methods. In simple terms, computational propaganda can be understood as propaganda created or disseminated by computational means.⁵¹⁸ Social media allows for automation, scalability, and anonymity which are the core features of computational propaganda.⁵¹⁹ Delwiche expanded upon this definition when he argued that computational propaganda is “the attempt to influence public opinion and behaviour via strategic synthesis of social media platforms, autonomous agents, micro-targeting, and datamining, with active participation from targeted individuals who help perpetuate the message.”⁵²⁰ Later, Bolsover and Howard emphasized that defining computational propaganda should move beyond the trap of technological determinism by acknowledging its other part—the social. A social understanding of computational propaganda originates from classical propaganda itself, which is “communications that deliberately misrepresent symbols, appealing to emotions and prejudices and bypassing rational thought, to achieve a specific goal of its creators.”⁵²¹

Of course, propaganda is rooted in a longstanding tradition of political manipulation originally driven by the state for control and deception. At the early investigation of propaganda, Lippman published *Public Opinion* in 1922, where he examined propaganda as a top-down operation to stir public opinion through manipulation of information.⁵²² In 1927, Laswell published *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, where he analysed the use of propaganda by state actors on its own citizens for unity and against enemies for agitation. Laswell defined propaganda as “the control of opinion by significant symbols, or, to speak more concretely and less accurately, by stories, rumours, reports, pictures and other forms of social communication.”⁵²³ In 1994, Herman and Chomsky proposed a “propaganda model” in their book, *Manufacturing Consent*, where they examined how mass media became an agent of propaganda in that it filters information based on profit-oriented operations when producing news. Because of the filters—such as size, advertising, flack, and an anti-communism

⁵¹⁷ Woolley and Howard, “Political Communication, Computational Propaganda, and Autonomous Agents: Introduction.”

⁵¹⁸ Gillian Bolsover and Philip Howard, “Computational Propaganda and Political Big Data: Moving Toward a More Critical Research Agenda,” *Big Data* 5, no. 4 (2017).

⁵¹⁹ Samuel C Woolley and Philip N Howard, “Introduction: Computational Propaganda Worldwide,” in *Computational Propaganda: Political Parties, Politicians, And Political Manipulation On Social Media*, ed. Samuel C Woolley and Philip N Howard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁵²⁰ Aaron Delwiche, “Computational Propaganda and the Rise of the Fake Audience,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Propaganda*, ed. Paul Baines, Nicholas O’Shaughnessy, and Nancy Snow (London: Sage Publications, 2020).

⁵²¹ Bolsover and Howard, “Computational Propaganda and Political Big Data: Moving Toward a More Critical Research Agenda.”

⁵²² Walter Lippmann, *Public opinion* (New York: Brace & Company, 1922).

⁵²³ Harold D Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (New York: Peter Smith, 1927).

narrative—the media “marginalize dissent and allow government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public.”⁵²⁴

Computational propaganda embraces propaganda’s classic characteristics but applies it in the digital era, showing diverse actors and sophisticated techniques. Woolley and Howard argued that computational propaganda “forms part of a suite of dubious political practices that includes digital astroturfing, state-sponsored trolling, and new forms of online warfare known as PsyOps or InfoOps wherein the end goal is to manipulate information online in order to change people’s opinions and, ultimately, behaviour.”⁵²⁵ In the modern era, computational propaganda brings an unprecedented rate of creation and dissemination of information and expands its potential influence on the target population through computational enhancement.⁵²⁶ Investigations of computational propaganda have increased in the advent of social media being used not only during pivotal political events but also in the context of the established production of journalism.⁵²⁷ The crucial feature of the computational departs significantly from its original state in that it is data driven techniques and uses tools like automation (bots) and algorithms (decision-making codes) that allow groups of actors to amplify highly specific, abusive, and even false information into the mainstream online environments.⁵²⁸ The messages of computational propaganda often circulate far beyond its original intent and across whole media systems, potentially adding credibility and improving recall of the manipulative information widely in the target population.⁵²⁹

There has been a growing concern about computational propaganda globally, particularly since the election of Donald Trump in 2016 US election and the Brexit referendum in the UK. Scholars showed the application of computational propaganda in various contexts from electoral campaigns to government’s strategic propaganda both in democracies, such as US, Taiwan, Brazil, Canada, and Germany, as well as in non-democracies, such as Russia and China.⁵³⁰ Woolley and Howard observed that “powerful (and often anonymous) political actors have used computational propaganda techniques to perpetrate political attacks, to spread disinformation, censor and attack journalists, and create fake trends.”⁵³¹ In the 2016 US election, scholars found

⁵²⁴ Edward S Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media* (London: Vintage Books, 1994).

⁵²⁵ Woolley and Howard, “Introduction: Computational Propaganda Worldwide,” p 4.

⁵²⁶ Woolley and Howard, *Computational propaganda: Political parties, politicians, and political manipulation on social media*.

⁵²⁷ Kerry Ann Carter Persen and Samuel C. Woolley, “COMPUTATIONAL PROPAGANDA AND THE NEWS: Journalists’ Perceptions of the Effects of Digital Manipulation on Reporting,” in *AFFECTIVE POLITICS OF DIGITAL MEDIA: Propaganda by Other Means*, ed. Megan Boler and Elizabeth Davis (New York: Routledge, 2021).

⁵²⁸ Woolley and Howard, “Introduction: Computational Propaganda Worldwide.”

⁵²⁹ Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts, *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics* (Oxford University Press, 18 Oct 2018, 2018). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190923624.001.0001>.

⁵³⁰ Woolley and Howard, *Computational propaganda: Political parties, politicians, and political manipulation on social media*.

⁵³¹ Woolley and Howard, “Introduction: Computational Propaganda Worldwide.”

that computational propaganda was used during the election to amplify certain narratives through malicious information that in a way benefitted the Republican candidate or defamed his opponent.⁵³² In India, a pioneering study found manipulation of public opinion through digital propaganda driven by algorithms in the context of the inter-state conflict between India and Pakistan.⁵³³ Following these setbacks in democratic processes in the world's democratic giants, the world was shocked by a number of global information operation groups that used illegal strategies and false information to achieve political goals. The cases of Cambridge Analytica, Internet Research Agency, and the recent revelation of "Team Jorge"⁵³⁴ perfectly demonstrate the weaponization of disinformation around the world based on clients' orders.⁵³⁵ The concerns towards this global operation are not only caused by its capacity to act as genuine communication by mimicking human behaviours that makes it harder to detect, but also because of the low level of digital literacy among many countries that could be vulnerable to the influence of malicious information. Also, methodologically, sophisticated research was applied on big data analysis to target the emotional side of the potential groups of people in the online world. Of highest concern, computational propaganda undermines civic experiences and the existence of genuine and equal deliberation in the open public sphere.⁵³⁶ In short, the growing abuses of computational propaganda has influenced elections, suppressed dissents, instigated polarization, and threatened the existence of democracy itself.

Following the above explanation, I use the concept of computational enhancement to examine actors, mechanics, narratives and methods of negative campaigning used at the 2019 presidential election in Indonesia. In the context of electoral negative campaigning, I use computational attack instead of computational propaganda to describe the computational enhancement of negative campaigning on social media.⁵³⁷ Computational propaganda is utilized to deceive people through manipulation of information, and it may be part of electoral campaigning where, for instance, a politician promotes himself with deceitful information (without talking about his opponents). In computational attack it is always about a negative thing related to opponents. The attack in computational attack constitutes a functional element of electoral

⁵³² Woolley and Guilbeault, "United States: Manufacturing Consensus Online."

⁵³³ Taberezh Ahmed Neyazi, "Digital propaganda, political bots and polarized politics in India," *Asian Journal of Communication* 30, no. 1 (2020).

⁵³⁴ This is a team of disinformation producers who, according to investigative journalism, have manipulated more than 30 elections around the world using hacking, sabotage and automated disinformation on social media. The team controls thousands of fake social media profiles on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Telegram, Gmail, Instagram and YouTube. An Indonesian account of Telegram has been penetrated by this team for their operation. See the report here "Revealed: the hacking and disinformation team meddling in elections," 2023, accessed 21 February, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/15/revealed-disinformation-team-jorge-claim-meddling-elections-tal-hanan>.

⁵³⁵ Kirchgaessner et al., "Revealed: the hacking and disinformation team meddling in elections."

⁵³⁶ Zeynep Tufekci, "Engineering the public: Big data, surveillance and computational politics," *First Monday* 19, no. 7 (2014).

⁵³⁷ As I have explained in chapter 1 following extensive literature, the use of attack or attack campaign here or elsewhere is a substitute for negative campaigning for parsimony reason.

campaigning, which is negative information about the opponents. In this context, I define computational attack as the use of political bots, algorithms, and social media affordances by political campaigners to create and amplify attack messages and negative narratives against opponents to influence the flow of information and perception of voters.

To examine computational attacks during the 2019 presidential election, I collected Twitter data through Twitter's REST API in JSON format using R programs from September 2018 to April 2019 based on 20 negative hashtags about the candidates. Then the data was reformatted with Tidyverse packages in R for text mining analysis.⁵³⁸ Text mining is "the process of distilling actionable insights from text."⁵³⁹ The goal of text mining is to "to extract useful information from data sources through the identification and exploration of interesting patterns" in unstructured textual datasets.⁵⁴⁰ The diverse techniques of text mining used include data pre-processing, association analysis, clustering, categorizing and summarizing of important concepts in a text, like frequency of terms.⁵⁴¹ I applied these techniques to detect anonymity, fake accounts, automation (bots), key hashtags, engagement, and messages of negative campaigning. This is followed by another element of computational attack—coordinated behaviour—in disseminating attack messages on Twitter using R packages. The coordinated behaviour on Twitter was detected based on time interval and number repetition of coordinated sharing of tweets, retweets, and hashtags.⁵⁴² This then informed an analysis of the actors who operated the computational attacks. As computational attacks take place in hybrid media systems, negative messages often travel further beyond the original intention of the actors, particularly with the reports of mainstream news media as if it legitimizes the attack messages.

4.2. Campaign team structure: Official and unofficial actors

The 2019 presidential election was a rematch between incumbent President Joko Widodo of the PDI-P and his 2014 rival, Prabowo Subianto, of the Gerindra Party. Both candidates and their nominating parties, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), and Gerindra party, were ideologically nationalists, believing in the sole state ideology of Pancasila, and both their party coalitions were composed of Islamic parties. Joko Widodo selected Ma'ruf Amin, a Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Kiayi and chairperson of Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) to be his vice-presidential

⁵³⁸ This process resulted in a tidy dataset containing key variables of interest namely user_username, user_location, conversation_id, text, created_at, retweet_count, like_count, quote_count, and source.

⁵³⁹ Ted Kwartler, *Text Mining in Practice with R* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2017).

⁵⁴⁰ Feldman and Sanger, *The text mining handbook: advanced approaches in analyzing unstructured data*.

⁵⁴¹ I Feinerer, K Hornik, and D Meyer, "Text Mining Infrastructure in R," *Journal of Statistical Software* 25, no. 5 (2008).

⁵⁴² For more details about these methods, please refer to Chapter 1

running mate. This move was to counter narratives against Jokowi aired during the 2014 election and in his first term that he was not appealing to voters who saw Islam as needing to play a greater role in state affairs. Prabowo Subianto selected Sandiaga Uno, a businessman and member of Gerindra party. This selection gave a huge boost to Prabowo's campaign funds, given that Prabowo had lost the previous election. At the same time, Sandiaga Uno—who was vice governor of Jakarta from 2017—was expected to attract many younger voters, including aspirational young Muslims.⁵⁴³

This section examines the structure and actors of the campaign team of both candidates in staging negative campaigning, including using the new mechanic of computational attack. Although campaigning was a formal phase of the electoral process with periods stipulated by law, campaign activities often started early, which led to accusations and political rows between contestants, setting the stage for negative campaigns that persisted throughout the official campaigns. The official campaign periods in the 2019 presidential election were from 23 September 2018 until 13 April 2019 followed by three days of quiet from 14-16 April 2019. Although candidates could not stage any campaign activities during this time, unofficial campaigns usually got more intense online. The official campaigns were campaigns carried out by official campaign teams as registered by candidates to the National Election Commission (KPU) following the law that run scheduled activities, such as rallies, TV debates, public meetings, political ads, social media, and distribution of campaign props.⁵⁴⁴ Unofficial campaigns were campaigns run by unregistered actors who did not have to follow any formal schedules and if found guilty of breaking the law would not affect the candidates legally.⁵⁴⁵ The unofficial organizations and actors contributed much more to the negative campaigns than the official ones because of their numbers, use of social media, and underground mobilization.

All candidates were legally required to submit the structure of their campaign teams to the KPU as an administrative requirement.⁵⁴⁶ These campaign teams were composed of party leaders, elites, influential figures, such as retired generals, and members of the supporting political parties. This is often called the official campaign team. The structure of official campaign teams submitted to the KPU by both candidates indicated slight differences in terms of functions and

⁵⁴³ Liam Gammon, "On the 2024 campaign trail with Sandi Uno," *New Mandala*, 13 March, 2019, <https://www.newmandala.org/on-the-2024-campaign-trail-with-sandi-uno/>.

⁵⁴⁴ These official campaign activities are generally stipulated in the Election Law and its subsidiaries regulations such as PKPU No.23/2018 on election campaigning. These laws do not regulate unofficial campaigns or direct involvement of citizens in campaigning for or against a candidate.

⁵⁴⁶ There are nine campaign methods the candidate can implement according to the Election Law namely limited gathering, face to face meeting, dissemination of campaign materials, installation of campaign props, campaign on social media, advertising on print, broadcast, and outdoor media, general meeting, debate on television, and other activities that do not violate the law (Election Law, No.7/2017)

personalities. Jokowi-Amin's official campaign team was called National Campaign Team (TKN) 547 and was led by prominent businessman Erick Thohir. Thohir was a media owner and wealthy businessman with his own political ambitions. He had previously held the 18th Asian Games in Jakarta and Palembang, successfully making him a noticeable figure among the Jakarta-based political circle.⁵⁴⁸ The TKN team's structure looked smaller, filled by younger figures in the political arena and from independent professionals.⁵⁴⁹ Prabowo-Sandi's campaign team was called the National Winning Body (BPN), led by former general Djoko Santoso.⁵⁵⁰ Santoso was a former Indonesian military commander during the era of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono from 2007 until he retired in 2010, and he joined the Gerindra party in 2015.⁵⁵¹ The BPN structure included Amien Rais, former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and the daughter of Sukarno Rachmawati Soekarnoputri.

The national official campaign teams were in charge of compiling all activities of the campaigns, holding campaign activities, and establishing campaigning team at the provincial and city level guided by electoral regulation.⁵⁵² The role of the official campaigns was seen through the formal modes of campaigning used, such as televised debates, political ads, participation in talk shows, public meetings, attending special events, and other such activities. But the official campaign also designed their negative campaigns tactics, despite the low frequency as this thesis argues. Sudirman Said, Director of Content/Material for Prabowo-Sandi campaign team explained that,

Negative campaigns were of course prepared and carried out by our team. This means we see the weaknesses of Mr Jokowi's government over the last 5 years. Then check whether it meets our future needs, for example. So, we definitely did it. For example regarding law enforcement, we really feel that it is getting weaker, corruption occurs everywhere, and we see from the first term that his leadership does not provide empowerment that maintains the integrity of the government. The incumbent candidate is often attacked in terms of what he promises, how he delivers, that is part of the attack. But we attacked within the

547 The official campaign team of Jokowi-Amin is composed of an advisory board, steering board, and national campaign team. The national campaign team consisted of head and associate head, secretary and associate secretary, treasurer and associate treasurer, winning teams of legislative election of political parties under Indonesia Work coalition (ex-officio), territorial steering committee of regional leaders, spokesperson, directorate, and special envoy. "INFOGRAFIK: Daftar Nama dalam Tim Kampanye Nasional Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin," Kompas.com, 2018, accessed 09 March, 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/09/28/21513591/infografik-daftar-nama-dalam-tim-kampanye-nasional-jokowi-maruf-amin>.

548 "Sukses di Asian Games, Erick Thohir Jadi Ketua Timses Jokowi," CNBC Indonesia, 2018, accessed 09 March, 2023, <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20180907174852-4-32268/sukses-di-asian-games-erick-thohir-jadi-ketua-timses-jokowi>.

549 Tamtomo, "INFOGRAFIK: Daftar Nama dalam Tim Kampanye Nasional Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin."

550 "Djoko Santoso Jadi Ketua Timses Prabowo-Sandiaga," Media Indonesia, 2018, accessed 09 March, 2023, <https://mediaindonesia.com/politik-dan-hukum/186054/djoko-santoso-jadi-ketua-timses-prabowo-sandiaga>.

551 "Former Indonesian Military chief Djoko Santoso dies at 67," The Jakarta Post, 2020, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/05/10/former-indonesian-military-chief-djoko-santoso-dies-at-67.html>.

552 *Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia No.7 Tahun 2017 tentang Pemilihan Umum*.

limits permitted by ethics. Moreover, for example, changing cabinets indicates that the leader does not deliver, why? Because changing cabinet members means frequently changing policies. It makes investors rethink investing. That's how it becomes material for us to attack.⁵⁵³

In addition, the official campaign team also learnt about their opponent candidate or held opposition research. Tubagus Ace Hasan of Golkar party and key member of Jokowi-Amin campaign team explained,

Yes, of course, we need to have sufficient knowledge of the opponent. First, at least we learn what their vision and mission are and the weak points of it conceptually and technically; for instance, whether they want to have debt or not. The question is whether it is possible today where a country does not have debt. That's something unusual in today's economy. Japan has huge debts, Africa has huge debts. Also, opponent has said stop importing; the question is how to do it in this era of globalization like this. So, we learnt about our opponent's issues. Second. it's about the candidate, of course. But, did not attack at a personal level. We're just saying what it's called, for example, is it possible to manage this nation with anger like that shown by opponent?⁵⁵⁴

Furthermore, the cruelty evident in previous campaigns made the campaign teams concerned and more cautious, particularly as regards the 2017 DKI Jakarta election. For example, a member of the TKN team, Eva Sundari of PDI-P explained,

I have been in politics for 15 years now, and I see the voters are becoming more and more irrational. Their decisions were more because of emotions, especially in 2004. Before, when there was no post-truth, people chose because of the candidate. But now I am especially traumatized by the 2017 DKI election. I was a member of Ahok's success team at that time, even the spokesperson. So, I can feel that since the DKI election the campaign has become more emotional. Voters also make decisions not rationally, but because of their religion, because of their race. In my opinion, the 2017 DKI's local election is messed up and the mess has affected the 2019 presidential election. I said that because during our meetings we always referred to DKI, saying: "Don't do this or that in fear of the

⁵⁵³ Sudirman Said, Zoom Interview, 3 November, 2020.

⁵⁵⁴ Tubagus Ace Hasan, In-person Interview, 13 August, 2020.

DKI case." So, it really became the basis for us to formulate campaign strategy, and somehow, it's good that we finally can trick, right. But it's not very good for democracy because we have to trick, for example, "how to curb opponents who may later use a verse campaign again?". So, I think yesterday's presidential election, somehow, was influenced by the 2017 DKI election. And we can feel why so, especially those in Prabowo's campaign team, the copied of DKI local election.⁵⁵⁵

Apart from the official campaign, the candidate also had unofficial teams which were not registered at the KPU and worked in fragmented networks based on personal connections. Although unofficial, these teams still received campaign materials and financial support from official campaign teams throughout the campaign periods. What made them unofficial is that they were unaccountable to the KPU or other mechanisms that might monitor campaign activities. These unofficial groups were made up of social media campaign teams who did not openly declare they were working for a political party or candidate. These included, for example, volunteers, buzzers, and influencers. The existence of these actors benefitted the candidate politically when they needed to resort to staging smear campaigns despite the hesitation of the candidates to acknowledge their existence. These unofficial campaign teams were not answerable to election regulations and did not need to follow campaign timelines to work. They also had close relations with the official campaign teams in terms of functional roles. A member of the official campaign team of TKN, Putra Nababan, summarized the relationship between unofficial and official campaigns as direct, at least in a sense. He explained,

The relationship is of course, because of their volunteers, that they try to spread narratives of the central campaign. They join themselves in various supporter groups, both in WA groups, in campaign groups, and in Twitter groups. So, they carry out the instructions that have been set by the central campaign team to play narratives according to the agenda setting of the official campaign. They distribute materials of the narrative that they want to play daily, weekly, monthly and when the narrative reaches the communities, they are the ones next who play it in their own groups. Hence, there is a war, a very strong narrative war in various groups that gave the way for the terms *cebong* for Jokowi supporters and *kampret* for opponents. Well, you know, there are even people who are half crazy. There are many people who attacked, and some are even arrested, but

⁵⁵⁵ Eva Sundari, Zoom Interview, 4 June, 2020.

the ones who are going half-crazy are those die-hard fans of Jokowi who do not want Jokowi to be discredited and there are all kinds of cases on Facebook attacking Jokowi. So, it's really a direct relationship, that's why they distributed the narratives directly and then spread to various communities that were active at that time to support Jokowi's victory.⁵⁵⁶

The first element of the unofficial campaigns was the volunteer organizations. Political voluntarism gained prominence in electoral politics, particularly after the introduction of the direct election era and the low trust in political parties. Public frustration with the party-dominated corrupt and oligarchic electoral politics led to the emergence of a grassroots movement to nominate and support a popular candidate, which resulted in an electoral movement.⁵⁵⁷ The rise of the electoral movement of *relawan* in Indonesia's electoral politics gained popularity in the 2012 Jakarta election with the establishment of JASMEV (Jokowi-Ahok Social Media Volunteers).⁵⁵⁸ JASMEV continued to operate during the 2014 national election, and in the 2017 Jakarta election, digital political voluntarism expanded with the founding of Friends of Ahok⁵⁵⁹ and INSIDER (Anies-Sandi Digital Volunteers).⁵⁶⁰ On the other hand, these partisan volunteer organizations also contributed to undemocratic practices in campaigning for their favoured candidates by mobilizing sectarianism and excluding opponents from claiming the rights of equality and justice.⁵⁶¹ The prominent *relawan* organizations campaigning for both candidates are shown in Table 5. Some of these *relawan* organizations were loyal supporters of the candidates from the previous election, where the involvement of progressive civil society organisations played a decisive role. For example, in the case of Jokowi, Projo, Seknas, and BaraJP worked since the pre-nomination of Jokowi in the 2014 election along with other groups through different strategies—"land campaign" (*kampanye darat*) and "air campaign" (*kampanye udara*)—the latter strategy being fought through broadcast media and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Path).⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁶ Putra Nababan, Zoom Interview, 11 June, 2020.

⁵⁵⁷ Dirk Tomsa and Charlotte Setijadi, "New Forms of Political Activism in Indonesia," *Asian Survey* 58, no. 3 (2018).

⁵⁵⁸ "Seribu Relawan Sosial Media Untuk Jokowi-Ahok," *beritasatu.com*, 2012, accessed 10 March, 2023, <https://www.beritasatu.com/megapolitan/66145/seribu-relawan-sosial-media-untuk-jokowi-ahok>.

⁵⁵⁹ "Teman Ahok in spotlight, confirms pollster's involvement," *thejakartapost.com*, 2016, accessed 10 March, 2023, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/03/17/teman-ahok-spotlight-confirms-pollster-s-involvement.html>.

⁵⁶⁰ "Pengakuan Relawan Digital Anies-Sandi Saat Kampanye Pilkada DKI," *tempo.co*, 2017, accessed 10 March, 2023, <https://pilkada.tempo.co/read/868897/pengakuan-relawan-digital-anies-sandi-saat-kampanye-pilkada-dki>.

⁵⁶¹ Lim, "Freedom to hate: social media, algorithmic enclaves, and the rise of tribal nationalism in Indonesia."

⁵⁶² Ririn Sefsani and Patrick Ziegenhain, "Civil-society Support — A Decisive Factor in the Indonesian Presidential Elections in 2014," *AS/EN* 136, no. July (2015).

Table 5 Volunteer groups of candidates

Jokowi-Amin's volunteers	
ReJo (Relawan Jokowi)	KITA Jokowi (Komunitas Indonesia Cinta Jokowi)
Projo	JoSmart (Jokowi Smart)
JAMIN (Jaringan Moderat Indonesia)	Almisbat (Aliansi Masyarakat Hebat Indonesia)
Relawan Merah Putih	Martabat Jokowi-Maruf Amin
Super Jokowi (Suara Perempuan untuk Jokowi)	BaraJP (Barisan Relawan Jokowi Presiden)
Jaman (Jaringan Kemandirian Nasional)	Gojo (Golkar-Jokowi)
Jokowi Riders	Laskar Jokowi
Seknas Jokowi	RKIH (Rumah Kreasi Indonesia Hebat)
Jokowi Mania	Jala Jokowi (Jaringan Relawan Jokowi)
Prabowo-Sandi's volunteers	
Kamiberani (Kaum Milenial Bersama Prabowo-Sandi)	Japri (Jaringan Pribumi)
RNPAS (Relawan Nasional Prabowo-Sandi)	GNPF (Gerakan Nasional Pengawal Fatwa)
Satria (Satuan Relawan Indonesia Raya)	Ladatu (Laskar Garuda Bersatu)
PEPES (Partai Emak-Emak Pendukung Prabowo-Sandi)	KOPI Demokrasi (Gerakan Konsolidasi Pemilih Indonesia untuk Demokrasi)
Jarpas (Jaringan Relawan Prabowo-Sandi)	

(Source: Compiled from various sources by author)

The online unofficial campaign teams were tasked with specific a goal to campaign for a candidate and oppose others through persistent posting, sharing, and responding to issues related to the candidates online. Although working separately they were coordinated and received resources from the official campaign teams. These unofficial teams benefitted from a good division of labour, including funders, managers, field coordinators, research, production, and distribution teams (see Figure 22). The unofficial team received funding from individuals related to the official campaigns and could interfere at some points in deciding specific messages to be boosted. In my personal interview with one of the buzzer coordinators, who was also a buzzer, Goldy Reki (a pseudonym), he explained that there was a special social media team that is not attached officially to the official campaign team of the candidate:

So actually, this is the Social Media Team, this is more or less confidential, this is the Head of Social Media Team, if people know there is a buzzer, this is above it, the one who plans, sets up, and finds ideas for what to do. I am one of the volunteer representatives included in the team. This team is chaired by Mr. AS. Under him there is a key person who now became a commissioner, then us

below him. My job is to convey and communicate the planned agenda setting from TKN to the volunteers below. We meet 2-3 times a week to discuss the results of analysis of development of issues on social media. The official team hired a social media monitoring consultant from Singapore, who crawled social media data and then captured it, finding issues that stand out. We met him every time we had a presidential debate. We formulate what issues to play based on what the candidates say during the debate, what issues should we raise, and which accounts should be reported. The reason to hire consultant from abroad is so that objectivity is high. If we hire from local skill, we are afraid that the data will be leaked or bought and sold which could jeopardize our strategy. So, under the official campaign team there is P team. The P team has explosive power and a large distribution capacity. However, to make it wider, existing volunteers are invited to join. The social media coordinators are there. Buzzers have their own team driven by them and got paid; they must participate in issues determined by the official campaign team TKN. Buzzer has a coordinator and is recruited to become a commissioner. He's the head of this buzzer. There is another buzzer manager under him who is now also recruited to be a commissioner. Money comes from the current two ministers and one of the top party officials behind the coalition.⁵⁶³

Unofficial campaigns were also capable of employing bots and disseminating factual as well as false information on social media based on the situation. Arya Sinulingga, a spokesperson for TKN, explained that their teams used bots to spread campaign messages, but did not agree with the idea that it was used to disseminate false information. When asked if his team use bots, he replied:

Bots? I'm afraid this will have a negative impression. If you mean whether we used that technology, yes definitely we did. That's just a tool for distribution. Distribution, not for others. If the message is negative, it becomes negative, and if the message is positive, it becomes positive.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶³ Goldy Reki, In-person Interview, 13 March, 2022.

⁵⁶⁴ Arya Sinulingga, Zoom Interview, 24 January, 2021.

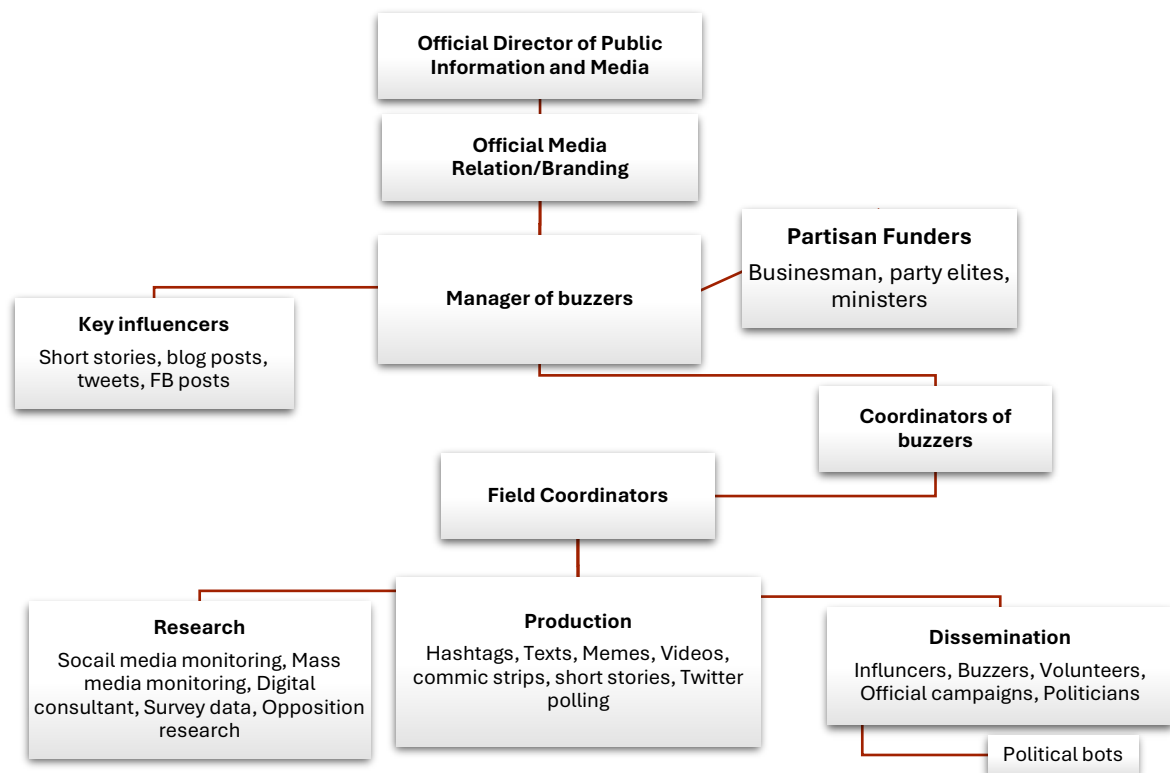


Figure 22 Digital campaign's structure of a candidate

(Source: based on multiple interviews)

However, my interview with Goldy Reki (pseudonym), field coordinator of buzzers for Jokowi-Amin, who coordinated up to 5,000 buzzers nationally, said that his team often attacked Prabowo-Sandi as it was the right thing to do if the information was true. When asked if the wider campaign team had ever used black campaigning, he responded,

Of course, there was negative campaigning. That definitely existed, and this is very common in the world of politics. Negative campaigns are valid in politics. And this negative campaign is a powerful strategy to defeat incumbent candidates. The incumbent has been in charge for five years. This strategy, negative campaign, has to be the antithesis, the opposite, because we have to present something better for more than five years from now. We evaluate the

incumbent. Maybe it's just natural, nothing is consolidated. What is consolidated is more about positive narratives, positive campaigns, something like that.⁵⁶⁵

Although he fundamentally disagreed with smear campaigns, it was always an option if the opponent's team crossed the line by using false information or black campaigning, that his team would retaliate with dirtier ammunition. His team also used fake accounts on social media. Goldy Reki explained,

There are fake accounts. The buzzer team created accounts. Apart from paying those who have big followers on social media, the Team also creates accounts, raises accounts, anonymous accounts. I remember, there was a shift system of buzzers with 2 to 3 shifts in 24 hours working online. One person would hold 10 accounts. When Twitter blocked several fake accounts, they had to create new accounts again, fake accounts.⁵⁶⁶

The digital team of the Prabowo campaign did not openly give any comment about using bots for attacking opponents. It was even harder to discuss the use of negative campaigning in the election as being their strategy, despite massive negative campaigns being directed towards Jokowi-Amien, as this chapter shows later. But Eva Sundari, a PDI-P politician, and key influencer for the Jokowi-Amin campaign believed that Prabowo-Sandi's campaign must have endorsed the practices of smear campaigns through these unofficial actors as they did not ban or deplore the acts openly. She said,

Mr. Jokowi has faced black campaigns that still claim that Mr. Jokowi is a communist, that Mr. Jokowi is the son of a Chinese, which is still being dismantled. Prabowo himself never said that negative narrative. But there's no one that forbids it, which means he actually took advantage of it, on purpose. He agrees then. There's no such thing as he officially forbids it. Mr. Jokowi experienced the most massive black campaign; that Jokowi is a communist, Jokowi is Chinese and is still being roasted now. The aim is to build hatred, stigma, a priori like that. They deliberately attacked religion. They associate us

⁵⁶⁵ Reki, In-person Interview, 13 March, 2022

⁵⁶⁶ Reki, In-person Interview, 13 March, 2022

with the devil's party vs. the angel's party of opponents with the battle of Badr. Prabowo didn't forbid it, does that mean he agreed? Yes, on purpose.⁵⁶⁷

Despite that, Anthony Leong, coordinator of the PRIDE believed that negative campaigning works for electoral gain. He argued,

Of course, there is the influence of negative campaigning on electoral gain as seen from its contribution to victory. So, this digital campaign does provide a certain perspective for fellow voters who haven't made their political choices yet. The most important thing is that if they haven't decided, then their choices will determine the winner of the election. For those, what I mentioned earlier, of undecided voters, this negative campaign is something that could dismantle (*membongkar*) their minds and hearts, something like that. So, it has a big influence, I think.⁵⁶⁸

The same line of argument is proposed by member of Gerindra party's Media Team in the 2019 election, Faizal Abdulgani although with less optimistic influence. He explained,

Negative campaigns cannot bring victory in elections. What happens could be a backfire. But, maybe there are those who are influenced, particularly if people have not yet made their political choices and are exposed to the negative campaigns. They may become reluctant to the target candidates or fed up with the politics entirely.⁵⁶⁹

At the 2019 presidential election, buzzers were recruited, trained and equipped with techniques and materials as well as receiving the use of facilities from partisan elites. Ulin Yusron, in an interview with Kompas TV, elaborated that buzzers either pro-Jokowi or against Jokowi were people who had similar standpoints, operating to amplify the same narratives. They worked on monitoring issues on social media and news media and then formulated and disseminated counter-narratives as part of their working system. Ulin explained,

I have been Jokowi's influencer since 2014. Buzzer has been facing degradation of understanding, just like 'imaging' (*pencitraan*) that is considered

⁵⁶⁷ Sundari, Zoom Interview, 4 June, 2020

⁵⁶⁸ Anthony Leong, In-person Interview, 6 August, 2020.

⁵⁶⁹ Faizal Abdulgani, Zoom Interview, 2 October, 2020.

to whiten the black and blacken the white. The meaning of buzzers as opinion leaders, have become more common now, meaning they only want to amplify the government's voice. However, those who applied this amplification did not only come from the government side; Those who amplify the most are much more extensive by the opposition side. I myself prefer to use the term social media activist. ... So, buzzers are actually about bringing together people who have the same understanding, who are both supporters of Jokowi, or who are both anti-Jokowi, and operate with the same narrative. Usually there is a division that observes and captures whatever issues are currently being discussed on social media in the mass media, then compiles a counter narrative, then disseminates it in the forms of articles, videos, games, or graphics.⁵⁷⁰

They were recruited through social media, university students, and even family relatives. A field coordinator of Jokowi-Amin's buzzers, who preferred to remain anonymous, explained how he and his associates recruited the buzzers during the 2019 election:

They are mostly university students, or fresh graduates or senior high students. They do not need to have specific backgrounds other than be able to use social media and open to be taught. But the top management of buzzers had prior experience because shaping public opinion is not an easy task, and it requires expertise.⁵⁷¹

For example, a selected group of buzzers close to Arya Sinulingga used the multimedia facilities at MNC media tower to produce digital content. They also received other facilities, such as temporary offices, office equipment, computers, mobile phones, and salary. The salaries ranged from 4 to 7 million per-month based on job position and work performance such as number of tweets or engagement.⁵⁷² The core digital team of Prabowo-Sandi were PRIDE (Prabowo-Sandi Digital Team) founded by Anthony Leong and operated from a 'war room' office in South Jakarta and established in 31 provinces. The organization was a remaking of an old team from the 2017 Jakarta election, called INSIDER (Anies-Sandi Digital Volunteer), which helped win victory for

⁵⁷⁰ "Ulin Yusron Blak-blakan Ngaku Buzzer Jokowi, Bayarannya Besar Ya?," Kompas TV, 2020, accessed 09 March, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhd9HaSy11k>.

⁵⁷¹ Reki, In-person Interview, 13 March, 2022

⁵⁷² Reki, In-person Interview, 13 March, 2022

the candidates. The team worked to disseminate positive information about Prabowo-Sandi and negative information about opponents.⁵⁷³

Buzzers were becoming increasingly professionalized. They did not only get training on various techniques of digital campaigns, but also used data or benefitted from expertise hired by the official campaign teams. The digital team of Jokowi-Amin used PoliticaWave's services and used data from Indonesia Indicator, a strategic intelligence company in information technology in Jakarta. In a team called Patra Team, Jokowi-Amin's digital campaign hired a consultant from Singapore who used highly sophisticated applications to trawl social media data in Indonesia as part of the electoral strategy.⁵⁷⁴ Indonesia Indicator also provided an online dashboard of media monitoring and analysis but denied that it supported any of the candidates.⁵⁷⁵ On the other hand, the digital campaign of Prabowo-Sandi used digital strategies offered by Menara Digital Enterprises, a digital marketing consultant based in Jakarta. Anthony Leong, CEO of the company, who was also coordinator of Prabowo-Sandi's buzzers organisation, PRIDE, said that he could not share any working agreements or services provided to political clients. The main reason was that they did not want to be openly involved in politics because it would stop them getting work from wider businesses. In an interview, he emphasized that he found it difficult to recall what he was doing in the campaign. However, he agreed that his strategy employed attack campaigning in the election:

Of course, there was negative campaigning. That definitely existed, and this is very common in the world of politics. Negative campaigns are valid if they are legalized and are legally recognized and attack the incumbent with a negative campaign. Maybe it's just natural, nothing is consolidated. What is consolidated is more about positive narratives, positive campaigns, something like that.⁵⁷⁶

In addition, some buzzers also received some short training and series of workshops on content production and digital campaigns (see Figures 25 and 26) or joined boot camps on computer skills. For example, Goldy Reki said that because of his interest in computer skills he joined a training on computer skills held by a ministry prior to his involvement in the campaign.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷³ "Markas Perang Tim Digital Prabowo-Sandi," merdeka.com, 2018, accessed 09 March, 2023, <https://www.merdeka.com/khas/markas-perang-tim-digital-prabowo-sandi.html>.

⁵⁷⁴ Reki, In-person Interview, 13 March, 2022

⁵⁷⁵ Indonesia Indicator was not available for complete interview discussing the issue for the sake of healthy business reputation by staying away from partisan politics.

⁵⁷⁶ Leong, In-person Interview, 6 August, 2020

⁵⁷⁷ Reki, In-person Interview, 13 March, 2022

The central role of buzzers in Indonesia's election campaigns went side by side with the revival of political voluntarism that democratized electoral campaigning in the reformation era. Some members of these buzzers also came from volunteer organizations, which were fragmented but self-organized based on profession, school alumni, religious association, hobbies, family ties, and so on. For example, some of the prominent volunteer organizations supporting Jokowi-Amin were Pro Jokowi (Projo), Barisan Relawan Jokowi Presiden (Bara JP), Aliansi Masyarakat Sipil Untuk Indonesia Hebat (Almisbat), and Koalisi Nasional Relawan Muslim Indonesia (KN RMI), comprising of 21 student and youth organizations.⁵⁷⁸ By November 2018, Jokowi-Amin campaign claimed to have 810 groups of volunteers.⁵⁷⁹ Popular volunteer groups of Prabowo-Sandi included GNPF (The National Fatwa Movement), RNPAS (National Volunteers of Prabowo-Sandi), and Jarpas (Prabowo-Sandi Volunteer Network). Most buzzers were independently recruited and often worked collaboratively with the key influencers. For example, the key influencers supporting Jokowi-Amin, such as Kristia Budiarto, Denny Siregar, Ade Armando, Eko Kunthadi, Ulin Yusron, Eko Sulisty, Pepih Nugraha, Dyah Kartika Rini, Andi Gani Nena Wea,⁵⁸⁰ met, discussed, and learnt from each other. Prior to the official campaigns, buzzers and influencers collaborated as seen in the tweet by Dede Budhyarto of their gathering with Joko Widodo at the State Palace (see Figure 24).⁵⁸¹ At one of their activities, Denny Siregar tweeted a picture and commented,

This photo is circulating again ... 🤔 This is a photo during the 2019 presidential election. We gathered to fight against kampret (bats) narratives on social media which were full of hoaxes. And, Alhamdulillah, sir @jokowi win. After that, all dispersed, no one was interested in becoming a commissioner, because that is not the goal. The main goal, preventing kadrin (desert lizard) from ruling ⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁸ "21 Ormas dan Relawan Dukung Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin," okezone.com, 2018, accessed 09 March, 2023, <https://news.okezone.com/read/2018/09/01/605/1944566/21-ormas-dan-relawan-dukung-jokowi-ma-ruf-amin>.

⁵⁷⁹ "Jokowi-Ma'ruf Disebut Mendapat Dukungan 810 Kelompok Relawan," cnnindonesia.com, 2018, accessed 09 March, 2023, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20181127185240-32-349701/jokowi-maruf-disebut-mendapat-dukungan-810-kelompok-relawan>.

⁵⁸⁰ "Daftar Timses dan Buzzer Jokowi yang Diangkat Jadi Komisaris BUMN," detik.com, 2020, accessed 09 March, 2023, <https://finance.detik.com/berita-ekonomi-bisnis/d-5240055/daftar-timses-dan-buzzer-jokowi-yang-diangkat-jadi-komisaris-bumn?single=1>.

⁵⁸¹ Dede Budhyarto (@kangdede78), "Kebahagiaan terpancar dari teman2 Tim Medsos TKN stlh bertemu Presiden @jokowi di Istana Negara, Jakarta (25/7/2019).", 26 July, 2019, <https://twitter.com/kangdede78/status/1154393344530759680>.

⁵⁸² Denny Siregar (@Dennysiregar7), "Foto ini nyabar lagi..? Ini foto waktu pilpres 2019. Kami kumpul melawan narasi kampret di medsos yang penuh hoax. Dan, Alhamdulillah, pak @jokowi menang. Habis itu pada buyar ga ada yg minat jadi Komisaris, krn bukan itu tujuannya. Tujuan utama, mencegah kadrin berkuasa 🤔", 24 April, 2022, <https://twitter.com/Dennysiregar7/status/1518233865491402752>.



Figure 23 Jokowi-Amin’s unofficial campaign team’s activity

(Source: <https://twitter.com/Dennysiregar7>)



Figure 24 Jokowi-Amin’s unofficial campaign team’s activity

(Source: <https://twitter.com/kangdede78>)

New buzzers received training from speakers and trainers deployed from a central team in Jakarta. The training covered the basic skills of using social media and creating content as well as attacking an opponent or responding to an attack to avoid backlash. The invitations to join for those who were interested, and parts of the training activities were made public on social media. Most activities of these buzzers were invisible to the public due to their controversial operations that could ruin the reputation of the candidate they supported. However, to recruit new members, somehow, they needed to make their communication open. For example, one of the most known pro-Jokowi groups of buzzers, Jasmev, was still participating in the digital campaigning in 2019 despite its weakening influence due to its disclosure by opponents in previous operations. Goldy Reki observed,

Jasmev is not the key buzzers behind Jokowi at the 2019 election, and it has lost its grassroots power of digital campaign as in previous elections due to the unexpected disclosure of its members and operations by adversaries.⁵⁸³

They recruited and trained new buzzers in Solo, Semarang, and Jakarta, among other places. Usually, they made a public announcement to call for participation for new members and then for post-training information dissemination. In Semarang, they tweeted a call for participation asking, "Hello Semarang! Please join our digital political campaign workshop, Sunday March 3, 10am-5pm at Star Hotel Semarang, Limited seats! Don't miss it guys,"⁵⁸⁴ and they mentioned prominent Jokowi influencers, such as @ulinyusron, @addiems, @doroii, @fsenewe, @agussari, @pramononang, @danrem, and @KurniaAgung175. In Solo, they held a "hypno-campaign workshop" in March 2019 with an IT professor from Jakarta as the trainer.⁵⁸⁵ In Jakarta, they gathered in Sarwono Hall for a workshop presenting a renowned professor in management (see Figures 25, 26 and 27).⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸³ Reki, In-person Interview, 13 March, 2022

⁵⁸⁴ Jokowi-Amin Social Media Volunteers (@JasmevLagi), "Hello Semarang! Please join our digital political campaign workshop, Sunday March 3, 10am-5pm at Star Hotel Semarang, Limited seats! Don't miss it guys ? #JasmevMenangkanJokowi @ulinyusron @addiems @doroii @fsenewe @agussari @pramonoanung @danrem @KurniaAgung175," 24 February, 2019, <https://twitter.com/JasmevLagi/status/1099468450034925568>.

⁵⁸⁵ Jokowi-Amin Social Media Volunteers (@JasmevLagi), "Hypnocampaign Workshop, Solo, March 2nd 2019, with Prof. Dr. Marsudi W. Kisworo, keren banget materinya guys! #JOKOWImenang !!! #JASMEVmenangkanJokowi," 3 March, 2019, <https://twitter.com/JasmevLagi/status/1102040695039176704>.

⁵⁸⁶ Jokowi-Amin Social Media Volunteers (@JasmevLagi), "Be a smart volunteer, come and join our workshop with the one and only Prof. Rhenald Kasali, PhD. Tomorrow guys! Limited seat! #KampanyePintar #OrangPintarPilihJokowiAmin #JASMEVmenangkanJOKOWI," 16 March, 2019, <https://twitter.com/JasmevLagi/status/1106759029915680769>.



Figure 25 Invitation banner of pro-Jokowi buzzers

(Source: <https://twitter.com/JasmevLagi/>)



Figure 26 Workshop of pro-Jokowi buzzers

(Source: <https://twitter.com/JasmevLagi/>)



Figure 27 Workshop of pro-Jokowi buzzers

(Source: <https://twitter.com/JasmevLagi/>)

Similarly, PRIDE pro-Prabowo buzzers ran workshops at the regional level on digital skills as part of their efforts to win the election (see Figures 28–31). Digital skill trainings like these were facilitated by political and digital trainers from the campaign headquarters in Jakarta, and local politicians and candidates for the legislative election shared strategies for online campaigning. For example, the PRIDE's training presented a wide range of trainers to equip new buzzers with digital skills.⁵⁸⁷ Antony Leong, coordinator of PRIDE, said that his team recruited up to 7,000 netizens (digital volunteers) from 34 provinces. Talking to media in Semarang he elaborated,

And they are operating in 34 provinces. We will operate in zones that we feel we are losing. Therefore, Central Java and East Java will be the center of our attention for the next two months. ...We are working on two big issues related to the economy and community welfare. In the OK-OCE program we will also raise the issue of the poverty gap that occurred during Jokowi's first administration era.⁵⁸⁸

These groups focused their operations on the areas where Prabowo-Sandi's electability was lower than the incumbent candidate and focused particularly on Central Java and East Java for the last two months leading up to voting day.⁵⁸⁹ These buzzers seemed to employ targeted campaign by region and issue where, like in Central Java, they selected ten geographical points to target by curating issues seen as "sexy" in the eyes of the voters, with the expectation of winning Prabowo-Sandi at least the 10-20% of swing voters who were online.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁷ alpi diharja (@AlpiDiharja), "Pelatihan/pembekalan Digital bersama Relawan Prabowo Sandi Digital Team Nasional, BPN Prabowo Sandi dan Politisi Koalisi Indonesia Menang Dengan Tema : " Kontestasi Politik Dunia Maya dan Tantangan Demokrasi. Hari,tanggal : Minggu 24 Febuari 2019

Tempat : Koprasi KPRI AMANAH," 18 February, 2019, <https://twitter.com/AlpiDiharja/status/1097430481614729216>.

⁵⁸⁸ "Times Prabowo Rekrut 7.000 Netizen untuk Kampanye di 34 Provinsi," kumparan.com, 2019, accessed 10 March, 2023, <https://kumparan.com/kumparannews/times-prabowo-rekrut-7-000-netizen-untuk-kampanye-di-34-provinsi-1550563108584651891/full>.

⁵⁸⁹ "Times Prabowo Rekrut 7.000 Netizen untuk Kampanye di 34 Provinsi."

⁵⁹⁰ "Times Prabowo Rekrut 7.000 Netizen untuk Kampanye di 34 Provinsi."



Figure 28 Announcement of PRIDE's digital workshop in West Java

(Source: <https://twitter.com/thonyleong>)⁵⁹¹



Figure 29 Announcement of PRIDE's digital workshop in Banten

(Source: <https://twitter.com/AlpiDiharja>)⁵⁹²

⁵⁹¹ Anthony Leong (@thonyleong), "Tim Prabowo-Sandi Pastikan Kemenangan di Kandang Banteng. #NewEraPrabowoSandi #PrabowoMenangDebat #RoadshowJateng," 17 February, 2019, <https://twitter.com/thonyleong/status/1097100415932366851>.

⁵⁹² alpi diharja (@AlpiDiharja), "Berani jujur hebat. Tapi lebih hebat lagi pemimpin yang berani bohong di era digital sekarang. Sebab hanya dalam hitungan detik, kebohongan seorang pemimpin bisa dikuak secara digital dan kolosal #RelawanPRIDEPandeglang #RelawanPRIDEBanten #SahabatPrabowoSandi #PrabowoPersiden," 19 February, 2019, <https://twitter.com/AlpiDiharja/status/1097831440694177798>.



Figure 30 Announcement of PRIDE's digital workshop in Banten

(Source: <https://twitter.com/AlpiDiharja>)⁵⁹³



Figure 31 Training of PRIDE buzzers in Banten (24/02/2019)

(Source: www.salakanews.com)⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹³ alpi diharja (@AlpiDiharja), "Mari Rapatkan Barisan dan datang Para Relawan Prabowo Sandi Banten. Pelatihan/pembekalan Digital bersama Relawan Prabowo Sandi Digital Team Nasional dan BPN Prabowo Sandi. Dengan Tema : " Kontestasi Politik Dunia Maya dan Tantangan Demokrasi," 15 February, 2019, <https://twitter.com/AlpiDiharja/status/1096452866699476992>.

⁵⁹⁴ "Targetkan Menang, Tim Prabowo-Sandi Gelar Pembekalan Digital di Pandeglang," salakanews.com, 2019, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://salakanews.com/targetkan-menang-tim-prabowo-sandi-gelar-pembekalan-digital-di-pandeglang/>.

An emerging component of unofficial campaigning in 2019 was the social media influencer. Influencers were different from buzzers in that they were invited by the official campaigns because of their strong influence on social media based on their engagements and followers. Eko Kunthadi, one of the prominent Jokowi's influencer supporters explained that an influencer was different from a buzzer. He went on,

I am more of an influencer, because I have a lot of followers, my writing has spread widely, and my job is to sharpen existing issues from various angles. A buzzer actually comes by order, so he doesn't have an ideology, whether A, B, or C. He just defends the one who pays. Long before 2019 I was clear about my political support. And even if I am not united in a volunteer group, I and other close friends I know well will still provide political support to Mr. Jokowi.⁵⁹⁵

Influencers were mostly old players in the world of content production businesses for online platforms who were deeply aware of creating highly engaging content as a successful business model. Pepih Nugraha, then editor-in-chief of the popular blog *kompasiana.com*, was a key influencer who produced content through writing blogs on the *kompasiana.com*. Talking of his role in the 2019 presidential election in our interview, he elaborated,

I am part of the Digital Narrative Team, on FB, Instagram, and Website; I told Pak Jokowi's success story online. I did a white campaign, and occasionally a 'red campaign.' But I don't do hoax – this is a matter of conscience. How to build an image that Jokowi is indeed a competent person, that he is worthy of continuing his government is my main goal. I joined the digital narrative team because they saw my reputation. I have a record in media works and I am the founder of *Kompasiana*. So, Pak Jokowi called 13 social media activists, including me. Finally, I was recruited by the Digital Narrative Team because I retired from *Kompasiana*, in early 2018. Then there was an inauguration at the Bogor Palace; It's paid, there's money involved. I was recruited by (...off the record...): people close to Jokowi, who are also acquaintances who often have a cup of coffee together. I want to be involved because I am independent. Freelancers. Second, it's a choice. There are only 2 Jokowi or Prabowo. I chose Jokowi. I don't like the military, so what can I do? I am not alone. I have a team of 20 people. I pay them 250,000 – 300,000/article. And one person can write

⁵⁹⁵ Kunthadi, In-person Interview, 15 January, 2021

4-5 articles per week. They write on Kompasiana, WordPress (their own blog), Twitter and Facebook. I know these 20 people personally, I know their political choices, are affiliated with or have been in the PDIP. They are political influencers, political writers. I have one that is affiliated with Gerindra, but I don't use it. They only write text, text narratives, no memes or videos, infographics, slide shows, that's everything else.⁵⁹⁶

With financial support from the campaign team, he was also tasked to recruit potential writers from the online world to write creative partisan content for online distribution.⁵⁹⁷ Social media influencers, which had first worked in the commercial sector, expanded their influence on the political sector thanks to the increasing role of social media in public domains. These influencers engaged in self-branding strategies to curate a consistent public persona, monetized their status, and had a strong relationship with their followers, making them powerful political campaigners.⁵⁹⁸ Influencers functioned as ideological intermediaries that legitimated certain policies by personifying and promoting a lifestyle that was inspirational, aspirational, and deeply ideological.⁵⁹⁹ Influencers became significant actors in staging negative campaigning on social media at the 2019 election mainly because of the numbers of followers they had developed over a long time as singers, celebrities, journalists, comedians, selebgram, YouTubers, and digitally-active young politicians.⁶⁰⁰ However, a select few of the influencers really drove the tone of the negative campaign on social media during the election: Ulin Yusron, Dede Budhyarto, Denny Siregar, Ade Armando, Fadjoel Rachman, and Permadi Arya (Abu Janda).⁶⁰¹ The unofficial campaigns did not only help the candidates in amplifying campaign messages but also becoming a shield or scapegoat when campaign violations occurred. A campaign staffer of Jokowi-Amin, Putu Artha, said that they did not organize any black campaigns and just followed the rule for campaigning. But he went on, "The sympathizers are a bit difficult for us to manage.

⁵⁹⁶ Pepih Nugraha, In-person Interview, 8 January, 2020.

⁵⁹⁷ Nugraha, In-person Interview, 8 January, 2020

⁵⁹⁸ Aleksi Suuronen et al., "When Social Media Influencers Go Political: An Exploratory Analysis on the Emergence of Political Topics Among Finnish Influencers," *Javnost - The Public* 29, no. 3 (2022).

⁵⁹⁹ Johanna Arnesson, "Influencers as ideological intermediaries: promotional politics and authenticity labour in influencer collaborations," *Media, Culture & Society* 0, no. 0 (2022).

⁶⁰⁰ The names can be looked at "Jokowi-Ma'ruf Gaet 10 Jubir dan 47 Influencer, Ini Daftar Namanya," *idntimes.com*, 2018, accessed 09 March, 2023, <https://www.idntimes.com/news/indonesia/dwifantya-aquina/jokowi-maruf-gaet-10-jubir-dan-47-influencer-ini-daftar-namanya?page=all>; "500 Artis Ramaikan Puncak Kampanye Jokowi-Ma'ruf," *bisnis.com*, 2019, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://kabar24.bisnis.com/read/20190410/15/909938/500-artis-ramaikan-puncak-kampanye-jokowi-maruf-amin-di-gelora-bung-karno-13-april>; and "Relawan Jokowi-Ma'ruf Libatkan Selebgram Youtuber Bersosialisasi," *sindonews.com*, 2019, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://daerah.sindonews.com/artikelamp/makassar/21558/relawan-jokowimaruf-libatkan-selebgram-youtuber-bersosialisasi>.

⁶⁰¹ Most of these influences along with other campaign teams later are rewarded positions as commissioners at various state-owned companies (BUMN). See "Berikut Daftar 19 Relawan Jokowi yang Jadi Komisararis BUMN," *kompas.com*, 2021, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.kompas.com/money/read/2021/05/31/114905426/berikut-daftar-19-relawan-jokowi-yang-jadi-komisaris-bumn?page=all>.

But hopefully they will also have the same understanding of the law,” he insisted.⁶⁰² According to him, the influencers were given a wide freedom to create campaign messages, and often went “too far” in campaigning for the candidate. This line of argument reveals two important things: first, negative campaigning and black campaigning has been tacitly accepted as campaign strategy for a candidate—candidates took advantage of the tactics; second, when it came to attacking opponents, the campaign teams of candidates outsourced the task to underground and unofficial campaign operators to save the credibility of their candidate.

Of course, political marketing has been around for some time in Indonesia’s politics.⁶⁰³ Official campaigns have long used survey data and hired pollster organizations to map and track the electability of their candidates and to monitor issues that were salient to voters.⁶⁰⁴ In addition to hired surveys, they also held internal surveys for comparative findings to avoid pleasing candidates at the expense of reliability.⁶⁰⁵ Sirajudin Abbas, Executive Director of Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting, explained that there were four roles of surveys for election campaigning:

First, reading people's behavior, what their mood is like (their concerns, needs, and fears); Second, mapping their evaluation of policies that have been implemented (how satisfied and how disappointed they are, is there anything that needs to be improved); Third, electability of the candidate (how well known and how well liked/accepted they are); and fourth, what kind of campaign strategy should be executed to win a particular electoral district. Besides that, we also evaluate all candidates, candidate A, B, and C as a whole—what their overall strengths and weaknesses are. It is important because it doesn't mean anything if we know about our own candidate, but we don't know the mapping of the opponent. The results of the survey will be useless.⁶⁰⁶

Another political consultant, Hasan Nasbi, founder of Cyrus Network, explained that there were two types of consultants based on their roles: adviser and organizer. Adviser consultants gave the broad findings of surveys and policy level recommendations directly to the candidate. Organizer consultants worked in designing and executing campaign strategies in collaboration

⁶⁰² "Pilpres 2019: 'Kampanye hitam SARA masih ampuh untuk mengeksploitasi perilaku pemilih'," *bbc.com*, 2018, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-45629345>.

⁶⁰³ Nyarwi Ahmad, "What Drive Marketization and Professionalization of Campaigning of Political Parties in the Emerging Democracy? Evidence from Indonesia in the Post-Soeharto New Order," *Journal of Political Marketing* (2021).; Ufen, "Electoral Campaigning in Indonesia: The Professionalization and Commercialization after 1998."

⁶⁰⁴ Inage, In-person Interview, 27 December, 2020

⁶⁰⁵ Inage, In-person Interview, 27 December, 2020

⁶⁰⁶ Abbas, In-person Interview, 27 January, 2021

with the success team of the candidates and their volunteer networks following the survey findings.⁶⁰⁷

Sirojudin Abbas explained his consultant company's involvement in the 2019 presidential election:

We provided research on voter behaviour and information to Jokowi's campaign team about the direction of voter preferences and how the campaign has influenced voter attitudes. We also provide some recommendations based on these findings. Of course, some are followed up, some are not. Next, we helped build a team to campaign for the candidate in certain areas where we still needed extra work because we still lost out to the opposing candidate, so that the direction of votes can be more balanced or won.⁶⁰⁸

Similarly, Hasan Nasbi's consulting company offered both adviser and organiser services. At the advising level, Cyrus Network conducted a national survey for political mapping and presented the results and insights directly to Joko Widodo up to four times. At the organizing level, Hasan Nasbi organized a door-to-door canvassing campaign in three selected provinces: Jakarta, Lampung, and North Sumatera, of which all were won by Jokowi-Amin. At the provincial level, Cyrus Network worked with local pro-Jokowi volunteer groups, like "Pujo" (Pendukung Jokowi) in Lampung.⁶⁰⁹ Furthermore, a political consultant based in Jakarta who did not want to be identified, Amost Inage, not the real name, (pseudonym), explained how a survey could be used to attack a political opponent during electoral campaigning:

Survey results can be used in attack campaigns through testing assumptions regarding issues and vote choices. For example, as far as I can remember I have tested an issue by asking respondents, "Of these two questions, which do you think you believe most: There are a lot of foreign workers in Indonesia, or There are a few foreign workers in Indonesia. The result showed those who choose first tend to choose Prabowo. This could be used for example when intending to attack a candidate." But in general, there are 3 assumptions about the effects of publishing survey results, namely bandwagon effect (supporting those who win), underdog effect (choose a candidate because they feel sorry

⁶⁰⁷ Nasbi, In-person Interview, 18 January, 2021

⁶⁰⁸ Abbas, In-person Interview, 27 January, 2021

⁶⁰⁹ Nasbi, In-person Interview, 18 January, 2021

for them), and no-effect. But the reality is not as simple as that; that would be too easy to win an election.⁶¹⁰

The cooperation between consultants and the candidates were mediated by high-ranking officials from the national campaign team, although the results of the survey were often presented directly to the president. However, the scale of the cooperation and how much money was paid and by whom were matters that were confidential. Based on their *Report on Receipt and Expenditure of Campaign Funds* (LPPDK) to KPU, the amount of funding used by the Jokowi-Amin campaign was Rp. 213.2 billion, whereas by Prabowo-Sandi it was 606.7 billion.⁶¹¹ However, campaign spending on the buzzers and influencers was unknown despite the confession that they were paid.⁶¹² It was not reported and not seen as part of campaign funding because it came from individual elites or businessman not the official campaign funding reported to the KPU.⁶¹³ Official and unofficial campaigns increasingly used data from social media analytics' consultants about daily conversation on social media, trending topics, and the popularity of their candidates as well as of the opponents. Prominent players in the social media analytics involved directly or indirectly in the campaigns were Politicawave, Provetic Indonesia, and Indonesia Indicator.⁶¹⁴ Yose Rizal from Politicawave explained his role in the campaign: "Helping with data and public perception from social and online media, sentiment towards opponent candidates, sentiment towards figures, and so on during the campaign. Then the data is analysed to be used by the team that will communicate them."⁶¹⁵ In addition, the Jokowi-Amin campaign also hired a consultant on social media analytics from Singapore which brought a highly sophisticated algorithm to trawl and analyse online data, but no one was available to identify a name.⁶¹⁶ Deddy Sitorus, a PDI-P politician and member of the national campaign, who was also head of Rumah Aspirasi Rakyat 01, a centre in Jakarta dedicated to the declaration of volunteers, supports, and aspirations in winning for Jokowi-Amin, elaborated on the strategic use of these data in the campaign. In an interview he explained.

⁶¹⁰ Inage, In-person Interview, 27 December, 2020

⁶¹¹ "Wow! Dana Kampanye Jokowi Rp 606 M, Prabowo Rp 213 M," [cnbcindonesia.com](https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20190503085535-4-70265/wow-dana-kampanye-jokowi-rp-606-m-prabowo-rp-213-m), 2019, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20190503085535-4-70265/wow-dana-kampanye-jokowi-rp-606-m-prabowo-rp-213-m>.

⁶¹² "Akui Dibayar Mahal Sebagai Buzzer Jokowi, Abu Janda Ungkap Bayaran yang Diterimannya, Videonya Viral," tribunnews.com, 2021, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://palembang.tribunnews.com/2021/02/13/akui-dibayar-mahal-sebagai-buzzer-jokowi-abu-janda-ungkap-bayaran-yang-diterimannya-videonya-viral?page=all>.

⁶¹³ Reki, In-person Interview, 13 March, 2022

⁶¹⁴ Yose Rizal, Zoom Interview, 18 November, 2020.; Reki, In-person Interview, 13 March, 2022 ; Rustika Herlambang, In-person Interview, 9 September, 2020. Rustika could not confirmed if her company is an official digital consultant of the candidates but admitted that their data are used in the form of dashboard services one way or the other.

⁶¹⁵ Rizal, Zoom Interview, 18 November, 2020

⁶¹⁶ Reki, In-person Interview, 13 March, 2022

We have what is called intelligence media monitoring, so we know what issues are being raised, what kind of impact it has, who is communicating, which groups of people seem to be affected and in which areas.⁶¹⁷

Social media analytics was a new player in political campaigns in Indonesia, being first focused on the business sectors. Some big names included Politicawave,⁶¹⁸ Provetic Indonesia,⁶¹⁹ Indonesia Indicator,⁶²⁰ Katapedia,⁶²¹ and Media Kernels Indonesia.⁶²² Their services included dashboard-based social media data analysis, sentiment analysis, key opinion leader identification, search engine optimization, and digital advertising. Their clients that they made public on their websites came from different institutions, such as ministries, state-owned enterprises, automobile industries, military, banks, manufactures, mining industries, local governments, as well as political parties. Some of them even offered service for creating narratives,⁶²³ field campaigns,⁶²⁴ and networks of buzzers.⁶²⁵ Deddy Rahman, CEO of Katapedia, explained about the networks:

There are lots of vendors. And there are many areas. They are young people who manage university students across the country. If there are campuses around, there are students in the area, that's where the buzzers come from. They are paid 2 million to 4 million in 1 month. They manage 10-20 social media accounts, and some even have up to 50 accounts if only for a short time task like just for "likes", although nowadays it is difficult to reach 50. Currently I can mobilize 1000 buzzers for each social media platform, from Twitter, Facebook, to Instagram. For example, in the 2018 Medan gubernatorial election, I mobilized 1000 buzzers on Twitter. So, before voting day, I went around on Friday to see what the preacher was saying in their sermon. If the preacher had the courage to speak and say, "Muslims must vote for Muslims," that's it, that's the thing. I used that.⁶²⁶

The extent of their involvement in the campaign was hard to unveil given the confidentiality agreements with their clients and potential clients. These social media analytics consultants

⁶¹⁷ Deddy Sitorus, In-person Interview, 5 September, 2020.

⁶¹⁸ See <https://politicawave.com/>

⁶¹⁹ See <https://provetic.com/>

⁶²⁰ See <https://indonesiaindicator.com/>

⁶²¹ See <https://www.katapedia.id/>

⁶²² See <https://mediakernels.com/>

⁶²³ See <https://provetic.com/#service>

⁶²⁴ See <http://cyrusnetwork.co/services.html>

⁶²⁵ Deddy Rahman, In-person Interview, 7 December, 2022.

⁶²⁶ Rahman, In-person Interview, 7 December, 2022

provided strategic communication services and recommendations based on data analysis of public opinion collected from both social media and online news media, including monitoring real time online conversation based on keywords requested by clients.⁶²⁷ These developments indicated a stronger professionalization of election campaigning, which paved the way for more sophisticated conduct of negative campaigning in Indonesia.

An often overlooked vital role of surveys and social media data for organizing negative campaigning is getting information about opponent candidates, known as opposition research. Opposition research is data collection and analysis about the personalities and issues related to opponent candidates used to attack opponents at the right time and on the right issues.⁶²⁸ In other words, to stage negative campaigns successfully it is important to know the weaknesses of the opponent. The most common techniques for opposition research are surveys, interviews, and focus-group discussions with potential voters.⁶²⁹ A staffer from the national campaign of Jokowi-Amin explained that they ran opposition research through media monitoring and profiling of opponents. He went on to say that his team watched over the opponents, looking at “Who do what. Analysis of their campaign narratives including specific issues and what are their basic arguments, what data do they have, who is speaking, in what form. We had to do all of that.”⁶³⁰ Getting negative information about opponents could also be done by asking their previous co-workers, particularly where candidates were previously both incumbents, like the president and vice-president or the governor and vice-governor.⁶³¹ Hasan Nasbi of Cyrus Network—a Jakarta-based political consultant company—suggested a unique method of knowing the opponent:

We always study opponents. Of course, we as consultants are freer to talk about the candidates, in contrast to campaign teams which already have clear partisan positions. We watch what the opponent teams talk about on the media. We can invite opponent campaign teams as speakers and ask prepared questions on issues of our interests. From that we know what the other side thinks about this issue. Then, from there we can prepare the antidote at the start for mitigation.⁶³²

In the current information environment, opposition research often occurs automatically on the internet by monitoring social media and news reports about the candidates. Then, the

⁶²⁷ Rizal, Zoom Interview, 18 November, 2020 ; Herlambang, In-person Interview, 9 September, 2020

⁶²⁸ Burton, Miller, and Shea, *Campaign craft: the strategies, tactics, and art of political campaign management*.

⁶²⁹ Inage, In-person Interview, 27 December, 2020

⁶³⁰ Sitorus, In-person Interview, 5 September, 2020

⁶³¹ Rahman, In-person Interview, 7 December, 2022

⁶³² Nasbi, In-person Interview, 18 January, 2021

information is used to attack opponent candidates. Andy Budiman of PSI and a spokesperson for TKN explained how they did this opposition research. He said,

We researched all policy offers that had been offered by Prabowo. So, we researched videos that have been issued to make statements, through releases, and so on. Then why the money issue is most offensive against Mr. Jokowi and another candidate, for example that Mr. Jokowi is only pro-rich, the narrative is built. We look for data that actually shows that Mr. Jokowi's policies are most beneficial to society through 'smart card and health card.' At that time, we had a research team that continued to research and then formulate answers to the negative campaigns and hoaxes against Pak Jokowi.⁶³³

This section has shown the increasing role of unofficial campaigns in staging negative campaigns at the 2019 presidential election and the diminishing role of the party in the same function, particularly on social media. Although its existence was never acknowledged openly or formally, political parties and candidates came to realize that they needed more underground operations for campaigns on social media without accountability. As electoral regulations do not oversee unofficial campaigns, candidates were not required to report funding for unofficial teams to the KPU, even though these buzzers and influencers were paid. They were also professionalized by employing techniques and materials drawn from political consultants, surveys, and social media analytics as well as attending training courses on digital campaigning. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between official and unofficial campaign structures to understand better the growth of negative campaigning in the 2019 election. Powerful negative campaigning at the 2019 election was led by unofficial actors namely buzzers and influencers. They were professional and used data and expertise from various consultants to operate. The candidate benefitted from these outsourced negative campaigns as they could avoid the direct backlash effect from the attacking while maintaining a positive public appearance. However, these unofficial campaigns posed a serious dilemma due to their underground operation and secrecy in funding, which hindered holding them accountable.

⁶³³ Andy Budiman, Zoom Interview, 15 June, 2021.

4.3. The mechanics of negative campaign computational techniques

This section describes the use of fake accounts, bots, and coordinated behaviors in propagating attack or counterattack messages against candidates. The production of negative campaigning in the digital era has used the sophisticated mechanisms of computational techniques, creating computational attack, simply defined as the use of computational techniques to produce and amplify attack messages by campaign operatives to weaken the image of political opponents. Beyond the technological aspects of computational attack—like automation (bots), algorithms, anonymity, and social media platforms—there was also the social factor, namely the coordinated behavior of sharing on social media. By analysing the 20 most visible hashtags used in 1,342,321 tweets against Jokowi-Amin and 350,943 tweets against Prabowo-Sandi using text mining analysis, the findings show that the key components of the computational attack on Twitter are the use of anonymity, employment of automation using bots, social media algorithms, coordinated behaviour of sharing of attack messages, and the actions of unofficial actors like buzzers and influencers. The power of social media lies in its affordances that give power to users to participate and become producers of content without significant barriers. Social media does not only connect voters and candidates directly in the campaigns but also empowers citizen-based campaigns to bring grassroots narratives to the campaign, including negative narratives about the candidates. Social media creates the opportunities for groups of users to coordinate attack campaigns and trick the logic of social media algorithms into making hashtags or messages trending. This process could establish a bandwagon effect where people would think that what is said collectively must be true and worthy of support.

Before going further, I would like to explain first how computational negative campaigning or computational attack works. The first element of computational campaigns is automation like the use of political bots. Automation comes in different forms. First, total automated accounts and partial automated accounts, sharing messages by humans and bots alternately. Second, programming-based digital media, such as social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and messaging applications. Third, social media algorithms that sustain the core operation of social media platforms like engagement and interactions. For example, Twitter and Facebook have algorithms that influence what contents a user would view based on parameters such as engagement metrics, type of contents, following system, and one's online behaviour and background. Fourth, human actors operate the computational campaigns, which in the context of Indonesia's recent election were led by elements of unofficial campaigns like buzzers. Fifth, affordances of social media that allow users to set up anonymous account and act collectively in coordination to amplify certain narratives by tricking the social media algorithms. Sixth, weakening or demeaning the image and reputation of political opponents by influencing the flow of information and media agenda. Therefore, computational attacks happened when campaign

operatives employed fake or authentic social media accounts to amplify attack messages and negative narratives against political opponents on social media platforms with automation or human agents to influence the flow of information and public opinion by manipulating social media algorithms with coordinated online behaviour.

The affordance of social media that allows anonymous users to spread messages has been seen as a negative factor to having civil and rational discussion on politics on social media. Scholars suggest that uncivil and manipulative behaviours on the internet with regards to politics will persist if anonymity remains,⁶³⁴ which could continue to affect users/readers in a negative way.⁶³⁵ This is not to say that only anonymous users share problematic information on social media. But anonymous users can create different accounts using fake names, profile pictures, location, occupation, and biography to disguise their real identity, which lets them say whatever they like without fear of retaliation or law enforcement. There are several major examples of these anonymous actors sharing problematic information online in the past, such as “trio macan2000,” “Muslim Cyber Army,” “digembok,” and “Saracen.” However, the accounts of buzzers supporting the candidates are identifiable by their characteristics. They also created anonymous social media accounts in terms of the name, gender, and locations, but some were real. The anonymous accounts showed distinctive characteristics between buzzers supporting Jokowi-Amin and buzzers of Prabowo-Sandi. The buzzers of Prabowo-Sandi tended to use Islamic symbols in their profile pictures or biographies, such as the crescent moon and star, Palestine’s flag, Arabic words, and so on. Meanwhile, Jokowi-Amin’s buzzers tended to identify themselves with the Indonesian flag, Pancasila, NKRI acronym, and so on. As Figure 31 shows, anonymous accounts tended to have a low number of followers and a limited number of friends (following) because these accounts were mostly created immediately when the campaign was about to begin and dedicated specifically for the election. At least, 4,250 accounts that attacked Jokowi-Amin had no followers at all, 16,124 accounts had only 1 to 5 followers, and 12,914 accounts had 6 to 10 followers. Similarly, there were 17,449 accounts that attacked Prabowo-Sandi that had no followers, 25,964 had 1 to 5 followers, and 11,481 accounts had 5 to 10 followers. This indicates that the accounts were anonymous, or fake, created by buzzers to stage their campaigns both for attacking opponents and promoting their own candidates.

Anonymity has two contradictory positions. First, it is legally allowed to have anonymous sources of information, or anonymous speakers for safety reasons, for the sake of human rights, and the

⁶³⁴ Yannis Theocharis et al., “The Dynamics of Political Incivility on Twitter,” *SAGE Open* 10, no. 2 (2020).

⁶³⁵ Sai Wang, “The Influence of Anonymity and Incivility on Perceptions of User Comments on News Websites,” *Mass Communication and Society* 23, no. 6 (2020).

fulfilment of freedom of expression or privacy rights. For example, in the context of journalism or the court. Second, in normal situations communicating anonymously undermines the truthful exchange of information. Anonymity on social media risks credibility of the attack messages and the actors despite its possible accuracy. Research also shows that anonymity increases incivility in social media conversations.⁶³⁶ Anonymity protects vitriol actors who harass and attack political candidates on social media leading to increased incivility.⁶³⁷ Negative campaigning by nature tends to be constituted by uncivil messages. Legitimate debate does not only require truthful information but also authentic participants to nurture civil communication in the context of democracy. However, the allocation of blame should not always be aimed at the users of social media but also the social media platforms themselves that tend to tolerate the anonymous identity of users (see Figure 32).

⁶³⁶ Daniel Halpern and Jennifer Gibbs, "Social media as a catalyst for online deliberation? Exploring the affordances of Facebook and YouTube for political expression," *Computers in Human Behavior* 29, no. 3 (2013).

⁶³⁷ Yannis Theodoridis et al., "A Bad Workman Blames His Tweets: The Consequences of Citizens' Uncivil Twitter Use When Interacting With Party Candidates," *Journal of Communication* 66, no. 6 (2016).

Anonymity of anti-Jokowi-Amin accounts			
Selected anonymous Twitter accounts by lowest followers			
Username	Follower	Following	Tweet/Retweet
ChannelDiky	0	23	7
Rizkibjmaulana	0	37	175
Abie03969063	0	36	54
UpDate24288867	0	39	55
Pandanu4	0	20	122
TongMahdi	0	48	18
qwertyk88	0	5	3
Dopo09549096	0	68	18
SyahrilYusfi	0	56	16
NurH4s4nUb41d4h	0	21	1570
Wibison75556863	0	2	81
Flashscore1	0	30	31
MallaDewi7	0	11	51
Aryprasatya85	0	13	138
AndiRizkyZaela1	0	28	39
demi_Indonesia_	0	64	6
Stacy77488991	0	0	77
FaishalAchmad7	0	39	35
herisofficial	0	34	38
Irwanrizal4	0	19	3
tamimaddariy	0	6	1
semuthi66486236	0	46	108
Ly_apr	0	0	558
Deliana83B	0	55	333
RichoFebrian5	0	31	51
Iday08962504	0	13	45
mertaa_aziza	0	16	19
ArisKurniawanK3	0	17	13
Priyo48049465	0	1	144
mohdadm96962224	0	2	14
Source: Data was collected via Twitter's REST API			
Analysis: Text mining in R			

Anonymity of anti-Prabowo-Sandi accounts			
Selected anonymous Twitter accounts by lowest followers on Twitter			
Username	Follower	Following	Tweet/Retweet
Dhany62819432	0	20	149
NoMunafik17	0	21	104
Crow80712626	0	2	13
wulannsariiii	0	4	19
DaikazokuDangou	0	38	8
BirtoKarlos	0	17	9
hulalawarakabum	0	11	128
akhtardestio	0	25	9
Just31950064	0	2	42
Thanos26041135	0	1	27
il_isna	0	0	6
LawanRasis	0	38	1380
Artotrio	0	33	1381
TanggaNada4	0	41	1558
RRahadians	0	0	342
FarelHarry	0	45	2
RGBResto	0	9	15
hanisrilangka	0	1	16
tuyulmanula	0	19	5
Neysafitriani	0	14	1
Joko_pei	0	92	1271
Agus_priyantho	0	57	1274
priyambada321	0	0	44
Hanasaragi	0	85	1274
UlawalRobi	0	49	13
Riaapriyani_ani	0	108	1205
Alulim123gmail1	0	315	316
Trisapto9	0	0	1
enricopangarib1	0	31	757
Aryprasatya85	0	13	138
Source: Data was collected via Twitter's REST API			
Analysis: Text mining in R			

Figure 32 Anonymous anti-candidate accounts on Twitter

(Source: Twitter data analysis)⁶³⁸

The next element of computational technique is automation. Automation is designed to timely execute certain tasks using bots. These bot applications are available for purchase, but some are free to use. Some others are created for political purposes, called political bots. Woolley and Howard define political bots as “algorithms that operate over social media, written to learn from and mimic real people so as to manipulate public opinion across a diverse range of social media and device networks.”⁶³⁹ Some of these bots are easy to spot on social media. For example, Twitter gives label to the source of every tweet on the bottom of tweets such as “Twitter for

⁶³⁸ The results are based on the analysis of twitter datasets using text mining techniques in R

⁶³⁹ Woolley and Howard, "Political Communication, Computational Propaganda, and Autonomous Agents: Introduction."

iPhone”, “Twitter for Android”, or “Twitter for Web,” which indicates organic tweets.⁶⁴⁰ According to Twitter this label “helps users better understand how a tweet was posted. This additional information provides context about the Tweet and its author. If you don’t recognize the source, you may want to learn more to determine how much you trust the content.”⁶⁴¹

In the 2019 presidential election, most of the hashtag tweets against both candidates were sent by organic users from Twitter for Android, Twitter Web Client, Twitter for iPhone, Twitter Web App, TweetDeck, news website, Instagram, TweetCaster for Android, and Facebook.⁶⁴² However, many tweets attacking Jokowi-Amin and Prabowo-Sandi came from third-party client applications,⁶⁴³ which indicated automation using bot applications, such as IFTTT, twittbot.net, dlvr.it, and Hootsuite.Inc (see Figure 33). The overall number of attack messages (tweets/retweets) distributed by bots was very small (1.3%) compared to the attack messages shared by humans with fake and authentic accounts (98.7%). As the chart below shows, there was a relatively equal number of attack messages shared by bots against Jokowi-Amin (10.851) and against Prabowo Sandi (11.404) but differences in the use distribution of bots.⁶⁴⁴

The bots have different functions and certainly varied levels of automation. The IFTTT, a short for “If This Then That,” is a software application that connects multiple devices, apps, and services to execute tasks or functions automatically.⁶⁴⁵ Its application integrates with 700 services, including Twitter, for free and by subscription of up to AU\$7.4/month. By December 2022, IFTTT offered Twitter users up to 49 workflows and automations built by diverse developers and available on the App store and Google Play. However, the most relevant IFTTT automations on Twitter used during election campaigning were recurring tweets set to automatically post a tweet every hour a day: using the commands “Every day at the same time,

⁶⁴⁰ This feature is not visible anymore after the takeover of Twitter by Elon Musk on 27 October 2022. The move was made public in a tweet on 18 January 2023 saying that “Twitter is enforcing its long-standing API rules. That may result in some apps not working,” which angers third party clients and developers. See “Twitter admits it’s breaking third-party apps, cites ‘long-standing API rules’,” *engadget.com*, 2023, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.engadget.com/twitter-third-party-app-developers-api-rules-193013123.html>.

⁶⁴¹ “How to Tweet,” Twitter, 2023, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/how-to-tweet#source-labels>.

⁶⁴² Twitter data analysis by author using text mining techniques in R

⁶⁴³ From Twitter: “In some cases, you may see a third-party client name, which indicates the Tweet came from a non-Twitter application. Authors sometimes use third-party client applications to manage their Tweets, manage marketing campaigns, measure advertising performance, provide customer support, and to target certain groups of people to advertise to. Third-party clients are software tools used by authors and therefore are not affiliated with, nor do they reflect the views of, the Tweet content. Tweets and campaigns can be directly created by humans or, in some circumstances, automated by an application. Visit our partners page for a list of common third-party sources.” “Find a partner,” Twitter, 2022, accessed 22 November, 2022, <https://partners.twitter.com/en/find-a-partner>.

⁶⁴⁴ The identification of these bots with text mining analysis was carried out through three steps.⁶⁴⁴ First, uploading the twitter data set into R and selecting the *source* column to filter potential bots as listed on the Twitter website and sources that are not regularly organic as above for further check. Second, the filtered data was manually assessed by collecting information on each website of the source name. Third, looking at tweeting behavior of an account that looked unusually consistent and active beyond normal hours of the day. Combining these three steps, then the source name is decided as bot followed by the frequency of users (accounts) and numbers of tweets or retweets shared by automation.

⁶⁴⁵ “What is IFTTT?,” 2022, accessed 22 November, 2022, https://ifttt.com/explore/new_to_ifttt.

post an automatic tweet” and set to automatically post a retweet if there was a tweet mentioning an account, and “Automatically retweet the text of a new tweets from a specific Twitter account,” which was used to automatically retweet a tweet from multiple selected users at once.⁶⁴⁶ For example, in the 2019 presidential election, pro Prabowo-Sandi @cybermoeslem account tweeted, “Beware of the danger of Chinese communism in Indonesia” with a link to a blog and used #2019gantipresiden #2019prabowosandi hashtags.⁶⁴⁷ The use of bots during the 2019 presidential election for automation can be seen in Figure 32.

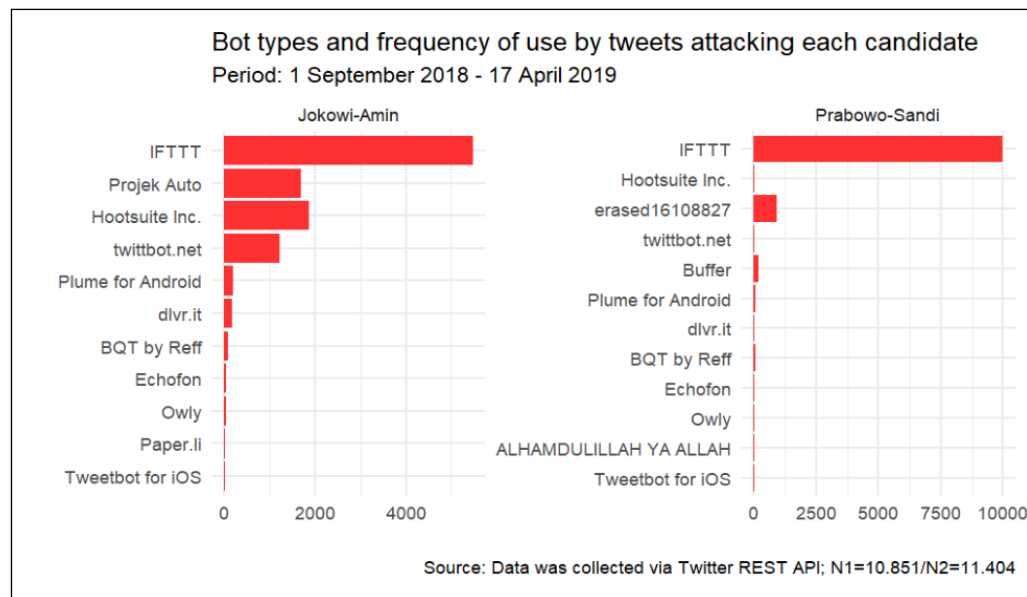


Figure 33 Total bots used to attack both candidates on Twitter

(Source: Twitter data analysis)⁶⁴⁸

The next popular bot used on Twitter was dlvr.it. It has similar automation functions as IFTTT but less frequency and operated through a paid web-based automation of tweets.⁶⁴⁹ On the other hand, twitterbot.net was free but operated through a website-oriented application too but with a less developed interface. Hootsuite is a social media management platform used for business marketing and available on App store and Google Play. Among its automation

⁶⁴⁶ "Twitter integrations," 2022, accessed 22 November, 2022, <https://ifttt.com/twitter>.

⁶⁴⁷ cybermoeslem (@cybermoeslem), "Awat Bahaya Komunis China di Indonesia <http://bit.ly/2CsH3AE> #2019gantipresiden #2019prabowosandi #pas menuju #pilpres2019," 22 December, 2018, <https://twitter.com/cybermoeslem/status/1076181575509987330>.

⁶⁴⁸ The results are based on the analysis of twitter datasets using text mining techniques in R

⁶⁴⁹ "Automate Tweets," 2022, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://dlvr.it/auto-tweet/>.

functions are to create, schedule, publish, and manage contents and ad campaigns across social networks, including Twitter, from a single dashboard.⁶⁵⁰ The last noticeable automation application is Buffer, which allows users to schedule “Twitter image posts, multi-image posts (up to 4 images), GIF posts, video posts, retweet posts, quote tweet posts, and link preview posts,”⁶⁵¹ from mobile phones. It also helps users to test the performance of hashtags for better recommendations. Beyond this advanced brand of bots, individual users of social media can create bots without much of a computer science background. Bots are developed by computer programming and given names which often conceal the true function of the bots, for example: “DaftarHarga11”, “DaftarHarga2085”, and “DaftarHarga95.”⁶⁵² At the 2019 presidential elections, different bots were used at different scales. For example, most bots spreading attack hashtags against Jokowi-Amin (see Figure 33) tended to be operationalized by many accounts (IFTTT, twittbot.net, Hootsuite.Inc.). However, certain bots (Projek Auto) were only used by a single account but spread more than a thousand tweets (Figure 34). Importantly, some bots shared very strong negative campaigning, for example, that delivered by “DaftarHarga11” political bot: “Rustic face ... Populist appearance ... Cruel heart ... Dictatorial behaviour ... anti-democratic ... phobic ... afraid of being replaced ... Remember the voice of the people is the voice of God,”⁶⁵³ (see Figure 35).

⁶⁵⁰ “Why Hootsuite?,” 2023, accessed 9 March, 2023, Why Hootsuite?

⁶⁵¹ “Schedule Retweet-Worthy Tweets With Buffer,” 2022, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://buffer.com/twitter>.

⁶⁵² These and other low use of bots are found on the tweets dataset

⁶⁵³ Agus Sampurna (@AgusSampurna7), “Wajah ndeso ... Penampilan merakyat ... Hati bengis ... Kelakuan diktator ... antidemokrasi ... fobia ... takutdiganti ... Ingat suararakysuaratuhan #BapakHoaxNasional #RajaHoax,” 13 October, 2018, <https://twitter.com/AgusSampurna7/status/1051733505040936960>

Automation of anti-Jokowi-Amin messages Selected bots by frequency of use on Twitter			Automation of anti-Prabowo-Sandi messages Selected bots by most frequently used		
Bot	Account	Tweet	Bots	Accounts	Tweets
IFTTT	25	5281	IFTTT	149	9996
Hootsuite Inc.	14	1862	erased16108827	110	902
Projek Auto	1	1689	Plume for Android	38	56
twittbot.net	20	1232	BQT by Reff	19	50
dlvr.it	25	95	Hootsuite Inc.	18	32
BQT by Reff	19	89	Echofon	18	38
Plume for Android	22	78	dlvr.it	18	36
Echofon	23	38	Tweetbot for iOS	8	16
Paper.li	14	29	twittbot.net	3	33
Tweetbot for iOS	7	26	erased15344114	1	8
Owly	12	24	TOTAL	382	11167
TOTAL	141	10315			
Source: Data was collected via Twitter's REST API Analysis: Text mining in R			Source: Data was collected via Twitter's REST API Analysis: Text mining in R		

Figure 34 Bots by frequency of use

(Source: Twitter data analysis)⁶⁵⁴



Figure 35 Anti-Jokowi tweet delivered by bot

(Source: <https://twitter.com/AgusSampurna7>)

The third element of the computational technique is social media algorithms. Social media algorithms have been strongly criticized for their lack of transparency and their risky

⁶⁵⁴ The results are based on the analysis of twitter datasets using text mining techniques in R

recommendation system, particularly when it deals with problematic information.⁶⁵⁵ A social media algorithm can be understood as “a set of rules and signals that automatically ranks content on a social platform based on how likely each individual social media user is to like it and interact with it.”⁶⁵⁶ Algorithms can be designed to produce political bots by technological experts to be used by political elites for electoral purposes or social control.⁶⁵⁷ An algorithm sets, filters, prioritizes, and predicts information to serve a platforms’ business interests. The key currency of social media business is engagement, which is powered by its key features, such as likes, comments, shares, reshares, and viewing. At the 2019 presidential election, beside using regular bots and creating political bots, social media algorithms were exploited by buzzers in disseminating attack messages through posting, resharing, mentioning, and likes by high follower users, with messages that potentially could trigger controversy among social media users. The ultimate goal was to make a hashtag, message, and narrative popular if not trending and to dominate the conversation.

The last feature of negative campaigning in the 2019 presidential election was the introduction of coordinated behaviour on social media, which produced coordinated attacks. The concept of coordinated behaviour became popular after Facebook identified and released information about suspected inauthentic behaviour interaction on the platform. The inauthentic behaviour was detected and monitored because it tended to post and amplify problematic information, particularly in relation to the 2016 US election. Nathaniel Gleicher, Facebook’s Head of Cybersecurity Policy described it: “Coordinated inauthentic behaviour is when groups of pages or people work together to mislead others about who they are or what they are doing.”⁶⁵⁸ Scholar started to pay attention to the strategic use of this mechanism by political actors during election campaigns. Some scholars suggested describing the coordinated inauthentic behaviour better as “a particular kind of disinformation campaign, where the spread of disinformation is enhanced by platform companies’ own products, such as advertising infrastructure and data access through APIs, and the sale of user data for reuse.”⁶⁵⁹ Giglietto et al. found the coordinated sharing of news links on Facebook to boost certain ideas in the lead up to the 2018 and 2019 Italian elections on the basis of both ideological and financial motivations.⁶⁶⁰ Lukito found that

⁶⁵⁵ Axel Bruns, *Are filter bubbles real?* (Cambridge, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2019).

⁶⁵⁶ “Social Media Algorithms: A 2023 Guide for Every Network,” 2022, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-algorithm/>.

⁶⁵⁷ Woolley and Howard, “Political Communication, Computational Propaganda, and Autonomous Agents: Introduction.”

⁶⁵⁸ “Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior Explained,” 2018, accessed 22 November, 2022, <https://about.fb.com/news/2018/12/inside-feed-coordinated-inauthentic-behavior/>.

⁶⁵⁹ Amelia Acker and Joan Donovan, “Data craft: a theory/methods package for critical internet studies,” *Information, Communication & Society* 22, no. 11 (2019).

⁶⁶⁰ Fabio Giglietto et al., “It takes a village to manipulate the media: coordinated link sharing behavior during 2018 and 2019 Italian elections,” *Information, Communication & Society* 23, no. 6 (2020).

state actors were coordinating sharing behaviour of problematic information on Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit, involving the Russia-affiliated IRA around the 2016 US election.⁶⁶¹ Indonesia was no exception to this new technique. The use of coordinated behaviour for attacking political opponents during election campaign was employed by both candidates in the 2019 presidential election by either real or fake accounts, managed by humans or by bots.

Coordinated behaviour on social media refers to a concerted act of posting, sharing, commenting, and liking of similar contents or information by many users or agents in a short period if not at the same time. The aim is to trick the social media algorithms to get higher engagement in the social media ecosystem. To detect coordinated online negative campaigning on Twitter, I searched the Twitter's REST API for tweets and retweets based on the 10 most common anti-candidate hashtags using R package (*academictwitterR*).⁶⁶² The collected data was then analysed on R to detect the behaviour of co-tweets, co-retweets, and co-hashtags among accounts based on time interval and number of repeated co-sharing following the parameters of the *CoorTweet* package.⁶⁶³ From the analysis I found that both tweets that attack Jokowi-Amin and Prabowo-Sandi were composed of coordinated behaviours. For example, the graph below (Figure 36) shows the coordinated behaviours of hashtag sharing in 346,812 tweets attacking Prabowo-Sandi. There were 7 network components of co-hashtags. The graph captures users tweeting the same hashtag at least 5 times within 25 seconds from each ($N = 114$). The graph also shows that some users could share two or three different hashtags together with other users.

⁶⁶¹ Josephine Lukito, "Coordinating a Multi-Platform Disinformation Campaign: Internet Research Agency Activity on Three U.S. Social Media Platforms, 2015 to 2017," *Political Communication* 37, no. 2 (2020).

⁶⁶² Barrie and Ho, "academictwitterR: an R package to access the Twitter Academic Research Product Track v2 API endpoint."

⁶⁶³ *CoorTweet: Coordinated Networks Detection on Social Media*. Ver. 1.3.3.

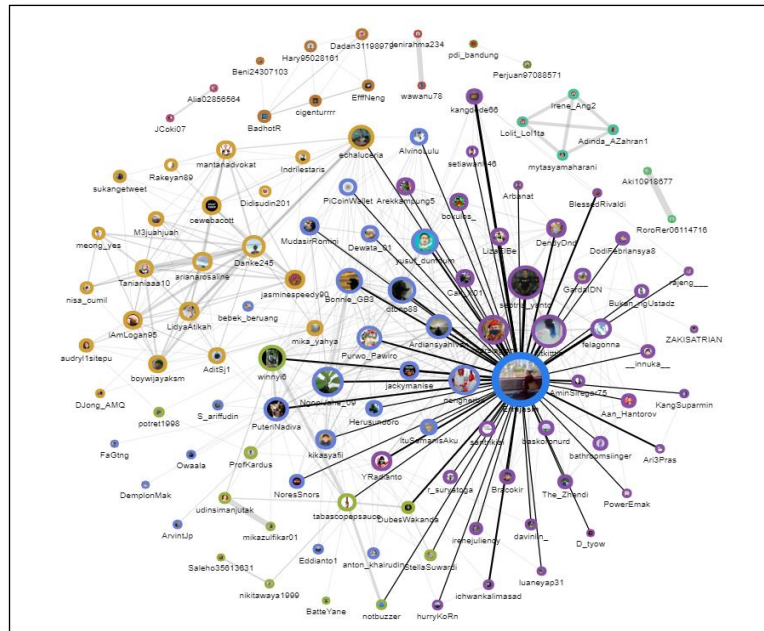


Figure 36 Coordinated behaviour of anti-Prabowo- Sandi buzzers on Twitter

(Source: Twitter data analysis)

Most investigations on inauthentic coordinated behaviour have focused on the sharing of false political information on social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, by various actors.⁶⁶⁴ In the context of the 2019 election, a new type of inauthentic coordinated behaviour appeared in the form of polling participation, in addition to spreading regular messages. Coordinated behaviour occurred when buzzers initiated attacks or counterattacks by setting online voting on Twitter. Although looking real, the distribution of votes was orchestrated. For example, approaching voting day in April 2019, a top buzzer supporting Prabowo-Sandi created a Twitter poll calling for loyalty of “voters” to vote for Prabowo-Sandi (02) that despite various slanders directed against Prabowo people should vote for him. This is certainly not a legitimate polling result considering the diverse nature of Twitter users in Indonesia (Figure 37). This had been organized with prior coordination to put most votes (91.6%) on option number one (“Still choose candidate pair 02”)⁶⁶⁵ intending to intensify the bandwagon effect hypothesis.

⁶⁶⁴ Lukito, "Coordinating a Multi-Platform Disinformation Campaign: Internet Research Agency Activity on Three U.S. Social Media Platforms, 2015 to 2017."; Giglietto et al., "It takes a village to manipulate the media: coordinated link sharing behavior during 2018 and 2019 Italian elections."

⁶⁶⁵ J. S. Prabowo (@marierteman), "utk menurunkan elektabilitas @prabowo 21 th dihembuskan FITNAH -pelanggar HAM -dalang kerusuhan Mei 98 -dari keluarga kapir

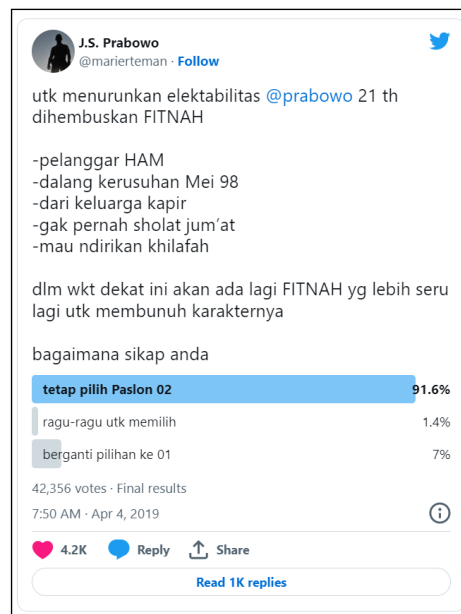


Figure 37 Counterattack of Prabowo-Sandi's campaign

(Source: <https://twitter.com/marierteman>)

In the broader context, coordination does not always indicate problematic activities. Coordination is even essential during civic activism and as a communication strategy responding to a crisis. In the context of negative campaigning coordination, maximum exposure in the social media network occurred by following the social media algorithm. In the 2019 presidential election, there was a mix of coordination among real accounts and fake accounts in distributing campaign messages on social media, particularly Twitter. Assessing the quality of the messages was not straightforward because of the nature of attack messages on personal aspects. However, some attack messages could be directly categorized as disinformation.

This section has explained the employment of computational attacks via the use of bots, fake accounts, and coordinated behaviour on Twitter to promote anti-opponent hashtags and messages. The key elements of the computational attack on Twitter were the use of anonymity, the employment of automation using bots, social media algorithms, coordinated behaviour of sharing attack messages, and the work of unofficial actors, like buzzers and influencers.

-gak pernah sholat jum'at
-mau ndirikan khilafah
dlm wkt dekat ini akan ada lagi FITNAH yg lebih seru lagi utk membunuh karakternya. bagaimana sikap anda tetap pilih Paslon 02; ragu-ragu untuk memilih; berganti pilihan ke 01," 4 April, 2019, <https://twitter.com/marierteman/status/1113604699343609856>.

Anonymous accounts on Twitter circulated harsh attack messages against candidates. The combinations of fake accounts, social media algorithm, buzzers, and coordinated behaviour succeeded in influencing the flow of information by creating trending hashtags, setting the agenda for the mainstream media, and by calling for participation through orchestrated polling. The affordances of social media (Twitter) along with its structural elements (such as quote tweet, and retweet) enabled interactive attacks and counterattacks between opposing buzzers/influencers over contentious issues. Hence, social media did create interactions between the two opposing groups fighting over influence, which boosted engagement for the attack messages.

To understand computational attack also requires an understanding of the messages of attack it intends to amplify in the first place. The main reason for using computational techniques in staging negative campaigns on social media was to create maximum popularity or engagement of the attack messages—with the goal of creating a bandwagon effect—with less human labour while avoiding harmful detection from political opponent as well as from the platform oversight system given the notorious nature of negative campaigning.

4.4. Negative campaign narratives in 2019

Computational attack produced attack messages and negative narratives that caused voters to doubt their views of the target candidate. By analysing the 20 most visible hashtags in 1,342,321 tweets against Jokowi-Amin and 350,943 tweets against Prabowo-Sandi using text mining and qualitative analysis (Figure 38),⁶⁶⁶ this section shows the key narratives of attack campaigns pushed forward through computational attack. The dominant attack messages during the 2019 presidential election revolved around the character and identity of the candidates, accusing them of lacking religious piety, integrity, and other scandalous allegations.

⁶⁶⁶ The tweets are collected based on the negative hashtags against each candidate. The tweets dataset was collected through the Twitter REST API using R software program within time frame from 1 September 2018 to 17 April 2019. This is not an exhaustive dataset but factually representative of the attacking behaviors of both candidate digital campaigns. The uneven number of tweets dataset between the candidate may be explained by the numbers of buzzers working for each candidate and the incumbency status of the two where Joko Widodo's campaign had to go more positive than negative following the tendency of an incumbent candidacy. Sometime, the attack hashtags do not contain consistent negative texts/posts but positive ones promoting own candidate.

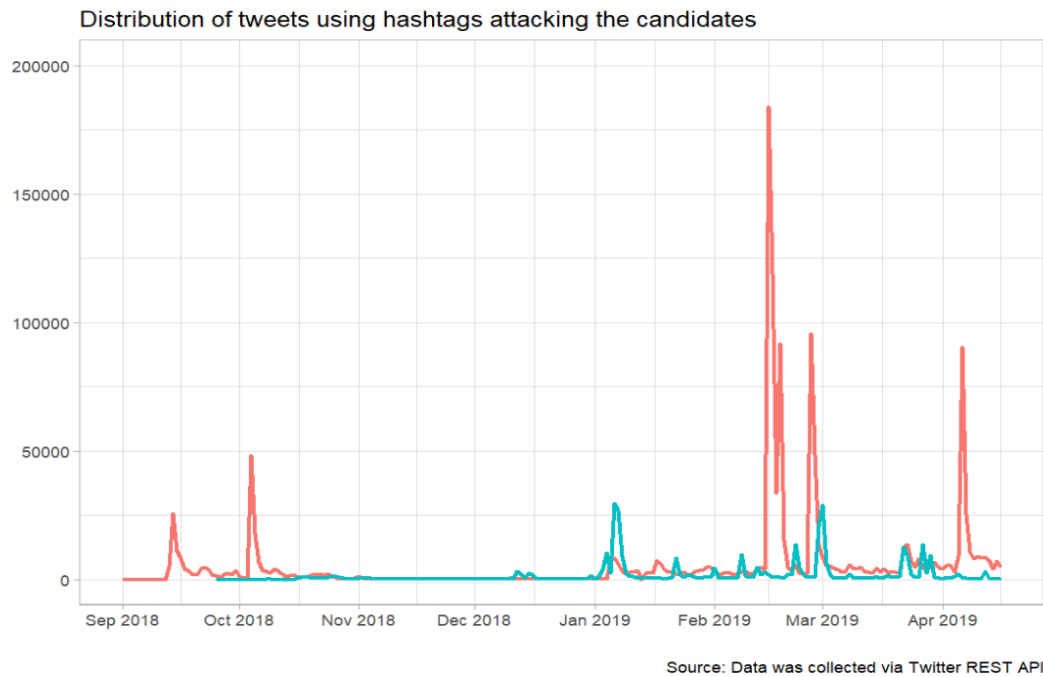


Figure 38 Distribution of Tweets using negative hashtags

The red line indicates anti-Jokowi-Amin tweets. The blue line indicates anti-Prabowo-Sandi tweets
(Source: Twitter data analysis)⁶⁶⁷

Messages of attacks could involve hashtags, keywords, phrases, slogans, tweets, posts, photos, videos, or memes. The messages were multiplied in many forms and amplified through many platforms to reach maximum engagement and impact based on the narrative they intended to cultivate in voters. Figure 39 shows key negative hashtags against Jokowi-Amin which dominated by #2019GantiPresident.

⁶⁶⁷ The results are based on the analysis of twitter datasets using text mining techniques in R, followed by timeseries plot for distribution

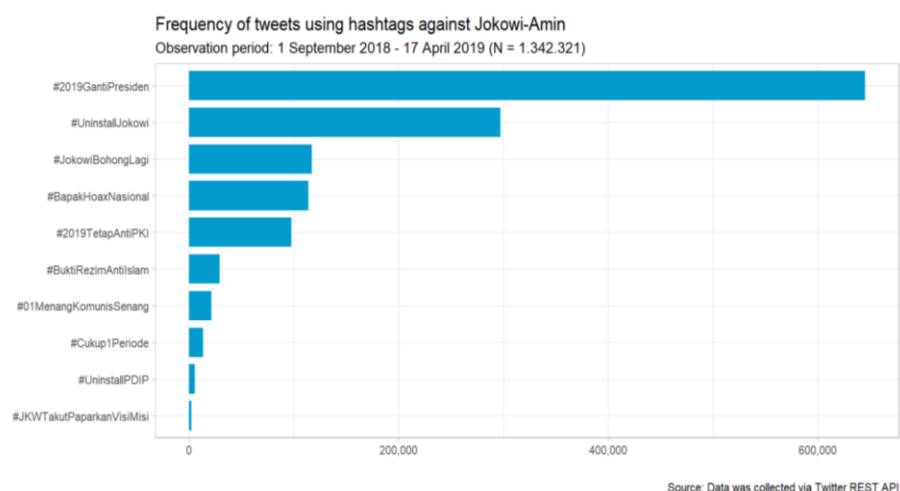


Figure 39 Prominent hashtags by tweets' frequency against Jokowi-Amin

(Source: Twitter data analysis)⁶⁶⁸

The underlying moral behind the hashtag was elaborated in the lyrics of the song “#2019GantiPresiden song” released on several YouTube pages. The music video featured supporters of Prabowo-Sandi, such as Ahmad Dhani, Amien Rais, Fadhli Zon, Mardhani Ali Sera, Neno Warisman, singing their views on a wide range of issues, which received 547,083 views (2019 Ganti Presiden)⁶⁶⁹ (see Figure 40). However, the campaign was tainted by harassment allegation by supporters of the hashtag for visitors of the Jakarta’s Car Free Day event, who happened to be wearing T-shirts asserting support for the Jokowi-Amin. Another protest towards the hashtag movement was triggered by a statement and the showing of a prepared #2019GantiPresident T-shirt by Sudrajat–Ahmad Syaikh during a live TV debate at the 2018 West Java gubernatorial election, which caused chaos during the debate. In his closing statement Sudrajat said, “My brothers and sisters, choose No. 3: Asyik. If Asyik win, God willing, in 2019 we will change the president,”⁶⁷⁰ which was seen as attacking the incumbent president. Observers argued that the anti-Jokowi hashtag might be Jokowi’s toughest opponent, which was responded to with #Jokowi2Periode (#Jokowi2Terms).⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁸ The results are based on the analysis of twitter datasets using text mining techniques in R, followed by visualization with ggplot package

⁶⁶⁹ 2019 Ganti Presiden (@user-lz3jx3uo4y), "Video Lirik 2019 Ganti Presiden #2019GantiPresiden," 8 June, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vM30O9U3Bs>.

⁶⁷⁰ CNN Indonesia (@CNNIndonesiaOfficial), "Ricu Debat Pilgub Jabar, Paslon Nomor 3 Keluarkan Kaus #2019GantiPresiden," 14 May, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJTNTfIDikA>.

⁶⁷¹ "Why an anti-Jokowi hashtag could be his strongest foe so far," The Jakarta Post, 2018, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/05/01/why-an-anti-jokowi-hashtag-could-be-his-strongest-foe-so-far.html>.



Figure 40 “#2019GantiPresiden” campaign in Jakarta (29 April 2018)

(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQc3cL3clmM>)

The use of harsh hashtags against the candidates intensified in the official campaign periods. There were more hashtag-based attacks on Twitter and Facebook against Jokowi-Amin than against Prabowo-Sandi during the campaign periods from 23 September 2018 to 17 April 2019. By counting the appearances of hashtags in all tweets collected using simple text mining analysis in R, I could manually categorize by face value hashtags attacking Jokowi-Amin and Prabowo-Subianto into character/identity, candidacy, party, ideology, and the government as a regime (see Figure 41 and 42). The circular plots were generated based on all hashtags used in the tweet dataset by their frequency of appearance. Although the count was automatically generated, a few low frequencies were manually grouped to similar hashtags due to inconsistencies in the writing. This broad categorization was based on a qualitative analysis of hashtags by grouping them into similar general topics, against both Jokowi-Amin and Prabowo-Sandi.

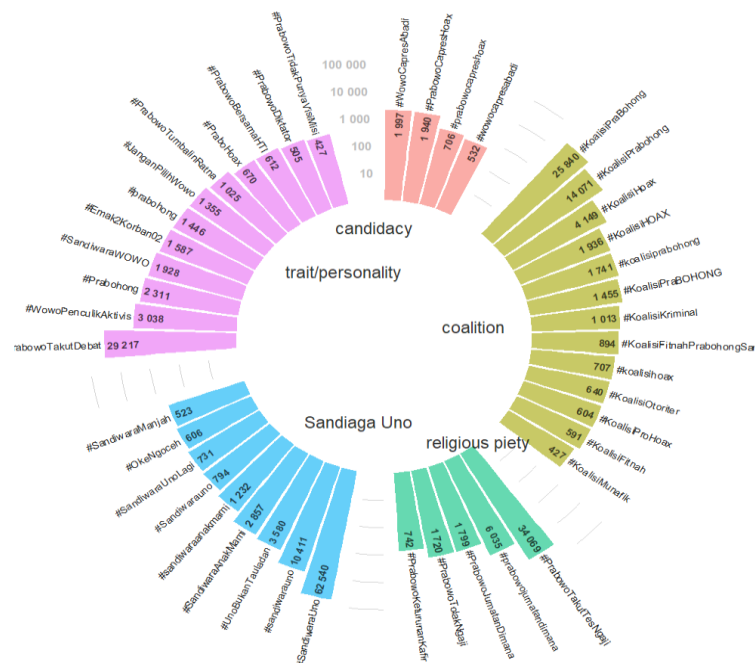
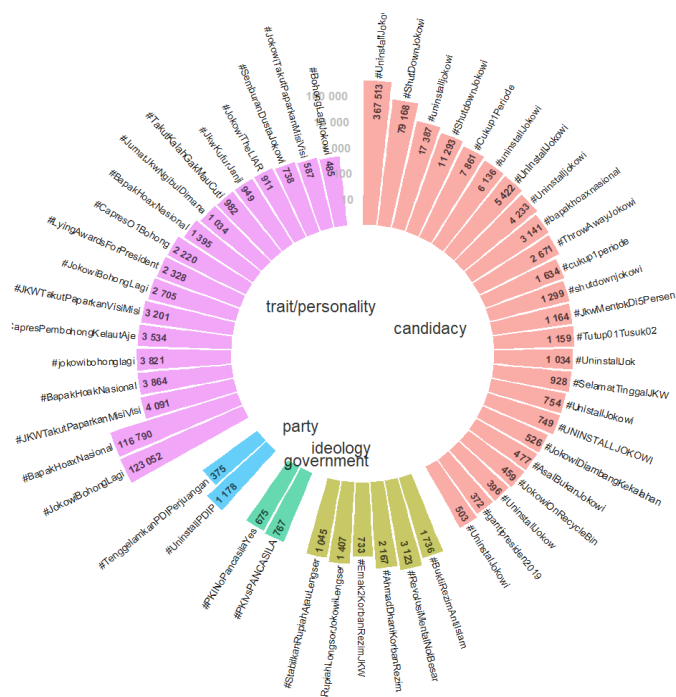


Figure 41 General categories of anti-Jokowi-Amin hashtags

(Source: Twitter data analysis by author)⁶⁷²



⁶⁷² The results are based on the analysis of twitter datasets using text mining techniques, followed by visualization with ggplot package in R

Figure 42 General categories of anti-Prabowo-Sandi hashtags

(Source: Twitter data analysis by author)⁶⁷³

To understand the nature of the attack messages, I focus on ten negative hashtags against each candidate. Some issues or messages of attacks were triggered by ongoing political dynamics and candidates' activities or statements. For example, the #UnInstallJokowi hashtag was prompted by a hashtag #UninstallBukalapak, referring to one of the Indonesia's unicorn marketplaces. On February 13, 2019, Bukalapak's CEO, Achmad Zaky, tweeted "Industry 4.0 is bullshit, if our country's R&D budget is like this (two billion US dollars, 2016), hopefully the new president can increase it,"⁶⁷⁴ which was interpreted by the online community as an attack on the incumbent president leading to the creation of #UninstallBukalapak. In retaliation, the #UninstallJokowi trended on Twitter followed by similar sentiment of tweets with the #UninstallPDIP hashtag.

The #2019GantiPresiden attack was often used to propagate messages related to identity issues on the social media network. For example, there was a tweet from a less authentic account stating, "In the 2019 presidential and legislative elections, it is forbidden to vote for presidential and legislative candidates supported by parties that support religious blasphemy. Let's spread the word from cities to villages, from mountains to valleys, from hills to rice fields" (Figure 43).⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷³ The results are based on the analysis of twitter datasets using text mining techniques, followed by visualization with ggplot package in R

⁶⁷⁴ "Dari Uninstall Bukalapak sampai Berakhir di Uninstall Jokowi," CNBC Indonesia, 2019, accessed 23 January, 2023, <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20190216142017-4-55897/dari-uninstall-bukalapak-sampai-berakhir-di-uninstall-jokowi>.

⁶⁷⁵ MasGagap (@suaragagap), ""Di Pilpres dan Pileg 2019 Haram Memilih Capres dan Caleg yang di Usung Partai-partai Pendukung Penista Agama, Ayo sebar luaskan dari kota hingga desa, dari gunung hingga lembah, dari bukit hingga ke sawah-sawah," ~Habib Rizieq~#2019GantiPresiden #PrabowoSandi #AdilMakmur," 3 December, 2018, <https://twitter.com/suaragagap/status/1069632496491347968>.



Figure 43 Anti-Jokowi tweet using religious sentiment

(Source: <https://twitter.com/suaragagap>)

The negative hashtags against Prabowo were dominated by criticisms towards Prabowo's religious identity, such as #PrabowoJumatanDimana, #PrabowoTakutTesNgaji, and #PrabowoKeturunanKafir. These particular hashtags seemed to be powerful in targeting voters most vulnerable aspects. The hashtags had strong meanings among Prabowo-Sandi's political supporters as represented under the Indonesia Fair and Prosperous Coalition (PKS, PAN, Demokrat, and Partai Idaman), which had a strong Islamic identity. The expectation seems to be to draw Islamic voters away from Prabowo-Sandi. Different from negative hashtags against the incumbent, strong negative hashtags were significantly directed towards Prabowo's vice presidential candidate, Sandiaga Uno. Figure 44 shows the dominant negative hashtags against Prabowo-Sandi where #PrabowoJumatanDimana topped the list.

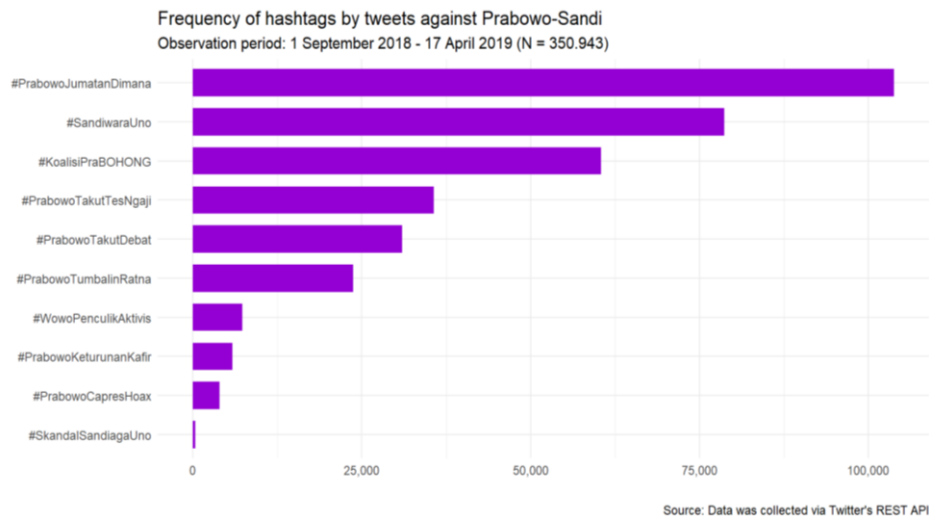


Figure 44 Prominent hashtags against Prabowo-Sandi by frequency of tweets

(Source: Twitter data analysis)⁶⁷⁶

A prominent hoax case in the 2019 election was that of Ratna Sarumpaet, who claimed she was physically attacked. It was first triggered by a statement made by Ratna herself—a supporter of the Prabowo-Sandi campaign—claiming that she had been assaulted by strangers on 21 September 2018, resulting in severe injuries in her face. Elites of the opposition team, including Prabowo Subianto himself, denounced the act, referring to it as a human right violation.⁶⁷⁷ The assault allegation went viral on Twitter, spearheaded by Gerindra politicians. First, Rachel Maryam (@cumarachel), on 2 October 2018 at 10:51am tweeted a picture of Ratna's face: "Innanillahi mother @RatnaSpaet was beaten by a group of people last night. Currently in battered state. Hey, how dare you do that to a mother? Don't you have a mother? What were you born from?" At midday on the same day, Fadli Zon (@fadlizon) tweeted "Ms. Ratna Sarumpaet did experience abuse and beatings by unknown persons. Very evil and barbaric," which was tweeted more than a thousand times and liked by 2,300 users. In the afternoon, the coordinator of spokespersons for the Prabowo-Sandi campaign, Dahnil Simanjuntak (@Dahnilarzar), also tweeted the allegation along with Prabowo's visit to Ratna. After meeting Ratna, Prabowo held a press conference and said in front of journalists,

⁶⁷⁶ The results are based on the analysis of twitter datasets using text mining techniques in R, followed by visualization with ggplot package

⁶⁷⁷ "Hasto Respons Prabowo soal Ratna Sarumpaet: Mulutmu Harimaumu," CNN Indonesia, 2018, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20181003132203-32-335330/hasto-respons-prabowo-soal-ratna-sarumpaet-mulutmu-harimaumu>.

We are shocked, concerned and disappointed. There has been an act of violent persecution, a sharp blow to one leader of our winning campaign team namely Mrs. Ratna Sarumpaet.... I saw it for myself. In our opinion, this is a repressive and inappropriate action; clearly a violation of human rights.⁶⁷⁸

However, the claim was a lie. Ratna was not assaulted; she had undertaken beauty surgery.⁶⁷⁹ The alleged motivation seemed to be trying to put the blame on the incumbent candidate to weaken their reputation. The case highlighted how politicians and campaign teams tried to use lies to discredit their opposition. This was a typical operation of negative campaigns against a candidate that exploited emotional appeal to stir anger towards the opponent and involved direct support from elite political influencers by resharing the problematic messages on social media without verifying its legitimacy first. Fake accounts followed suit, boosting the virality of the messages. The case was treated differently by the law where Ratna, who was a supporter of the opposition candidate, was prosecuted and then faced jail time, which indicated a crackdown on the opposition supporters by the state. This unfair treatment was also proclaimed by Anthony Leong and Taufik Hidayat, Head of the Political Strategic Communication Agency of Democrat Party's Jakarta branch. Taufik argued that the unfair treatment begat harsher attacks during the campaign towards the incumbent. He went on,

I participated in 2017 and 2019 campaigning. Hoaxes were extraordinary at that time. The hoax gets wild when it comes to law enforcement. I mean If law enforcement was indiscriminate, I am very sure this hoax would not have become big like now. A recent example is how the image of the former governor of DKI Jakarta was destroyed by spreading false narratives, assumptions, with the aim of trying to downgrade the figure whose electability was high. This has been subject to the ITE Law, but it is up to the person who is harmed, whether he reports it, and if it is reported whether the law authorities will process it completely. So, if the authorities are firm and without showiness in the future it will definitely be better. ... So, there is an anonymous buzzer. Sometimes these anonymous actors can be identified, sometimes it can't. If those of us who find it, and beat it, we will be on the wrong side taking the law into our own hands. Actually, among our own circle, we know who they are. The law enforcement

⁶⁷⁸ KOMPASTV (@kompastv), "Keterangan Pers Prabowo Terkait Ratna Sarumpaet," 2 October, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncgdZt-gb-E>.

⁶⁷⁹ "Ratna underwent facial surgery, not assaulted: Police," The Jakarta Post, 2018, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/10/03/ratna-underwent-plastic-surgery-not-assaulted-police.html>.

method must be firm. Don't be blunt to the left, sharp to the right. Because the ITE Law is a rubber article when used to enter cases like this. The ITE Law is not originally used for that, but for banking. The hate article is a rubber article.⁶⁸⁰

The key narrative of negative campaigning during the 2019 election was the accusation that the candidate was not Islamic enough. It meant that the targets (the actors in the stories) were depicted as not following the teaching of Islam and as denying the responsibility of being a faithful Muslim. For example, Joko Widodo was attacked on Twitter with these negative narratives, saying that he did not pray properly. An anonymous Twitter account (@CapresCalon) repeatedly shared, "For us to reflect: The problem of being an imam of prayer/worship is that it is not allowed to be joyful, especially when the intention is merely for political image. The reward falls out, washed away by the Tsunami. Choosing legislative candidates from PBB, PAN, and PKS. Supporting the #2019GANTIPRESIDENT" (16 April 2019).⁶⁸¹ Another example was, "Muslim support for prospective leaders who cannot pray is getting stronger, collaborate with infidels, don't want to take the Quran test, and even now is perfidious by inviting PKI's people to join, despite he was against the PKI. God willing #2019GantiPresiden."⁶⁸² Similarly, Prabowo Subianto was also attacked on Twitter with similar demeaning hashtags such as #PrabowoJumatDimana and #PrabowoTakutTesNgaji. Several Twitter accounts (@ridlwandjogja, @DodiFebriansya8, and @amrulla81106845) spread this the same day: "It is not clear where him having his Friday prayer. Can he read the Quran? How come he would lead the majority of Indonesian Muslims. #PrabowoTakutTesNgaji?" (06/01/2019), which was retweeted by 34 different accounts. This narrative is common because it is believed to be a powerful rhetoric, using religious piety as a standard to judge the quality of an individual before the eyes of the Muslim majority of voters in Indonesia. The narrative was used to destabilize belief and generate doubt of the candidates' true Islamic credentials. But this narrative is nothing new. It has been used since the 1955 elections by Muslim parties, particularly by Masyumi towards other parties, particularly PKI. However, this narrative retained its popularity among political operatives due to the rising Islamic conservatism and other problems facing the country.

Another example included how Joko Widodo was accused of being the supporter or ally of religious blasphemers. The blasphemy story was copied from the Jakarta election in 2017,

⁶⁸⁰ Hidayat, Zoom Interview, 29 April, 2022

⁶⁸¹ PILIH CALEG PRO IJTIMA ULAMA DUKUNG PRESIDEN 02 (@CapresCalon), "UNTUK KITA RENUNGAN: https://genius.com/ebiet-g-ade-untuk-kita-renungan-lyrics"/# Masalah Jadi Imam Sholat/Ibadah Tidak Boleh Ria' Apalagi Kalau Niat Hanya Untuk Pencitraan' Pahalanya Bisa Rontok Kena Sunami. Memilih Pemimpin/PKS/PAN/PBB Yang Mendukung ► #2019GANTIPRESIDENT," 16 April, 2019, https://twitter.com/CapresCalon/status/1118073629873303552.

⁶⁸² faishal bin djalil (@faishal_djalil), "Semakin kuat dukungan muslim kepada calon pemimpin yang tak bisa sholat, berkolaborasi dengan kafir, tak mau tes mengaji, bahkan kini berkhianat dengan mengajak "kaum" PKI bergabung. Padahal dulu bilanganya melawan PKI. Insyaallah #2019GantiPresiden," 30 January, 2018, https://twitter.com/faishal_djalil/status/1090513993976795136.

where the incumbent governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, who was nominated by parties supporting Joko Widodo, was found guilty of blasphemy during his official agenda. A more insidious attack was, “The word of Allah: It will be said to them, do not hope for destruction for today, but hope for repeated destruction. That’s how angry Allah is at the infidels. But we still want to make them our friends and leaders. #2019GantiPresiden.” (@Innayaputri72, 26/02/2019). The same account tweeted more: “Word of Allah, QS Al-Baqarah: Whoever is the enemy of Allah, His angels, His apostles, Jibril and Mikael, then surely Allah is an enemy to infidels. Do we still want to make infidels our friends and leaders? #2019GantiPresiden.” (26/02/2019). A broad and indirect attack on Jokowi by targeting PDI-P was retweeted by @rior_RR:

“When being an opposition it begged for the support of Muslims, when it came to power it began to show its true character, Islam was marginalized, its figures were persecuted and criminalized #SatanBertopengDemokrasi @Maruarar_Sirait #MenolakLupa #2019ChangePresident #BenamkanSetanMerah #SalingFollow.”⁶⁸³

This accusations against Jokowi and his administration as anti-Ulama⁶⁸⁴ and anti-Islam in West Java were reiterated, saying that Jokowi would ban calling to prayer in mosques and allow same sex marriage,⁶⁸⁵ and in Makassar he was accused of aiming to stop religion subjects at schools and changing Islamic boarding schools into public schools.⁶⁸⁶ Prabowo Subianto and Siandiaga Uno were also targets of tweets with the same narrative. A group of accounts tweeted the same messages around the same time, saying, “Wowo Sandi are infidels who do not understand Islam. Sandi makes ablution by taking water directly from the dipper. He is an instant Muslim or ID Muslim. #PrabowoTakutTesNgaji, #02KoalisiHoax, #SandiwaraUno.”⁶⁸⁷ Also, in countering

⁶⁸³ #MahaBrantakanJKW (@rior_RR), 3 September, 2018, https://twitter.com/rior_RR/status/1036644184524898305.

⁶⁸⁴ “Jokowi: Saya yang Buat Perpres Hari Santri, Kok Dibilang Anti Ulama?,” 2019, accessed 13 March, 2023, <https://www.merdeka.com/politik/jokowi-saya-yang-buat-perpres-hari-santri-kok-dibilang-anti-ulama.html>.

⁶⁸⁵ A short video showing mothers visiting households talking to residents in local language (Sundanese) saying: “The sound of the call to prayer in mosques will be banned, no one will wear the hijab anymore. Women and women can marry, men and men can marry.” “Viral Video Ibu-ibu Sosialisasikan 'Kawin Sejenis Sah' Jika Jokowi Menang,” detik.com, 2019, accessed 13 March, 2023, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4441472/viral-video-ibu-ibu-sosialisasikan-kawin-sejenis-sah-jika-jokowi-menang>.

⁶⁸⁶ A video of a mother on door-to-door campaign in Makassar, South Sulawesi, went viral persuading attendees by saying: “If we vote for Prabowo, we think about the fate of our religion, our children. Even though we are not the one will enjoy it, but tomorrow, 5 years and 10 years from now do we want Jokowi and his ministers to abolish religion lessons in schools. It’s one of their programs. First, religious education will be removed from schools. Then, their plan is to make *pesantren* as public schools. So, we want how to do...” To disclose the smear campaign, a twitter account shared it. #99 (@PartaiSocmed), “Sinetron ketebak! PKS menolak mengakui ibu ini sebagai kadernya, meski si ibu kampanye door to door pakai seragam PKS. Kalian yg mati2an membantu Bowok hanyalah sampah yg layak dikorbankan. Cinta kalian bertepuk sebelah tangan!,” 6 March, 2019, <https://twitter.com/PartaiSocmed/status/1103121311771975681>.

⁶⁸⁷ Suka-suka gue (@Didisudin201), “Wowo sandi itu kafir ga ngerti islam.

sandi berwudu aja nyiduk air dari gayung langsung

sandi islam karbit apa islam ktp...

#PrabowoTakutTesNgaji #02KoalisiHoax #SandiwaraUno,"
<https://twitter.com/Didisudin201/status/1081888135905046528>. Other
<https://twitter.com/LidyaAtikah/status/1082001309589397504>
<https://twitter.com/echaluceria/status/1081888121275396096>

6 January, 2019,
 anonymous accounts are
 (7/01/2019),
 (6/01/2019),

the same-sex marriage accusation, an account on Twitter attacked Prabowo indirectly saying, "... Regarding LGBT, try asking the son of presidential candidate number two."⁶⁸⁸ An anonymous account also shared a slander on the gender orientation of Sandiaga with an accusative meme: "Sandiaga is bisexual. Don't you believe it? That's right! Sandi likes physical contact with men too" (Figure 45).⁶⁸⁹



Figure 45 Anti-Sandiaga attack on identity issue

(Source: <https://twitter.com/SatpamSosmed>)

The second key narrative was that the candidate was a proponent of communism or PKI. In 2017, public perception showed that 12% agreed with the resurgence of PKI, and 39% saw the resurgence as a threat to the nation,⁶⁹⁰ and in April 2019 during the election those who believed in the resurgence of PKI reached 15% of the total population, and 14% in September 2020.

⁶⁸⁸ <https://twitter.com/akuncere/status/1081985527451009024>

<https://twitter.com/auraanisa9/status/1082053085596332032>

(7/01/2019),
and

<https://twitter.com/DedeDwiky/status/1082007588655517696> (7/01/2019).

⁶⁸⁸ Abi Hasantoso (@TheREAL_Abi), "Ibu-ibu berhijab. Tapi tukang fitnah. Padahal Islam melarang fitnah. Jokowi jadi presiden sejak Oktober 2014. Adzan masih berkumandang, masjid-masjid dimakmurkan, pesantren-pesantren dibangun, malah gendeng Kiai Ma'ruf jadi cawapres. Soal LGBT coba tanya anak capres nomor dua. pic.twitter.com/TSJNOpou3k," 24 February, 2019, https://twitter.com/TheREAL_Abi.

⁶⁸⁹ Patroli 24 Jam (@SatpamSosmed), "Kok lama-lama Pak Satpam jadi curiga sma Sandi ya? Setelah kemarin muncul website "Skandal Sandiaga", sekarang muncul bukti-bukti yang lebih menguatkan Menurut kalian bagaimana?"

#patroli24jam #SkandalSandiaga #YennyWahidProJokowi,"

26

September,

2018,

<https://twitter.com/SatpamSosmed/status/1044889394585300992>.

⁶⁹⁰ *Isu Kebangkitan PKI, Sebuah Penilaian Publik Nasional: Temuan Survei September 2017*, Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (2017), <http://saifulmujani.com/blog/2017/09/29/masyarakat-indonesia-tidak-setuju-isu-kebangkitan-pki>.

Those who believed in the resurgence of PKI tended to be Muslim, male, residing in Sumatera, East Java, Bali, and Nusa Tenggara, coming from Minangkabau, Madura, and Betawi ethnic groups, and having voted for Prabowo-Sandi in the election.⁶⁹¹ These demographics constitute the majority of Prabowo-Sandi's voters base, as Chapter 6 demonstrates.



Figure 46 Anti-Jokowi tweet using anti-communist sentiment

(Source: <https://twitter.com/MardaniAliSera>)

Joko Widodo was constantly the target of attacks accusing him of being a member of the Communist Party of Indonesia. An anonymous account tweeted a quote by A. H. Nasution saying: "It is impossible to have a COMMUNIST spirit and be a PANCASILAI, because the IDEAL of communists is precisely to eliminate RELIGION. Even if they have religion, it is just a guise. Beware of the latent danger of communist #2019tetapAntiPKI #2019GantiPresiden."⁶⁹² An indirect attack also came from PKS's elite with a high engagement on the issue of PKI, who tweeted,

Do you still remember Aidit's claim that he was a Pancasila defender, but who carried out the coup & insulted Pancasila? Remember Gen. AH Nasution reminded us? That the PKI always cheats by instigating a conflict between Islam and Pancasila. #2019GantiPresiden #2019tetapAntiPKI (Figure 46).

⁶⁹¹ SIKAP PUBLIK ATAS ISU KEBANGKITAN PKI, SMRC (Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting, 2020), https://saifulmujani.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Rilis_Kebangkitan-PKI-30-September-2020_SMRC.final_tmbh.pdf.

⁶⁹² MasGagap (@suaragagap), "Tidaklah Mungkin Seseorang Bisa Berjiwa KOMUNIS Sekaligus PANCASILAI. Karena CITA-CITA Komunis Justru Ingin Menghilangkan AGAMA. Kalaupun Mereka BERAGAMA Itu Hanyalah KEDOK SEMATA" [Jenderal A. H. Nasution] Waspada bahaya laten komunis #2019tetapAntiPKI #2019GantiPresiden," 14 September, 2018, <https://twitter.com/suaragagap/status/1040375448293785600>.

A more direct attack was pursued using a photo of PKI's campaigning activity from 1955, which was shared and labelled where an attendee is labelled as Joko Widodo standing in front of PKI leader D.N. Aidit, implying a similarity in body posture (see Figure 47).⁶⁹³ Another related attack was posted on Facebook and shared in a group named INDONESIA BERSUARA by an anonymous account called "Ko Hong Guan," accusing Jokowi's father as being the leader of PKI's underbow organization saying, "Finally leaked. A1. The real Jokowi's father. Remarkably similar!!! If *cebong* denies it, I slap their faces one by one!!!"⁶⁹⁴ (Figure 48).

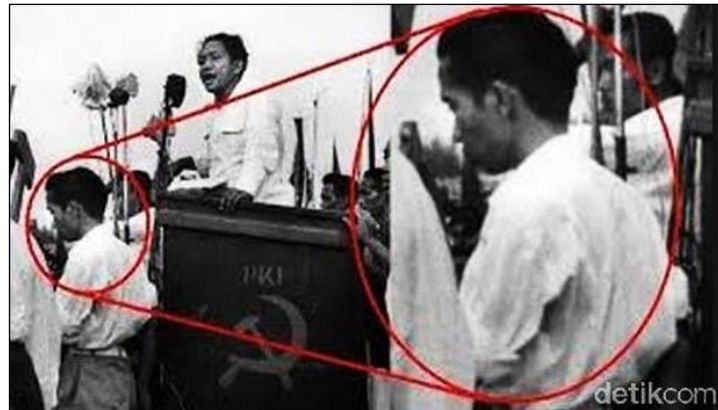


Figure 47 Attacks on Jokowi using anti-PKI sentiment

(Source: <https://news.detik.com>)

⁶⁹³ "Jengkelnya Jokowi Kena Hoax Foto Bareng DN Aidit," detik.com, 2018, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-3944003/jengkelnya-jokowi-kena-hoax-foto-bareng-dn-aidit>.

⁶⁹⁴ "[SALAH] Akhirnya Bocor Juga Bapaknya Jokowi Yang Asli," turnbackhoax.id, 2020, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://turnbackhoax.id/2020/07/29/salah-akhirnya-bocor-juga-bapaknya-jokowi-yang-asli/>.



Figure 48 Attacks on Jokowi using anti-PKI sentiment

(Source: <https://turnbackhoax.id>)

The fourth key narrative was a lack of integrity or lack of morals by the candidate. The lack of integrity was a narrative generated from one candidate's accusation of the other as a hoax maker or liar. Supporters of both candidates used this narrative with various hashtags. Jokowi was accused of #BapakHoaxNasional or #JokowiBohongLagi and #Capres01Bohong.⁶⁹⁵ The #JokowiBohongLagi went viral after the second televised debate discussing energy, food, infrastructure, environment, and resources where Joko Widodo made statements on the development of a high-speed train project that, contrary to his previous policy, would be funded by APBN, and on peat fires, and wheat imports, amongst others. Equally harsh messages were directed towards Prabowo-Sandi as their campaign publicly addressed an alleged violent attack against one of their die-hard supporters and former activist Ratna Sarumpaet, which turned out to be totally false information. It triggered massive attacks, such as #PrabowoTumbalinRatna, #Prabohong, #PraboHoax, #KoalisiHoax, #KoalisiPraBohong, and so on.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁵ Twitter data analysis by author

⁶⁹⁶ Twitter data analysis by author



Figure 49 Attack on Prabowo using ‘unfaithful man’ narrative

(Source: <https://twitter.com/NawyanP>)

Another example of this would be the narrative of the unfaithful husband. The unfaithful husband was a new narrative used against Sandiaga Uno and Prabowo Subianto but not against Jokowi-Amin. Prabowo was attacked with the negative narrative by problematising his status as a widower, who is depicted as a failed family leader and questioning his capacity to lead a country (see Figure 49). For example, an account tweeted: “He could not even take good care of his own family, then wanting to manage the country. #KoalisiHoax #KoalisiPrabohong #PrabowoKeturunanKafir #Prabowokalahlagi.”⁶⁹⁷ Sandiaga Uno was even more a target of this unfaithful husband narrative based on false information, categorized as a black campaign. A website published scandalous reports about the unethical manner of Sandiaga. Sandiaga was accused of having an affair with a woman. The release of a controversial website which was taken down quickly was followed by popular hashtags on Twitter and Facebook, called #SkandalSandiaga and #SandiwarUno. The narrative exploited a stereotype in Indonesian society about the sacredness of marriage as defined by religion and recognised by the law, which was represented by Joko Widodo-Ma’ruf Amin’s families. On Twitter the same negative

⁶⁹⁷ Nawyan Pamungkas (@NawyanP), “Urus keluarga aja ngga becus segala mau ngurus negara ? #KoalisiHoax #KoalisiPrabohong #PrabowoKeturunanKafir #prabowokalahlagi,” <https://twitter.com/NawyanP/status/1104230124667363328>.

messages was amplified by buzzers using #SandiwaraUno hashtag (see for example Figure 50).

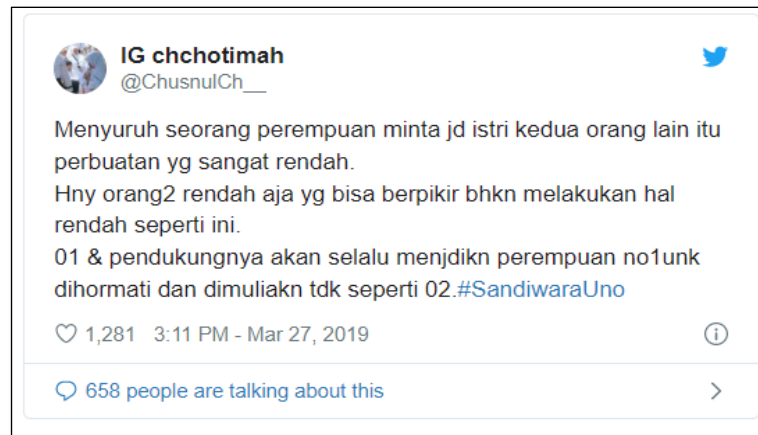


Figure 50 Attack on Sandiaga Uno

(Source: https://twitter.com/ChusnulCh__)

There were other forms of negative campaigning. Some included, for example, simply ridiculing an opponent. To ridicule means to make contemptuous fun of someone with the aim of ruining their reputation. It also means to downgrade the value or worthiness of an action, character, or thing. One example of this occurred in Boyolali, when Prabowo made a statement during his public address:

I grew up in Jakarta. I gave my heart and soul to this nation. But, when I went around Jakarta, I saw luxurious buildings, skyscrapers, and luxurious hotels. There are hotels, and many others. Just to pronounce the names you wouldn't even be able... I am sure you have never been to those hotels. If you tried you would probably be kicked out. Maybe your faces are not that of rich people. Your faces are just that of the Boyolali people, right?⁶⁹⁸

This statement may be at first taken as being meant to entertain the crowd as they cheered out responding to almost every statement that he made. But it became ammunition for opponents to ridicule Prabowo with, particularly on social media. Not only street demonstrations in Boyolali

⁶⁹⁸ The clip of the speech is available on Taufik Irvani: TAUFIK IRVANI (@taufikirvani2991), "KUNJUNGI BOYOLALI, INI YANG DILAKUKAN CAPRES PRABOWO," 1 November, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uz57XzDd07M>.

(Figure 51), but also public gatherings outside Boyolali, including in Jakarta (Figure 52) and Medan (Figure 53), erupted to deplore the statement, followed by the trending hashtags #SaveMukaBoyolali along with #GerakanTolakPrabowo on Twitter.



Figure 51 Anti-Prabowo protest in Boyolali

(Source: <https://twitter.com/TheArieAir>)⁶⁹⁹



Figure 52 Anti-Prabowo protest in front of State palace in Jakarta

⁶⁹⁹ Arie Dirgantara (@TheArieAir), "Bikin NOL JAWA TENGAH WILAYAH BEBAS PRABOWO," 4 November, 2018, <https://twitter.com/TheArieAir/status/1059095901464027136>.

(Source: liputan6.com)⁷⁰⁰



Figure 53 Anti-Prabowo protest in Medan

(Source: akurat.co)⁷⁰¹

The messages along with the hashtags made fun of the statement using memes, TV talk shows, comic strips, testimonies, and short clips (see for example Figure 54 and 55). Clips of his speech were uploaded on YouTube (Nov 2, 2018) along with the comment, "... Even to his own supporters, he spoke like that," which reached 160,000 views and 1,700 comments.⁷⁰² The end result on election day was not good for Prabowo. Twenty-five polling stations in Boyolali voted zero for Prabowo-Sandi.⁷⁰³

⁷⁰⁰ "FOTO: Demo Pemuda dan Mahasiswa Mengecam Ungkapan Tampang Boyolali," liputan6.com, 2018, accessed 15 October, 2023, <https://www.liputan6.com/photo/read/3686442/foto-demo-pemuda-dan-mahasiswa-mengecam-ungkapan-tampang-boyolali?page=4>.

⁷⁰¹ "Pernyataan Prabowo 'Tampang Boyolali' Didemo Warga Sumut," akurat.co, 2018, accessed 15 October, 2023, <https://www.akurat.co/daerah/1302018229/Pernyataan-Prabowo-Tampang-Boyolali-Didemo-Warga-Sumut>.

⁷⁰² IRVANI, "KUNJUNGI BOYOLALI, INI YANG DILAKUKAN CAPRES PRABOWO."

⁷⁰³ "Tak Ada Satu Pun Suara untuk Prabowo dari 25 TPS Boyolali," kumparan.com, 2019, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://kumparan.com/tugujogja/tak-ada-satupun-suara-untuk-prabowo-dari-25-tps-boyolali-1quTeRjm6zz/full>.



Figure 54 Ridicules of Prabowo's statement comic

(Source: <https://twitter.com/gwyap>)⁷⁰⁴



Figure 55 Ridicules of Prabowo's statement comic

⁷⁰⁴ Yohanes Ageng Prayoga (@gwyap), "How now? #SaveMukaBoyolali #SaveTampangBoyolali #President," 6 November, 2018, <https://twitter.com/gwyap/status/1059503235273129984>.

(Source: https://twitter.com/girliciouz_)⁷⁰⁵



Figure 56 Anti-Prabowo polling on Twitter

(Source: <https://twitter.com/TheArieAir>)

Prominent buzzers supporting Jokowi-Amin made a Twitter poll ironically questioning Prabowo's achievements ("Prabowo's achievement is?") by offering four anti-Prabowo options to choose from: "Hoax spreader," "Kidnapper," "Hurt people's hearts," and "Insulting the poor" (Figure 56).⁷⁰⁶ Live polling on Twitter is often used to increase engagement through participation of users. In the context of electoral competition, it was also used to attack opponents by exposing negative issues about the target. Moreover, my interview with a digital campaign consultant revealed that this polling had been often used to weaken the position of opponents through a bandwagon strategy by orchestrating the respondents to vote where their own candidate would be set to get higher votes than opponents.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁵ Velicia Key (@girliciouz_), "Pengen ketawa tapi takut dosa ?? #SaveMukaBoyolali #TampangBoyolali #SaveTampangBoyolali #PrabowoHarusMintaMaaf," 5 November, 2018, https://twitter.com/girliciouz_/status/1059356930739646464.

⁷⁰⁶ Arie Dirgantara (@TheArieAir), "Prestasi PRABOWO adalah?," 3 November, 2018, <https://twitter.com/TheArieAir/status/1058578360786284544>.

⁷⁰⁷ Rahman, In-person Interview, 7 December, 2022

Sometimes, however, the ridicule went from being substantial and funny to being plain disinformation. Prabowo was attacked using this method by associating him with the notorious Nazi leader Adolf Hitler.⁷⁰⁸



Figure 57 Attack on Prabowo using anti-Hitler sentiment

(Source: <https://twitter.com/mahesatiwi>)

The visual association of Prabowo with Hitler was a form of disinformation. The tweet was equating Prabowo verbally and visually with Adolf Hitler while praising Jokowi as the champion for Indonesia's progress. As I noted in the previous chapter, the core element of the tweet—the picture—first appeared in the 2014 presidential election, posted by Ulin Yusron of Jokowi's high-ranking buzzer with the title, "The fascist, the kidnapper, the hothead #PrahaBocor" (Figure 57),⁷⁰⁹ which sparked criticisms and calls for investigation of the action. In an interview with Kompas TV in 2022 on the issue of buzzers in Indonesia, Ulin Yusron said he was against

⁷⁰⁸ MahesaTiwi (@mahesatiwi), "Indonesia tak ingin hancur seperti era Hitler kan? Karena itu cuman @jokowi saja yabg sanggup bikin Indonesia maju ", 13 December, 2018, <https://twitter.com/mahesatiwi/status/1073083937591709697>.

⁷⁰⁹ Twitter: @ulinyusron (28/06/2014). The tweet was deleted by the time Prabowo Subianto was appointed as Minister of Defense in the new Jokowi's administration.

Prabowo's candidacy due to the allegations of his 13 fellow activists' kidnapping back in 1997/1998. The fierce political rivalry prompted him to share the picture.⁷¹⁰

The analysis above shows strong evidence that policy criticism was hard to find in the social media campaigns. A member of KPU, I Dewa Kade Wiarsa Raka Sandi, assessed that

During 2019 presidential election campaign, there was little discussion regarding policy issues, so other issues surfaced and touched on the issue of SARA, which created polarization and divided the public. In practice, policy-related issues only appear in televised debates. In the campaign, excessive fanaticism from supporters left aside key matters related to policy issues and candidates attacked opponents more with black campaigns. Excessive fanaticism, shortened campaign time compared to the previous presidential election, disinformation and hoaxes appearing everywhere, thus obscured actual information and a lack of socialization of the candidate's vision, mission, programs and policies on social media which has become a new medium for new and young voters.⁷¹¹

A different basis for the lack of policy criticism on social media was suggested by a member of Bawaslu, Fritz E. Siregar. He explained,

Indeed, competition is not based on ideas, only on who can manipulate the masses and who has the most money. Talking about ideas, policy is only at theoretical level. That elections are a battle of ideas is at the level of our utopia. I can campaign by saying 'People must vote for candidates who have good ideas, the right way to solve problems.' To say it more clearly, maybe the question is: 'Why a leader is chosen?' The first is because they belong to one same religion, same tribe, or because they are handsome, so they are attractive to look at. So what? I think that's the reality, that's still the limit of our citizens' educational capabilities, and in the field that's what happens.⁷¹²

This section has shown a wide range of attack messages used against the two candidates and the narratives amplified through the use of different methods. The attacks tended to focus on

⁷¹⁰ KOMPASTV (@kompastv), "Ulin Yusron Blak-blakan Ngaku Buzzer Jokowi, Bayarannya Besar Ya? - KAMAR ROSI," 8 September, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhd9HaSy11k>.

⁷¹¹ I Dewa Kade Wiarsa Raka Sandi, Email Interview, 31 March, 2022.

⁷¹² Fritz E. Siregar, In-person Interview, 16 October, 2020.

character and identity issues, such as religion and communism, and were dominated by smears and slanders rather than policy disputes. The amplification of these attack messages, with mostly problematic information, were done by both human—buzzers and influencers—and bot agents on Twitter using authentic and fake accounts. The messages produced using multimodal content carried repetitive hashtags and were disseminated to deliver negative narratives against the candidates. The key narratives were selected to operate strategically in influencing voters' perceptions of the opposing candidate. The selection of these methods along with the negative narratives suggest that the key audience for the negative campaigning was Muslim society because they were the majority of voters in Indonesia's politics. The analysis above indicates some of these narratives were a continuity of negative campaigning in Indonesia going back to the 1950s, as explained in Chapter two. With the nearly unlimited space for campaigning and computational attacks on social media, candidates used the new mechanics and unofficial actors of digital campaigning. In the following section I elaborate further on how the new media landscape exacerbated this form of negative campaigning in the 2019 election.

4.5. The digital media system and negative campaigning at national election

This section explains the use of new media technologies during the 2019 presidential election. Digital media did not replace the legacy media but rather it was used in the creation of a hybrid media ecosystem—defined as the interaction and interdependence between older and newer media in the production and distribution of information. The hybrid media system introduced new processes of simultaneous integration and fragmentation in the media system as older media (newspapers and television) “merge with and adapt to the formats, genres, norms and actors brought about by newer digital media.”⁷¹³ This concept originated in the work Chadwick, who popularized the concept in his book, *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*:

The hybrid media system is built upon interactions among older and newer media logics in the reflexively connected social fields of media and politics. Actors in this system are articulated by complex ever-evolving relationships based upon adaptation and interdependence and concentrations and diffusions of power. Actors create, tap, or steer information flows in ways

⁷¹³ Mattoni and Ceccobelli, "Comparing hybrid media systems in the digital age: A theoretical framework for analysis."

that suit their goals and in ways that modify, enable, or disable the agency of others, across and between a range of older and newer media settings”⁷¹⁴

The hybrid media system in 2019 is crucial to our understanding of negative campaigning because it enabled unofficial campaign actors to access the mainstream media content, ultimately legitimizing their attack messages.

The influence of this hybrid media system on negative campaigning was based on two significant transformations in the production and dissemination of political information. First, there had been a pervasive distribution and exchange of political information outside of traditional news organizations led by grassroot, unconventional, and personalized forms of news production. Second, lay citizens could participate and express their opinions in real time through various platforms using different devices, which shifted the control over the formation of issues in public conversations.⁷¹⁵ These two factors explained the empowerment of ordinary citizens in both supporting and opposing a political candidate during election campaigning through the collective production and distribution of campaign messages using digital media platforms without a significant gate-keeping system. From the candidate’s side, the hybrid media system allowed them to sustain direct and massive permanent campaigning—continuous campaigning beyond the electoral period—particularly through social media, which often was also reported by the mainstream news media.⁷¹⁶ The high level engagement of campaign messages, which was often the case with attack messages, particularly on Twitter, extended “the reach of messages beyond followers/fans to secondary networks, to media coverage, and to the coveted position of the trending section on various social media platforms.”⁷¹⁷ Hence, the cumulative attention metrics, such as click rates, likes, shares, and others generated by social media public could “play crucial roles in how social media platforms present content to users, how users perceive content, and how the press covers issues.”⁷¹⁸ Research found there was an intermedia agenda-setting or issue convergence across media during the election campaign in which social and traditional news media enjoyed a symbiotic relationship.⁷¹⁹ As a result, the hybrid media system

⁷¹⁴ Chadwick, *The hybrid media system: Politics and power*.

⁷¹⁵ Mattoni and Ceccobelli, “Comparing hybrid media systems in the digital age: A theoretical framework for analysis.”

⁷¹⁶ Anders Olof Larsson, “Online, all the time? A quantitative assessment of the permanent campaign on Facebook,” *New Media & Society* 18, no. 2 (2016).

⁷¹⁷ Shelley Boulianne and Anders Olof Larsson, “Engagement with candidate posts on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook during the 2019 election,” *New Media & Society* 25, no. 1 (2023).

⁷¹⁸ Yini Zhang et al., “Attention and amplification in the hybrid media system: The composition and activity of Donald Trump’s Twitter following during the 2016 presidential election,” *New Media & Society* 20, no. 9 (2018).

⁷¹⁹ Bethany A. Conway, Kate Kenski, and Di Wang, “The Rise of Twitter in the Political Campaign: Searching for Intermedia Agenda-Setting Effects in the Presidential Primary,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 20, no. 4 (2015).

helped build a complex system for the production, distribution, amplification of negative campaigning.

Political campaigners see mainstream digital media content as vital.⁷²⁰ In 2019, 73% of Indonesians had internet access, and of those who did, 94% connected via mobile phone.⁷²¹ The average daily time of using the internet in 2019 was 8 hours.⁷²² By 2019 56% of the total Indonesian population were active social media users.⁷²³ In addition to Google, Facebook, and Twitter, internet users in Indonesia regularly accessed mainstream news sites, like tribunnews.com, detik.com, liputan6.com, Kompas.com and others, as well as independent and partisan citizen-journalism model of news blogs from different devices.

Regardless of the potential of the new media for staging negative campaigning, candidates rarely launched attacks against opponents on their official social media accounts (see Table 6). These accounts were used for positive campaigning by the candidate—promoting their visions, missions, positive characters, track-records, and information related to their campaign activities as well as calling for participation to turn out in the election.

Table 6 Official social media accounts of the candidates

	Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin	Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno
Facebook	https://facebook.com/jokowi.amin	https://facebook.com/PrabowoSubianto https://facebook.com/SandiSUno
Twitter	https://twitter.com/jokowi_amin	https://twitter.com/prabowo https://twitter.com/sandiuno
Instagram	https://instagam.com/jokowi.amin	https://www.instagram.com/prabowo/ https://www.instagram.com/sandiuno/
YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLIBh_VXKckypg2gQMr1CKw	

(Source: KPU)

⁷²⁰ Philip N. Howard, "Deep Democracy, Thin Citizenship: The Impact of Digital Media in Political Campaign Strategy," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 597, no. 1 (2005).

⁷²¹ LAPORAN SURVEI INTERNET APJII 2019 – 2020 (Q2).

⁷²² Simon Kemp, *DIGITAL 2019: INDONESIA* (We are Social & Hootsuite, 31 January 2019), <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2019-indonesia>.

⁷²³ Kemp, *DIGITAL 2019: INDONESIA*.

Messaging applications, especially WhatsApp, made their own mark in Indonesia's elections for a few reasons. First, it had many users. By January 2019, WhatsApp was the second most used application (83%), above Facebook (81%) and only after YouTube (88%) based on survey data.⁷²⁴ Scholars found that beside positive and attack messages, false memetic-based messages were also circulated by the Jokowi-Amin campaign team in the 2019 election through WhatsApp, using the astroturfing technique of manipulation.⁷²⁵

At the 2019 presidential election both candidates became targets of negative campaigning in the hybrid media environment, simultaneously comprising of outdoor (such as banners and posters), traditional (flyer, tabloid, print media, and TV), and digital media (social media, messenger application, online news, blog). News blogs were particularly interesting examples because they allowed the producers to write long articles without proper editorial criteria and set the tone of the article in their favour. Blogging is a unique form of political participation that blends hypertext links, opiated commentary, call for action, and requests for feedback in various ways.⁷²⁶ These blogs did not hold the traditional standards of good journalism as they were mostly one-sided, even though they raised factual issues widely debated during the campaigns. At the 2019 election, blogs like these published stories to attack the candidates and to share on social media. Some examples of these blogs were *gelora.co*, *kontenislam.com*, *redaksiindonesia.com*, *seword.com*, and *gesuri.id*. Among its tendentious negative articles towards Jokowi, one particularly interesting story was "Volunteers Admit It is Difficult to Convey Jokowi's Success, Observer: People Know Jokowi's Lies."⁷²⁷ Other websites containing attack messages against Jokowi included *kontentislam.com*, which published articles such as "Observers Say There Are Allegations *Jiwasraya* Funded Jokowi's Campaign in the 2019 Presidential Election, The President Director Denies",⁷²⁸ "Who Plays the SARA Issue in the 2019 Presidential Election? Why Are Islam and Pancasila Controversy?", which suggests that Jokowi was the cause of identity politics in the election.⁷²⁹ In the meantime, blog attacks against Prabowo appeared on *redaksiindonesia.com* (HTI, FPI, PKS and 212's Ulema are Silent in a Thousand Words on Prabowo's Friday Prayer),⁷³⁰ *seword.com* (Where Prabowo have his Friday

⁷²⁴ Kemp, *DIGITAL 2019: INDONESIA*.

⁷²⁵ Baulch, Matamoros-Fernández, and Suwana, "Memetic persuasion and WhatsAppification in Indonesia's 2019 presidential election."

⁷²⁶ Kevin Wallsten, "Political Blogs: Transmission Belts, Soapboxes, Mobilizers, or Conversation Starters?," *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 4, no. 3 (2008).

⁷²⁷ "Relawan Akui Sulit Sampaikan Keberhasilan Jokowi, Pengamat: Rakyat Tahu Kebohongan Jokowi," *gelora.co*, 2019, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.gelora.co/2019/02/relawan-akui-sulit-sampaikan.html>.

⁷²⁸ "Pengamat Sebut Ada Dugaan *Jiwasraya* Biayai Kampanye Jokowi di Pilpres 2019, Dirut Membantah," *kontenislam.com*, 2019, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.kontenislam.com/2019/12/pengamat-sebut-ada-dugaan-jiwasraya.html>.

⁷²⁹ "Siapa yang Main Isu SARA di Pilpres 2019? Mengapa Islam dan Pancasila Dipertentangkan?," *kontenislam.com*, 2019, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.kontenislam.com/2019/03/siapa-yang-main-isu-sara-di-pilpres.html>.

⁷³⁰ "Ulama Versi HTI, FPI, PKS dan 212 Diam Seribu Bahasa Soal Jumatan Prabowo," *redaksiindonesia.com*, 2019, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://redaksiindonesia.com/read/ulama-versi-hti-fpi-pks-dan-212-diam-seribu-bahasa-soal-jumatan-prabowo.html>.

Prayer is Trending, Kampret Eats the Lord's Weapon)⁷³¹, and gesuri.id (After the 212 Reunion, Prabowo was seen as often emotional and swearing).⁷³²

In what follows, I analyse several key examples of the issue convergence of negative campaigning through the hybrid media system in Indonesia during the 2019 presidential election.

The first example of cross-media amplification is the virality of *#JokowiBersamaPKI* (*#JokowiWithPKI*). The viral social media hashtag was printed on an outdoor banner. This banner was displayed by an unknown group by the roadside in the Tanah Abang area in Jakarta (Figure 58).⁷³³ The message on the banner indicated attacking Jokowi, but also promoted Prabowo-Sandi's candidacy at the same time, implying that it was staged by Prabowo's campaigns. The hashtag *#JokowiWithPKI* received at least 71 shares on Twitter with potential impressions of 12,634,797 based on users' total followers, either via the buzzer or news media accounts who suggested contradictory interpretations.⁷³⁴



⁷³¹ "Prabowo Jumatan Di Mana' Jadi Trending, Senjata Kampret Makan Junjungan," *seword.com*, 2019, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://seword.com/politik/prabowo-jumatan-di-mana-jadi-trending-senjata-kampret-makan-junjungan-ZcbrGLPGk>.

⁷³² "Pasca Reuni 212, Prabowo Dinilai Sering Emosi dan Mengumpat," *gesuri.id*, 2018, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.gesuri.id/internal/pasca-reuni-212-prabowo-dinilai-sering-emosi-dan-mengumpat-b1TA1ZgzS>.

⁷³³ "Beredar Spanduk JKW Bersama PKI, Kubu Prabowo: Kami Punya Standar Sendiri," *suara.com*, 2018, accessed 9 March, 2023, <https://www.suara.com/news/2018/12/05/185946/beredar-spanduk-jkw-bersama-pki-kubu-prabowo-kami-punya-standar-sendiri>.

⁷³⁴ The data based on the crawling of *#JokowiBersamaPKI* on twitter through Twitter's REST API using R program.

Figure 58 Anti-Jokowi banner with hashtags

(Source: <https://www.suara.com/>)

A blog linked to a political party tweeted that the “#JokowiBersamaPKI” banner was trying to seek sympathy amid declining electability <https://t.co/hSGrA05h6Q>.” (@geloraco, 08/12/2018), suspecting that the display of the banner was a staged act of playing victim by the Jokowi’s campaign team to draw sympathy from the public. A similar interpretation was tweeted by news media *Republik Merdeka* (RMOL), tweeting “The Banner #JokowiBersamaPKI seeks sympathy amid declining electability” and attaching a link to the news story.⁷³⁵ Tempo’s online news site (tempo.co, 05/12/2018) interpreted the campaign banner as a violation of the election law, saying that “The #JokobersamaPKI banner is hate speech, Expert: It can be prosecuted.”⁷³⁶ Prabowo’s campaigners denied that they distributed the banner, saying that their candidates also were victims of the banner.⁷³⁷ Jokowi was highly concerned with the insinuations associating him with the denounced Communist Party of Indonesia and urged for them to cease. His usual approach was not to respond to an issue or to respond as if he did not care; however, in this case, he did respond because a survey result had revealed that up to 9 million people had believed this sander.⁷³⁸

The second example of negative campaigning in a hybrid media context was the “SAY NO!! Jokowi Ma’ruf Amin” flyer which was distributed in several regions, such as Magelang and Tasikmalaya. It did not only criticize Joko Widodo for his alleged failures in various aspects of his administration, such as debt, foreign workers, rice and salt imports, but also evoked negative identity-related sentiments and negative narratives. The flyer referenced the lingering identity-based attacks on Jokowi claiming that “Those who insult religion are Jokowi’s partners”, “Those who burned the Tawhid flag were in Jokowi’s camp”, “Those who want to delete the Religion column, PDIP”, “Those who want to drop the religion subject, PDIP”, “Those who want to downplay the call to prayer, Jokowi’s minister”, “Those who are proud to be children of PKI are

⁷³⁵ REPUBLIK MERDEKA (@rmol_id), “Spanduk #JKWBersamaPKI Cari Simpati Di Tengah Penurunan Elektabilitas”, 8 December, 2018, https://twitter.com/rmol_id/status/1071346151952015360.

⁷³⁶ tempo.co (@tempodotco), “Spanduk #JKWBersamaPKI Masuk Ujaran Kebencian, Pakar: Bisa Dipidanakan,” 5 December, 2018, <https://twitter.com/tempodotco/status/1070268880839274496>.

⁷³⁷ “Gerindra Sebut Spanduk #JKWBersamaPKI Justru Rugikan Prabowo,” tempo.co, 2018, accessed 25 January, 2023, https://metro.tempo.co/read/1152466/gerindra-sebut-spanduk-jkwbersamapki-justru-rugikan-prabowo?utm_source=Digital%20Marketing&utm_medium=Twitter&utm_campaign=Metro_Dinda.

⁷³⁸ “Muncul Spanduk #JKWBersamaPKI, Jokowi: Ada 9 Juta Orang Percaya Fitnah Saya Anggota PKI,” tribunnews.com, 2018, accessed 10 March, 2023, <https://surabaya.tribunnews.com/2018/12/07/muncul-spanduk-jkwbersamapki-jokowi-ada-9-juta-orang-percaya-fitnah-saya-anggota-pki>.

in Jokowi's camp" and so on (see Figure 59).⁷³⁹ The flyer was distributed in a number of cities, uploaded and shared on social media, and reported upon in online news websites (such as jpnn.com, jawapos.com, detik.com, Kompas.com, timesindonesia.co.id, beritaenam.com, pontas.id, and kabarpolitik.com, as well as on national television station on primetime news (Figure 60).⁷⁴⁰



Figure 60 Anti-Jokowi-Amin flyer

(Source: www.kompas.com)

⁷³⁹ "Kubu Jokowi-Ma'ruf Temukan Selebaran yang Diduga Kampanye Hitam," Kompas.com, 2019, accessed 10 March, 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2019/01/25/19373621/kubu-jokowi-maruf-temukan-selebaran-yang-diduga-kampanye-hitam>.

⁷⁴⁰ KOMPASTV (@kompastv), "Muncul Selebaran 'Say No To Jokowi-Ma'ruf'," TKN Minta Polisi Usut Penyebar," 30 January, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kd5N2lxR9s4>.

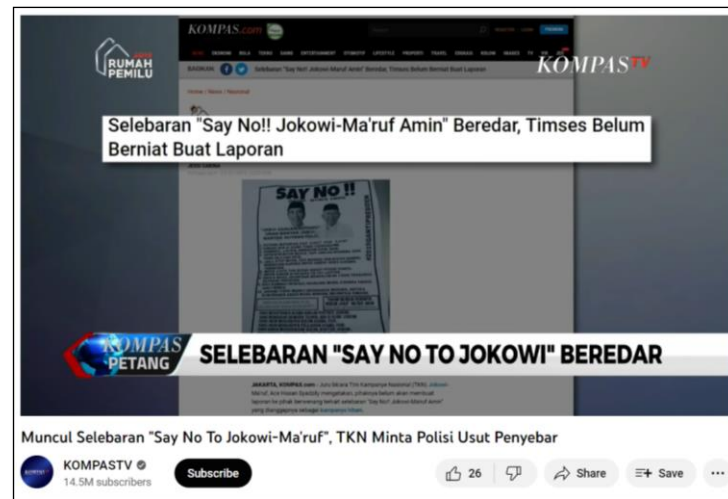


Figure 60 TV news coverage of anti-Jokowi-Amin flyer

(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/c/kompastv>)

The third example of the cross-media amplification of negative campaigning was the case of Indonesia *Barokah* tabloid against Prabowo-Sandi.⁷⁴¹ Headlines in the tabloid included “Prabowo is angry, he destroyed the media”, “Deceiving the public for political victory? Dismantling the strategy of spraying lies”, and then a striking quote saying “Prabowo-Sandi uses the firehouse of falsehood strategy.”⁷⁴² The Indonesia Press Council (Dewan Pers) assessed the contents of the tabloid as not being the work of journalism and urged that anyone who felt harmed by its distribution should report it as a violation of law. However, the Electoral Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) decided that the tabloid did not violate electoral regulations. The tabloid was distributed to Mosque and Islamic boarding schools across the country by post, particularly Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua. One manager at the Indonesian Post Service (PT. Pos Indonesia) said that distribution of the tabloid reached 232,781 mosques and 28,241 Islamic schools with a total cost of delivery more than US\$96,973.⁷⁴³ Interestingly, from its original distribution in January 2019 the tabloid had been practically unknown to the national public until social media, WhatsApp groups, and mainstream news media reported on it and held live talk shows about it in a prime-time slot. An anonymous pro-Jokowi buzzer on Twitter

⁷⁴¹ “Versi Cetak Dicegah, Versi Online Beredar, Ini Sikap Bawaslu Terkait Tabloid Indonesia Barokah,” *jatimtimes.com*, 2019, accessed 10 March, 2023, <https://jatimtimes.com/baca/186767/20190125/181800/versi-cetak-dicegah-versi-online-beredar-ini-sikap-bawaslu-terkait-tabloid-indonesia-barokah>.

⁷⁴² Indonesia Barokah Tabloid, 1st edition/December 2018.

⁷⁴³ “Jejak Paket Misterius Tabloid Indonesia Barokah,” *tirto.id*, 2019, accessed 10 March, 2023, <https://tirto.id/jejak-paket-misterius-tabloid-indonesia-barokah-dgBE>.

(@_MV_Ilestari) on 2 February 2019 made a thread of seven tweets displaying some of the contents of the tabloid in JPEG image format which made it easier to read and with comments and retweets (see cover of the tabloid in Figure 61). In the last tweet of the thread, she wrote,

In Indonesia Barokah Tabloid, there are no new articles about grandpa Prabowo and Grandma Ratna regarding LIES. There is nothing new; they are all scattered in the media & social media already. Indonesia Barokah has negative campaigns, but 100% NOT A HOAX, NOT A BLACK CAMPAIGN. It is very different from the vile Obor Rakyat tabloid which contains slanders.⁷⁴⁴



Figure 61 Cover of Anti-Prabowo ‘Indonesia Barokah’ tabloid

(Source: Indonesia Barokah tabloid)

The fourth example is an attack message against Sandiaga Uno. Like the above hashtag-related messages, the “#SandiwarUno” was also massively circulated, first on Twitter, and Instagram,⁷⁴⁵ and then on Facebook, with different contents. Observation from Facebook’s

⁷⁴⁴ Nita (@_MV_Ilestari), "Di Tabloid Indonesia Barokah, artikel ttg Mbah Prabowo & Mbah Ratna perihal KEBOHONGAN gak ada yg baru, bertebaran di media & medsos. Indonesia Barokah ada kampanye negatif tapi 100% BUKAN HOAX, BUKAN KAMPANYE HITAM. Sangat berbeda dg tabloid KEJI Obor Rakyat yg berisi FITNAH.," 3 February, 2019, https://twitter.com/_MV_Ilestari_/status/1091902893953769472.

⁷⁴⁵ There are at least 53.767 posts on instagram.com, "#sandiwaruno," 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/sandiwaruno/>.

CrowdTangle data showed there were at least 619 posts mentioning Sandiwara Uno with a total interaction of 587,525 and that posting lasted from 16 September 2018 until 22 April 2019. The hashtag was triggered by an allegedly staged act of Sandiaga Uno on his campaign trail visiting a traditional market in Labuhanbatu, North Sumatera. In that event, there was a handwritten poster telling Sandiaga to just go home because people do not like to be separated and would remain voting for No.1 (Jokowi-Amin). However, the poster seemed to have been orchestrated and installed by his supporters prior to this. The official team of Jokowi-Amin accused Sandiaga of playacting or playing victim to get sympathy.⁷⁴⁶ Not only the buzzers and influencers supporting Jokowi-Amin amplified the hashtag and messages, but also the mainstream online news, partisan blogs (such as *seword*, *islampos*, *gemanusantara*, and so on), and traditional television news, like Kompas TV.⁷⁴⁷

This section has shown the implications of the hybrid media system on the production, distribution, and amplification of negative campaigning. The negative campaigning at the 2019 presidential election showed a convergence between social media and traditional media amplifying negative narratives. Mainstream news media not only helped negative narratives spread but effectively encouraged and endorsed the practice. The initial source of negative campaigning could come from trending hashtags on social media or partisan blogs which were then reported by both online and traditional news media. However, it was also the case that the original attack messages came from traditional or outdoor media and were amplified on social media by buzzers and influencers, and then shared on private messenger groups. It is important to understand the effects of the hybrid media system in Indonesia to understand the nature of negative campaigning in the 2019 presidential election given the fact that candidates, parties and voters alike utilized and consumed information from both newer and older media platforms. Professional campaigners increasingly influenced the mainstream media agenda by creating trending issues on social media. The dependence of the mainstream news media on newsworthy social media trending issues, either out of necessity or partisanship, created an opportunity for the attack messages to become amplified. This hybrid campaigning is crucial to understanding why negative campaigning was powerful and used by candidates in Indonesia's 2019 elections. As such, I examine this trend further in the local context in 2020 in the next chapter as well.

⁷⁴⁶ "#Sandiwarauno Ramai di Twitter, TKN Sebut Sandiaga Bermain Playing Victim," *okezone.com*, 2018, accessed 10 March, 2023, <https://news.okezone.com/read/2018/12/12/605/1990422/sandiwarauno-ramai-di-twitter-tkn-sebut-sandiaga-bermain-playing-victim>.

⁷⁴⁷ "Warganet Ramai Soroti #SandiwaraUno," *kompas.tv*, 2019, accessed 10 March, 2023, <https://www.kompas.tv/article/40911/warganet-ramai-soroti-sandiwarauno>.

4.6. Conclusion

New digital technologies enhanced the production and dissemination of electoral campaigning in Indonesia. This chapter has shown the use of a new mechanic for negative campaigning during the 2019 presidential election, led by buzzers and influencers who amplified the attack messages. Computational attack refers to the employment of automation (political bots), anonymity, social media platform, algorithms, coordinated behaviour, and human agents in operating fake and real accounts to influence the flow of information in favour of a candidate by amplifying attack messages and narratives against an opponent. This chapter argued that computational attacks dominated the negative campaigning at the 2019 presidential election. Political bots were used to spread slander towards candidates in coordination and provoking hashtags. The employment of these computational attacks was led by unofficial actors related to the candidates, namely buzzer and influencers. These unofficial actors worked in coordination to influence the flow of information by tricking social media algorithms for message popularity. As the attack messages rose to being a top issue, mainstream media often extended the exposure by reporting on it leading to the resonance of attack messages across all media platforms. This whole network of communication could create a digital two-step flow of communication, building a powerful instrument in the negative campaigning toolkit.

The uses of hashtags, keywords, slogans, photos, videos, and links made disseminating attack messages faster and more massive, following the network-based social media logic to strengthen negative narratives. The negative narratives were disseminated in slogans, tweets, posts, memes, and other forms to attack opponents using emotion-evoking messages. The key narratives of negative campaigning used against candidates during the election revolved around disobedience to Islam, being an opponent of Islam, and being a proponent of communist/PKI, which indicated a narrative continuity in Indonesia electoral politics.

This chapter contributed to the key argument of the thesis by showing a new mechanic of negative campaigning with computational attacks. As this chapter has shown, negative campaigning did not give what voters needed to make their best decisions in the context of democracy: truthful and useful information mainly related to problems and solutions relevant to their aspirations. The debates and criticisms among candidates—attack messages and narratives—were mainly focused on demeaning the opponents with slanders, identity attacks, and disinformation. The operation of these computational attacks was led by unofficial actors in the campaign. The dominant role of unofficial actors in staging the negative campaigning made negative campaigning even more problematic because of their underground operations and confidential relations with the candidates. The use of social media, which was first seen as an impetus for deliberative political participation, multiplied the illegitimate campaigning in the

democratic election. The unofficial actors of negative campaigning overly produced dirty attacks on opponents while hiding behind pseudonyms; the dirty attacks sabotaged serious talks on challenges facing Indonesia's declining democracy in authentic debates. This phenomenon demonstrated that the innovation in new media technologies has worked to empower bad actors to stage dirty campaigns by manipulating information for electoral ends, and beyond technological determinism, the human factor—the way people utilized the technology—could be seen to be at fault.

Chapter 5 The normalization of negative campaigning at local elections

This chapter examines the use of negative campaigning at local level elections in Indonesia. It shows negative campaigning was employed by various actors using computational propaganda beyond the national election level to the extent that the practice has become normalised nation-wide despite a lower intensity and sophistication.

This chapter is divided into three parts. First, I introduce the political context of the case study of local elections in Indonesia. Second, I examine evidence of computational propaganda in those case studies (the concept I have examined in the Chapter 4). Third, I evaluate how the digital media system shaped campaigning. Finally, I conclude that negative campaigning is a key electoral strategy employed by candidates at local level elections normalizing the strategy from the national elections. This chapter contributes to the central argument of the thesis by showing evidence of negative campaigning at local level elections employing computational propaganda as a part of the digital era strategies. The key contents of negative campaign messages are dominated by character attacks against local leaders' candidates. Importantly, however, this chapter also reveals how national actors play key roles in employing negative campaigning at local elections, essentially normalising the practice nation-wide.

5.1. Contextualising Indonesia's local elections

This section explains how local elections work in Indonesia and factors shaping local politics under which elections are contested. It argues that elections at the local level have given more opportunities to established local elites to thrive and dominate local politics despite a direct election system. Since 2005, local leaders have been directly elected by people following the direct presidential election in 2004. Direct elections at the local level are held every five years to select mayors, regents, and governors, which have been conducted concurrently since 2015. Candidates at local elections are nominated as a pair by a political party or a group of political parties following the electoral regulations, and in 2008 it was decided that independent candidates could also contest local elections with a proof of public support. Nonetheless, political parties control candidate nomination in Indonesia's local elections. Nomination is not only centralized but also less democratic, posing a paradox as to the nature of the party itself in a

democracy.⁷⁴⁸ Even though pre-election coalition in local elections is more likely to give candidates a win, including for non-incumbent candidates, this strategy contains corrupt practices among parties involving monetary transfer and has nothing to do with local policy or programmatic alliance.⁷⁴⁹ Like national elections, local elections are organized by a local electoral commission (KPU) and supervised by a local electoral supervisory agency (Bawaslu), which are responsible for the administrative and technical aspects of the election, including, among others, registration, voter lists completion, nomination, campaigning, and voting day.⁷⁵⁰

Scholars have identified some key characteristics of local elections in Indonesia over the past 15 years. First, candidates at local elections do not benefit much by promoting their party names or ideologies, and they revolve more around personal reputation or the character of the contesting candidates,⁷⁵¹ with political dynasties key to wooing supporters.⁷⁵² The political dynasty creates an unfair game for other contestants during elections. Dynastic politicians are those who are related by blood or marriage to other individuals formerly holding political office.⁷⁵³ Scholars found that political dynasty destroys good governance, which exacerbates the delivery of public goods for people.⁷⁵⁴ Importantly, the dynastic status of political candidates have a huge role in their successful campaigning as they gain both informational and electoral advantages.⁷⁵⁵ Scholars observed that there were 202 dynastic candidates contesting local elections in 2015 and 2018, and 117 of those won.⁷⁵⁶ At the 2020 local elections, 57 dynastic candidates secured victory⁷⁵⁷ despite wide public resistance to the expanding political dynasty. In addition, it is arguably easier for dynastic politicians to secure nominations by political parties.

Second, campaigns of candidates at local elections in Indonesia have almost always involved money politics to accumulate and sustain power.⁷⁵⁸ Mobilizing voters in Indonesia's elections

⁷⁴⁸ Arya Budi, "Less democracy, more centralism: the selection of Candidates by Golkar and PDIP in Indonesian subnational executive elections, 2005–2020," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 3 (2020).

⁷⁴⁹ Blane D. Lewis, "How do mayors get elected? The causal effects of pre-electoral coalitions on mayoral election outcomes in Indonesia," *Local Government Studies* 46, no. 3 (2020).

⁷⁵⁰ "Peraturan Pemerintah Pengganti Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia No. 1 Tahun 2014 Tentang Pemilihan Gubernur, Bupati, dan Walikota," (2014).

⁷⁵¹ Colm Fox, "Candidate-centric systems and the politicization of ethnicity: evidence from Indonesia," *Democratization* 25, no. 7 (2018).

⁷⁵² Taishi Muraoka, "Political Dynasties and Particularistic Campaigns," *Political Research Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (2018).

⁷⁵³ Benny Geys and Daniel M. Smith, "Political Dynasties in Democracies: Causes, Consequences and Remaining Puzzles," *The Economic Journal* 127, no. 605 (2017).

⁷⁵⁴ Rollin F. Tusalem and Jeffrey J. Pe-Aguirre, "The Effect of Political Dynasties on Effective Democratic Governance: Evidence From the Philippines," *Asian Politics & Policy* 5, no. 3 (2013).

⁷⁵⁵ Daniel M. Smith and Shane Martin, "Political Dynasties and the Selection of Cabinet Ministers," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (2017).

⁷⁵⁶ "Peneliti: Mayoritas Kandidat Politik Dinasti Menang Pilkada," CNN, 2020, accessed 14 April, 2023, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20200804153433-32-532064/peneliti-mayoritas-kandidat-politik-dinasti-menang-pilkada>.

⁷⁵⁷ "Peneliti: 57 Calon Dinasti Politik Menang Pilkada 2020," CNN Indonesia, 2021, accessed 14 April, 2023, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20210412184019-32-628960/peneliti-57-calon-dinasti-politik-menang-pilkada-2020>.

⁷⁵⁸ Vedi R. Hadiz, "Democracy and Money Politics, The Case of Indonesia," in *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Politics*, ed. Richard Robison (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

has also relied on the patronage mechanism—the distribution of material benefits such as money, goods, services, and other benefits by political candidates to voters and supporters.⁷⁵⁹ The decentralization of administrative and financial affairs in local government has brought about localized problems of national politics, particularly with corruption and dynastic politics.⁷⁶⁰ Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) prosecuted at least 22 governors and 141 regents and mayors in response to corruption scandals between 2004 and 2022.⁷⁶¹ This signifies the failure of good governance at the local level, which is often attributed to the expensive cost of campaigning. The Indonesian Ministry of Home Affairs reported that a regent or mayor candidate would need funds of between 20 to 100 billion rupiah to contest local elections.⁷⁶² However, the literature on this remains a key research agenda, with some scholars arguing the process is not entirely transactional and is driven by a patronage system, but also retrospectively where voters evaluate candidates' performances.⁷⁶³

To examine the process of negative campaigning in local elections, I study two cases of mayoral elections in 2020: Medan and South Tangerang. Medan has been a central case of local politics in studying local democracy in Indonesia on money politics, patronage, and identity politics.⁷⁶⁴ South Tangerang is a city in Banten province where dynasty politics, patronage, and Islamic politics converge during electoral politics.⁷⁶⁵ The two cases are important examples of local elections and bear a significant influence on the dynamics of local democracy in Indonesia that shapes campaigning for a number of reasons. First, both cities have high internet accesses, at 82%⁷⁶⁶ in Medan and 79%⁷⁶⁷ in South Tangerang in 2020, which could lure candidates to campaign online. Second, Medan has a strong journalistic culture as a capital city and South Tangerang's proximity to Jakarta has made it a key source of news coverage for both local and

⁷⁵⁹ Edward Aspinall and Mada Sukmajati, *Electoral dynamics in Indonesia: Money politics, patronage and clientelism at the grassroots* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016).

⁷⁶⁰ Edward Aspinall and Muhammad Uhaib As' ad, "Understanding family politics: Successes and failures of political dynasties in regional Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 24, no. 3 (2016).; Sri Budi Eko Wardani and Valina Singka Subekti, "Political Dynasties and Women Candidates in Indonesia's 2019 Election," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 40, no. 1 (2021).; Abdul Hamid, "A Family Matter: Political Corruption in Banten, Indonesia," *Asian Politics & Policy* 6, no. 4 (2014).

⁷⁶¹ "Korupsi Kepala Daerah," Indonesia Corruption Watch, 2022, accessed 14 April 2023, <https://antikorupsi.org/id/korupsi-kepala-daerah>.

⁷⁶² "Mahalnya Ongkos Politik...", *kompas.com*, 2018, accessed 14 April, 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/01/12/09494501/mahalnya-ongkos-politik>.

⁷⁶³ Diego Fossati, "A Tale of Three Cities: Electoral Accountability in Indonesian Local Politics," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 48, no. 1 (2017).

⁷⁶⁴ For examples: Edward Aspinall, Sebastian Dettman, and Eve Warburton, "When Religion Trumps Ethnicity: A Regional Election Case Study from Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 19, no. 1 (2011).; Fox, "Candidate-centric systems and the politicization of ethnicity: evidence from Indonesia."; Ahmad Taufan Damanik, "Medan, North Sumatra: Between Ethnic Politics and Money Politics," in *Electoral dynamics in Indonesia: Money politics, patronage and clientelism at the Grassroots*, ed. Edward Aspinall and Mada Sukmajati (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016).;

⁷⁶⁵ Gandung Ismanto and Idris Thaha, "Banten: Islamic Parties, Networks and Patronage," in *Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia*, ed. Edward Aspinall and Mada Sukmajati, Money Politics, Patronage and Clientelism at the Grassroots (NUS Press, 2016).

⁷⁶⁶ LAPORAN SURVEI INTERNET APJII 2019 – 2020 (Q2).

⁷⁶⁷ *Persentase Penduduk Berumur 5 Tahun ke Atas yang Mengakses Internet dalam 3 Bulan Terakhir Menurut Kabupaten/Kota di Provinsi Banten (Persen)*, 2018-2020, (Badan Statistik Provinsi Banten, 2020), <https://banten.bps.go.id/subject/2/komunikasi.html#subjekViewTab3.html>.

national mainstream media. Third, Medan is the city capital of North Sumatera province and the fourth largest city in Indonesia by population, which was 2,681,830 in 2020, composed of 61.2% Muslim, 18.4% Christian, 11.5% Catholic, 8% Buddhist, and 4% Hindu.⁷⁶⁸ As a multi-ethnic city, Batak groups comprised 35.2% of the population followed by Javanese with 33%, Chinese 9.7%, Malays 6.9% and others 15.2%.⁷⁶⁹ Lastly, its local council (DPRD Medan) was representative of different political parties, both nationalist and Islamic parties. It was dominated by PDIP and Gerindra with 10 and 9 members respectively, followed by PKS with 7 members, PAN 6, Golkar 4, Nasdem 4, Demokrat 4, Hanura 3, PSI 2 and PPP 1.⁷⁷⁰ South Tangerang is a vibrant new city in Banten province with a population of 1,399,146. It is composed of 90% Muslim, 4.7% Christian, 3.3% Catholic, 1% Buddhist, and others.⁷⁷¹ Three main ethnic groups in the city are the Betawi, Sundanese, and Tionghoa. The Golkar party dominated with 10 members of its local council (DPRD) followed by PDIP, Gerindra, and PKS with 8 members each, then Demokrat 5, PKB and PSI 4, PAN 2, and Hanura 1 member.⁷⁷²

In both these case studies, electoral campaigning at local elections relied on different media platforms, including both new and old media. In 2020, these elections became more significant for my study, as the campaign moved almost entirely online due to the COVID-19 pandemic; citizens were urged to stay at home and public events were cancelled. Of course, this also meant that I was unable to attend events myself, nor conduct interviews in-person with campaign staffers, which made the research much more reliant on my online analysis. Nevertheless, these case studies of a largely 'online' election with research conducted largely 'online' allowed for new innovations in campaign practices and researcher's methodologies. Conducting fieldwork during the pandemic, I observed the elections through news media, social media, and watched all televised debates live. For both the Medan and Tangerang elections, I employed the methodology of qualitative content analysis of online news and tweets, text mining, and social media network analysis of tweets to understand computational propaganda. Analysis of computational propaganda relied on a Twitter dataset collected based on negative hashtags against candidates. The focus of the analysis was on elements of computational attack, namely

⁷⁶⁸ "Jumlah Penduduk Menurut Kabupaten/Kota dan Agama yang Dianut, 2020," BPS SUMUT, updated 21 April 2021, 2021, accessed 11 March, 2023, <https://sumut.bps.go.id/statictable/2021/04/21/2289/jumlah-penduduk-menurut-kabupaten-kota-dan-agama-yang-dianut-2020.html>.

⁷⁶⁹ Deasy Simandjuntak, *Medan's 2020 Mayoral Election: Dynastic Politics Versus Underperforming Incumbency* ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute (ISEAS, 20 April 2021), https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ISEAS_Perspective_2021_48.pdf.

⁷⁷⁰ This is drawn from the composition of fractions at DPRD Medan, see "FRAKSI," DPRD Kota Medan, 2021, accessed 11 March, 2023, <https://dprd.pemkomedan.go.id/simanja/fraksi/fraksi-pdi-perjuangan>.

⁷⁷¹ "Data Keagamaan," Kementerian Agama Kota Tangerang Selatan, 2023, accessed 11 March, 2023, <https://tangselkota.kemenag.go.id/data/data-keagamaan/>.

⁷⁷² "Jumlah Anggota DPRD Kota Tangerang Selatan menurut Partai Politik dan Jenis Kelamin (Orang), 2019," BPS Tangerang Selatan, 2019, accessed 11 March, 2023, <https://tangselkota.bps.go.id/indicator/40/111/1/jumlah-anggota-dprd-kota-tangerang-selatan-menurut-partai-politik-dan-jenis-kelamin.html>.

social media platforms, anonymity with fake accounts, social media algorithms with engagement metrics, and the coordinated behaviour of buzzers and influencers in amplifying the attack messages. Attack messages were drawn from qualitative analysis of tweets and online news, which were further used to identify the key narratives and methods of attacks used to weaken the image of the target candidates. To detect the presence of coordinated behaviour I used social network theory on social media by measuring intensity, frequency, and solidity.

5.2. The 2020 Medan mayoral election

This section analyses negative campaigning in the 2020 Medan mayoral election. The 2020 Medan mayoral election was contested by two pairs of candidates. The first candidates were the incumbent Akhyar Nasution and Salman Alfarisi, who were both Muslim. Akhyar, who was Batak by ethnicity, was a former deputy to Dzulmi Eldin, mayor of Medan from 2016 until 2019, before becoming mayor after Dzulmi was prosecuted by KPK in a bribery case.⁷⁷³ Akhyar was originally a member of the PDIP cadre, but his intention to run the election went against the will of PDIP leaders in Jakarta, particularly chairwoman Megawati Soekarnoputri, who sought to nominate Bobby Nasution, son-in-law of President Joko Widodo. Akhyar was dismissed from the party by Megawati Soekarnoputri because he was considered disobedient after questioning the decision.⁷⁷⁴ Akhyar left the PDIP and joined the Democrat party ahead of the nomination. His running mate, Salman Alfarisi, was a two-term member of Medan's Regional People's Representative Assembly (DPRD) and from PKS (2009-2019) and North Sumatera's provincial DPRD (2019-2020).⁷⁷⁵ Akhyar and Salman were nominated by two parties, namely the PKS and Democrat parties. The second pair of candidates was Muhammad Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman, who were also both Muslim. Bobby, who was Batak by ethnicity, was a businessman in the property sector and became nationally popular after marrying President Jokowi's daughter, Kahiyang Ayu, in 2017. His running mate Aulia Rachman was a member of the Regional People's Representative Assembly (DPRD) of Medan from the Gerindra party. Bobby and Aulia were nominated by PDIP, Gerindra, PAN, Golkar, NasDem, PSI, Hanura, and PPP. They were also supported by other political parties, such as PKB, Perindo, PKPI, and others.

⁷⁷³ "Wali Kota Medan Ditahan KPK, Wakilnya Akhyar Nasution Jadi Plt," detik.com, 2019, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4749453/wali-kota-medan-ditahan-kpk-wakilnya-akhyar-nasution-jadi-plt>.

⁷⁷⁴ "Dipecat PDIP, Akhyar Jadi Jagoan PKS Lawan Mantu Jokowi di Pilkada Medan," detik.com, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5151730/dipecat-pdip-akhyar-jadi-jagoan-pks-lawan-mantu-jokowi-di-pilkada-medan>.

⁷⁷⁵ "Profil Salman Alfarisi, Balon Wali Kota Medan yang Hafal 10 Juz Al-Quran, Lulusan Arab Saudi," tribunnews.com, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://medan.tribunnews.com/2020/03/12/profil-salman-alfarisi-balon-wali-kota-medan-yang-hafal-10-juz-al-quran-lulusan-arab-saudi>.

These nomination alliances almost exactly resembled the coalition patterns of the parties supporting the ruling administration.

By law, candidates were required to submit their official campaign structures to local KPU ahead of the campaign periods. These campaign teams were much simpler than those of the national elections. The official campaign team of Akhyar Nasution – Salman Alfarisi was led by Ibrahim Tarigan and consisted of 214 members, including Rudiawan Sitorus (Coordinator of Campaign), Wasis Wiseso Pamungkas (secretary), Yusrizal Sipayung (Treasurer), Jumadi (Coordinator of Volunteer), Ari Usman (Coordinator of Data and Witness), Tengku M. Fauzi (Advisory board), and others. The official campaign team of Bobby Nasution – Aulia Rachman was far slimmer, having only 7 members: head of winning team (H.T. Milwan), general secretary (Alween Ong), general treasurer (Faisal Arbie), and spokesperson (Meryl Saragih, Sugiat Santoso, Nursyam and Ikrimah Hamidy).⁷⁷⁶

The structure of the campaign teams of candidates at the local elections sent to the KPU was merely an administrative fulfilment rather than a factual campaign organization. At the 2020 local elections campaign actors were not the large quantities of grassroots volunteers like in the national elections, but online buzzers and political influencers exercising their powers over social media conversation about the candidates.⁷⁷⁷ Parties mobilized their top rank elites to campaign for their own candidates and key influencers to attack opponents at the same time. In the Medan election, these buzzers could be seen through some accounts on Twitter, such as @MarcellaAlaman1, @MelisaNelva, @Anyaledian, @EllisSutisna, @AirinAirin_NZ, and so on, on Facebook, and Instagram. The involvement of partisan and political influencers from Jakarta political elites set the tone of the negative campaigning in Medan. Bobby Nasution was the main target of attacks by these highly popular partisan influencers, such as Mardi Ali Sera (PKS), Syahrial Nasution (Democrat), Yan A. Harahap (Democrat), Rocky Gerung, Abdul Somad, and Don Adam. Meanwhile, Akhyar was a target of attack messages by buzzers rather than political influencers.

As we shall see, most negative campaigns occurred online, where buzzers, politicians, and influencers collaborated to attack opponents with malicious information, mostly on personal,

⁷⁷⁶ KPU Kota Medan

⁷⁷⁷ Because of Covid-19 pandemic public gatherings such as mass rallies, volunteer declaration events, and other similar activities are almost none.

identity, and leadership issues. Importantly, campaign actors with the highest engagement of attack messages were political influencers helped by buzzers as decentralized amplifiers.

5.2.1. Computational attack in Medan mayoral election

This section analyses the mechanics of negative campaigning in Medan using digital media. The negative campaigns occurred mostly on Twitter, and less on Facebook and Instagram, using fake accounts despite a few authentic accounts, and were strongly directed against challenger candidate Bobby Nasution and less so against incumbent Akhyar Nasution. Searching Instagram with two keywords from anti-Bobby hashtags #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan returned 59 posts⁷⁷⁸ and #KalahkanMenantu returned only 8 posts.⁷⁷⁹ These messages were produced in memes and online banners attacking the challenger. On Facebook, there were at least 67 posts of #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan⁷⁸⁰ and 11 posts for #KalahkanMenantu.⁷⁸¹ Almost all of the posts were shared on group pages rather than in a regular post, which had from hundreds to 10 thousand members, such as KOALISI RAKYAT FOR "DEMOKRAT",⁷⁸² BERITA KOTA MEDAN,⁷⁸³ Relawan Akhyar Salman (RASA),⁷⁸⁴ and INI BARU MEDAN BUNG!⁷⁸⁵ On Twitter, there were 429 tweets/retweets of the two hashtags. Attack messages against the incumbent, Akhyar Nasution, were constantly shared on Twitter by fake accounts in a coordinated way with the same repetitive hashtags and messages.

Anonymity and automation were two reasons why computational propaganda was a dangerous and insidious political strategy.⁷⁸⁶ Anonymity was highly exploited by buzzers in disseminating the attack messages against the candidates. The accounts used pseudonyms to conceal the real identity of users, which were mostly created prior to the election, particularly on Twitter. However, these accounts had low engagement and a tiny number of followers that tended to use the profile pictures of unknown persons from the internet. In Medan, several fake accounts

⁷⁷⁸ "#MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan," 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/menantujokowibisadikalahkan/>.

⁷⁷⁹ "#KalahkanMenantu," 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/kalahkanmenantu/>.

⁷⁸⁰ This was search through CrowdTangle's Historical Data with parameters search: #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan, post type: All Posts, order by: Total Interactions, date: 09/01/2020 – 12/09/2020

⁷⁸¹ "#KalahkanMenantu."

⁷⁸² KOALISI RAKYAT FOR "DEMOKRAT", "#MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan," 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/197070075030998/search/?q=%23MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan>.

⁷⁸³ BERITA KOTA MEDAN, "#MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan," 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/787301995100844/search/?q=%23MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan>.

⁷⁸⁴ Relawan Akhyar Salman (RASA), "#MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan," 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/779786939520607/search/?q=%23MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan>.

⁷⁸⁵ INI BARU MEDAN BUNG!, "#MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan," 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/959126074121158/search/?q=%23MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan>.

⁷⁸⁶ Samuel Woolley, *Manufacturing Consensus: Understanding Propaganda in the Era of Automation and Anonymity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2023).

of buzzers seemed to be operated by the same buzzer suggested by account characteristics, tweets that they shared, and connections between them, indicating a great deal of similarity. Some examples of anonymous accounts can be found on Twitter (see Table 7). Anonymity here was based on the lack of transparency and authenticity of users' identities, such as in the profile pictures, biography, location, and so on. Anonymous accounts tended to have very low if not zero followers and engagements and newly created on the platform. Its significance lay in the "free and safe" participation to disseminate severe attack messages without fear of being tracked and identified either by political opponents or by the platform.

Table 7 Anonymous accounts on Twitter attacking incumbent

(*N* = 12 accounts)

No	Handler	Username	Account created	Number of followers	Attack Tweets
1	@EllisSutisna	Ellis Sutisna	2020 Sept	0	31
2	@MelisaNelva	Nelva Melisa	2020 Sept	1	31
3	@MarcellaAlaman1	Marcella Alamanda	2020 Sept	1	31
4	@AnyaLedian	Ledian Anya	2020 Sept	1	31
5	@MustafidAsmara1	Mustafid Asmarandana	2020 Nov	4	4
6	@JogiZX	Jogi #FightTheHoax	2020 Oct	182	8
7	@beehonie911	??	2020 Nov	386	2
8	@jurpem	Jurnal Pemerintahan	2016 Apr	455	1
9	@IkhyarV	Ikhyar Velayati	2020 Nov	572	6
10	@MajuMedan	Catheryne Lisda	2020 Nov	703	8
11	@SumutMaju	Sumut Maju?	2020 Oct	954	4
12	@sayalusia	Lusia Rahma	2019 Dec	1012	5

(Source: Twitter data analysis with text mining)

Table 8 Anonymous accounts on Twitter attacking challenger

(Top 20 samples of the least followers)
(N = 2,249 accounts)

No	Handler	Username	Account created	Number of followers	Attack tweets
1	@DonMatic4	Don Matic	2020 Aug	0	1
2	@Gaktahudia	Apakatanya	2020 Aug	0	1
3	@JokoDol92849382	Joko Dolok	2020 Oct	0	1
4	@DedeSup04572223	Dede Suparman	2020 Nov	0	2
5	@solotrend3	solotrend	2020 Aug	1	1
6	@juviafransiska	Juviafransiska	2020 Aug	1	1
7	@Kyzero3	Kyzero	2020 Aug	1	1
8	@lembingi	Ym	2019 Jul	1	1
9	@liRoundap	Jack Roundap II	2020 Apr	1	1
10	@Iyang11391905	Iyang	2020 Aug	1	1
11	@Sudrun39927837	Sudrun	2020 Nov	1	2
12	@dony04552401	dony	2020 Aug	1	2
13	@yoshep__88	Yoshep Robert	2016 Jul	1	2
14	@RidhoNa17117165	Ridho Nasution	2019 Feb	2	1
15	@PksPersada	PersadaPKSMedan	2020 Oct	2	4
16	@HalimHumairaa	Aisyah humairaa Halim	2020 Nov	2	2
17	@Kanan74Otak	otak_kanan74	2020 May	2	1
18	@Sana60257936	Sana	2016 Nov	2	3
19	@zasli_nur	p	2019 Jan	2	2
20	@Husamud56944318	Husamuddin	2020 Sep	2	3

(Source: Twitter data analysis with text mining)

The next element of negative campaigning discussed is the use of algorithms in the Medan election. Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram algorithms are driven largely by engagement metrics composed of likes, tweets, retweets, favourites, comments, and so on. The goal of the political campaign in this algorithmic playing field was to produce and disseminate messages that would reach the highest engagement possible. Attack messages engaged in (162 tweets/retweets) against the incumbent in Medan were sent by 12 accounts, constituting only 10 likes, 2 quote tweets, and 4 retweets (see Table 7). But the total engagement of attack messages (2,249 tweets/retweets) against the challenger were sent by 587 accounts, constituting 27,445 likes, 645 quote tweets, and 1,226,392 retweets (see example in Table 8). Many of these high

engagements were attributed to the central role of political influencers, party accounts, and news media with high followers that tweeted or retweeted the attack messages (see Table 9).

Table 9 Top influencers attacking challenger Bobby Nasution

(Category was annotated based on the characteristics of the accounts)

Handler	Username	N of follower	Category
@Demokrat_TV	Demokrat TV	5.991.406	Political party
@MardaniAliSera	Mardani Ali Sera	501.933	Politician
@panca66	#RepublikDagelan	218.675	Politician
@DonAdam68	Don Adam	192.576	Professional
@jpnncom	JPNN.com	67.462	Media
@bayprio	Bayu Prioko	67.461	Partisan
@Reiza_Patters	Katak Pembina 走れ包	54.705	Professional
@PresidenKopi	Presiden Kopi	47.964	Professional
@RelawanProSandi	#FreePalestine	46.215	Partisan
@_BangFu	Mohamad Fuad	33.963	Professional

(Source: Twitter data analysis with text mining)

As organic engagement will not always give the best result, campaign actors often used different ways to boost engagement, such as producing emotion-loaded messages, using automation, and coordinating sharing behaviour online. Coordinated behaviour is defined by the concurrent time and frequency of repeated mutual actions of sharing on social media. Coordinated behaviour is much easier to see on Twitter because of its data accessibility. After analysing 162 tweets, the expected coordinated sharing shows that users who tweeted together the same hashtag at least 1 time within 10,000 seconds of each other was 4, suggesting weak coordination (see Figure 62). To look for more meaningful amplification of attack messages on Twitter against the incumbent candidate, I selected four buzzer accounts (@MarcellaAlaman1, @Anyaledian, @MelisaNelva, @EllisSutisna) and downloaded all tweets that they shared, resulting in many more tweets ($N = 429$). The tweets had very little interaction with other accounts.

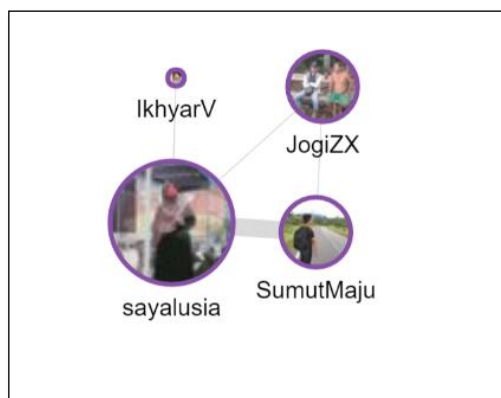


Figure 62 Low coordinated behaviour attacking incumbent

(The colour indicates similarity in content sharing; bigger node means higher number of co-sharing the node has. The edge represents a form of co-sharing.)
(Source: Twitter data analysis with CoorTweet)

Contrary to the incumbent, coordinated behaviour attacking the challenger in Medan mayoral election was strong despite the limited number of hashtags produced. The coordinated behaviour was organized through co-sharing of retweets and hashtags. Analysing 5,087 tweets showed that there were 603 accounts that tweeted together the same retweet at least 1 time within 25 seconds of each other, creating 7 networks of coordination groups. To detect a higher level of coordination, the parameters of time distance and number of same contents being shared were increased. For example, analysing the same number of tweets ($N = 5,087$), by setting the time distance between retweets to 100 seconds with the number of contents co-retweeted being 2 resulted in 95 coordinated accounts spreading in 7 groups (Figure 63). To detect further levels of coordination, the frequency of same retweets by each account was set into at least 2 times, and the time interval to 25 minutes, resulting in 12 coordinated users of 4 networks of coordination (Figure 64).

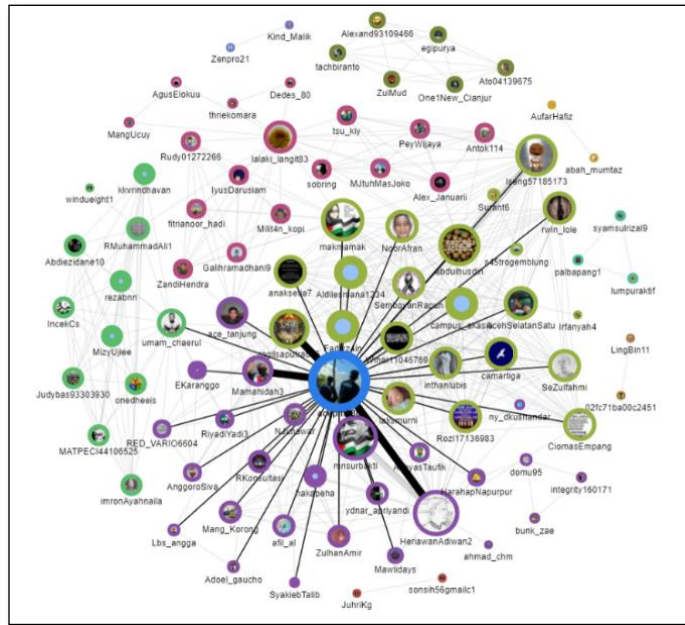


Figure 63 Coordinated retweet of attack messages against challenger

(The colour indicates similarity in content sharing; bigger node means higher number of co-sharing the node has. The edge represents a form of co-sharing; thicker edge/line indicates higher number of co-sharing between the nodes)
(Source: Twitter data analysis with CoorTweet)

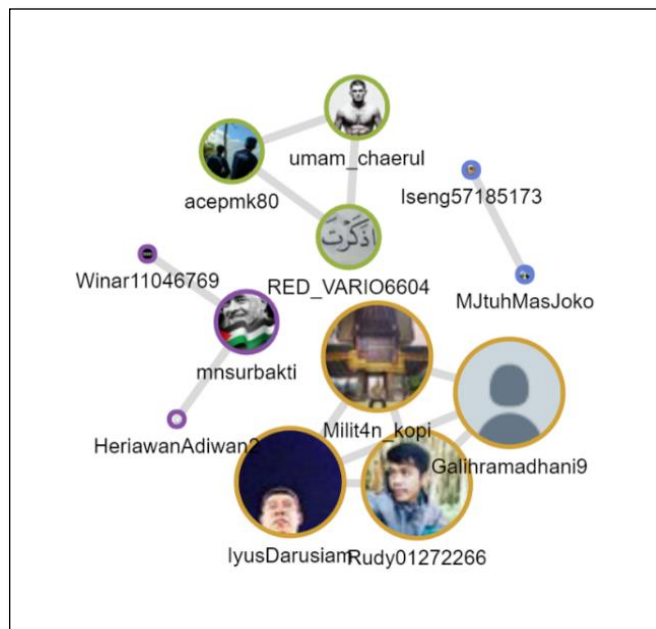


Figure 64 Selected Coordinated retweet of attack messages against challenger

(The colour indicates similarity in content sharing; bigger node means higher number of co-sharing the node has. The edge represents a form of co-sharing; thicker edge/line indicates higher number of co-sharing between the nodes)
(Source: Twitter data analysis with CoorTweet)

The last example of evidence of coordinated behaviour attacking the incumbent candidate in the Medan election was the co-sharing of hashtags. Analysis of the same dataset ($N = 5,087$) resulted in users who tweeted together the same hashtag at least 1 time within 100 seconds of each other being 51 in a single network of coordination, which indicated the strength of the coordination (Figure 65). By shortening the time distance of tweeting, the result showed a stronger coordination between key buzzer accounts staging the attacks (Figure 66).

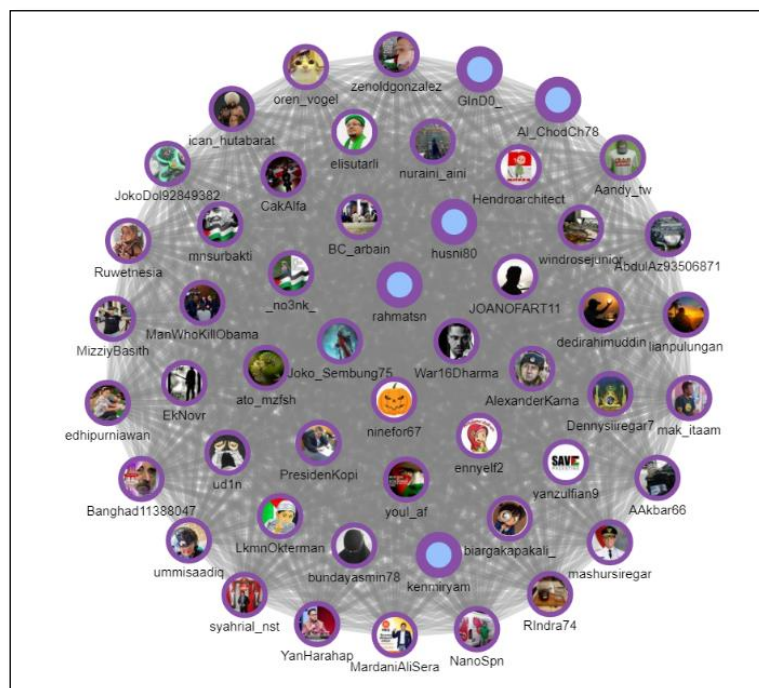


Figure 65 Coordinated sharing of hashtag attacking challenger

(The colour indicates similarity in content sharing; bigger node means higher number of co-sharing the node has. The edge represents a form of co-sharing; thicker edge/line indicates higher number of co-sharing between the nodes)

(Source: Twitter data analysis with CoorTweet)

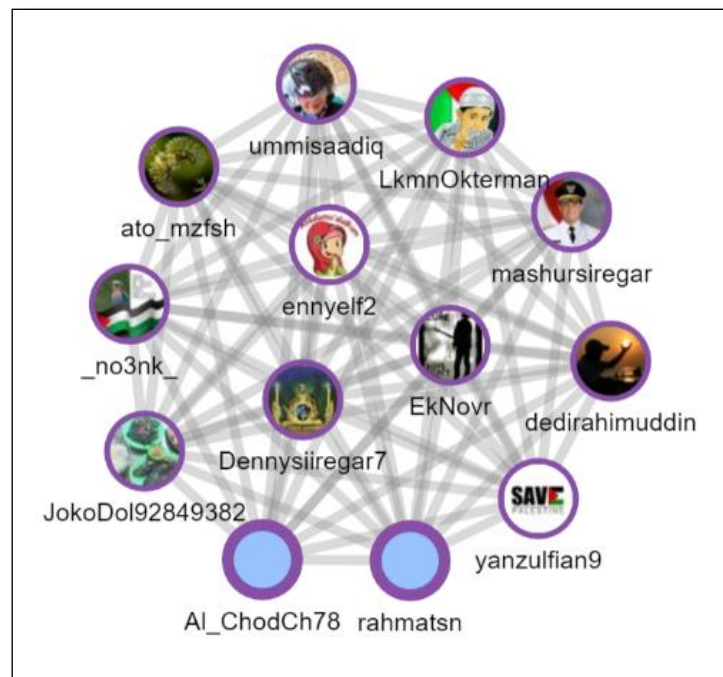


Figure 66 Stronger coordinated sharing of hashtag attacking challenger

(The colour indicates similarity in content sharing; bigger node means higher number of co-sharing the node has. The edge represents a form of co-sharing; thicker edge/line indicates higher number of co-sharing between the nodes)
(Source: Twitter data analysis with CoorTweet)

Negative campaigning against both candidates in the Medan election was uneven. On one hand, the challenger candidate was massively attacked on Twitter through strong coordinated behaviour using both fake and authentic accounts. Importantly, political influencers related to two political parties, PKS and the Democrat party, played a central role in the attack against challengers by tweeting negative hashtags and then these being retweeted by their massive numbers of followers on Twitter. On the other hand, the computational attack against the incumbent was weak and indicated barely any coordination despite the use of fake accounts and many negative hashtags. The flow of this attack was driven by fragmented buzzers without any significant retweets from other buzzers and supporting partisan elites. This may be explained by the political supporters of the candidates. Incumbent candidates were supported by active and savvy internet user politicians, such as PKS and Democrat party, whereas challenger candidates were nominated by the party with less active members on social media.

5.2.2. Narratives of negative campaigning in Medan

In this section, I analyse the narratives of negative campaigning staged against candidates in Medan. This qualitative analysis was mainly based on Twitter data supported by examples with Facebook posts, blog articles, and online news outlets covering the elections. I identified hashtags, keywords, and recurring issues to generate the main attack messages and key negative narratives as well as the corresponding methods of attacks in the negative campaigning. Negative campaigning at the 2020 Medan election was constituted of attack messages using hashtags on social media platforms driven by buzzers and political influencers. To scale the attack messages, 12 recurrent negative hashtags against the incumbent were collected, Akhyar-Salman, and 2 negative hashtags against the challenger, Bobby-Aulia, (see Table 10) used between 1 August – 9 December 2020. The number of hashtags selected was based on both manual and repeated automatic identification of the negative hashtags.

Following the above data collection process, the findings showed that both candidates received harsh attacks from anonymous accounts, but over different issues. Akhyar Nasution became a target of his handling floods and waste, whereas Bobby Nasution become a target focusing on his alleged dynastic relation with the president.

I focus on three key attack messages against Akhyar to unveil the unifying narratives of the negative campaign against the incumbent. First, chaotic flood management. The most consistent message of attacks against Akhyar was the handling of flooding in Medan, questioning his leadership capacity. For example, an anonymous account created in October 2020 shared an attack message saying, "Not only a failure, but also a total failure. #AkhyarDamaged #MedanFlood. Go to the party instead!!,"⁷⁸⁷ attaching a link into a news report where Bobby Nasution criticised the incumbent leadership in handling flooding with other local administrations. Another similar message of attack sent by @sayalusia using the same hashtag but with a visual element of two pictures showed Akhyar Nasution in the middle of an event greeting attendees. The tweet was, "Medan was flooded with casualties. But he went to a party. Is that how you want to be mayor of Medan? #MedanFlood#AkhyarDamaged."⁷⁸⁸

Table 10 Negative and positive hashtags on the candidates

Candidates	Negative hashtags	Positive hashtags

⁷⁸⁷ Sumut Maju! (@SumutMaju), "Bukan gagal lagi, tapi Gagal Total. #AkhyarRusak #banjirmedan Pergi pula ke pesta!!," 5 December, 2020, <https://twitter.com/SumutMaju/status/1335160408894795776>.

⁷⁸⁸ Lusya Rahma (@sayalusia), "Medan banjir sampai ada korban jiwa. Dia malah pergi kepesta. Kayak gitu mau jadi walikota Medan? #BanjirMedan #AkhyarRusak," 5 December, 2020, <https://twitter.com/sayalusia/status/1335020261410652160>.

Akhyar	#AkhyarTidakBerguna	#MedanAMAN
Nasution -	#TolakAkhyarMemimpin	#AMANMedanKali
Salman	#AkhyarGagal	#MedanCantikBerkarakter
Alfarisi	#AkhyarOut	#CoblosPecinya
	#AkhyarRusak	#No1CoblosPecinya
	#AkhyarGaBecusBanget	#UntukMedanSatu
	#MedanGakDiurusAkhyar	#2020TetapAMAN
	#AkhyarBanyakGayaHasilNol	#AMANNO1
	#MedanJelasTidakAMAN	#NyamanKotanyaBahagiaWarganya
	#AkhyarSalmanMainKotor	#AkhyarSalman
	#AkhyarPemimpinGagal	
	#JanjiBusukAkhyarSalman	
Bobby Afif	#MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan	#KolaborasiMedanBerkah
Nasution -	#KalahkanMenantu	#BobbyAulia
Aulia		#BobbyAuliaSolusiMedan
Rachman		#BobbyAuliaPilihanTepat
		#MedanBerkah
		#BobbyAuliaHarapanBaru
		#MedanBeridentitas
		#MedanInovatif
		#MedanKondusif
		#MedanBebasKorupsi
		#BobbyAuliaRombakMedan
		#BobbyAuliaBenahiMedan
		#BobbyAuliaMedanMaju

(Source: Twitter data analysis with text mining)

The second was bad waste management. The most visible message of attack on the issue of flooding contains memes ridiculing the incumbent candidate said, "Claiming to be the greatest in Medan, but the handling flood and waste by Akhyar is still messy. #Medan #AkhyarLotsofstyleZeroResult."⁷⁸⁹ This tweet was tweeted by four buzzer accounts on 10 November 2020, namely @MelisaNelva, @MarcellaAlaman1, @EllisSutisna, and @Anyaledian. These four fake accounts seemed to belong to a single buzzer considering their

⁷⁸⁹ Ledian Anya (@Anyaledian), "NGAKU PALING HEBAT DI MEDAN, TAPI MASALAH BANJIR DAN PENANGANAN SAMPAH MASIH KACAU SI AKHYAR NGURUSNYA. #Medan #AkhyarBanyakGayaHasilNol," 10 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/Anyaledian/status/1325958684237729792>.

visible characteristics. They were all created in September 2020 at the beginning of the campaign period, had the same attack message contents, and showed a consistent use of female names with profile pictures of young female faces. There were also fragmented messages related to his emotional state or arrogance, campaign violations during the pandemic, campaign sponsors, cases of violence against children in Medan, and budget transparency. These attack messages followed similar elements of content as the above that targeted Akhyar Nasution, which suggests prior opposition research on the incumbent. Some examples of the attack messages can be seen in Figure 67 – 71.



Figure 67 Anti-Akhyar tweets

(Source: <https://twitter.com/Alfiansyahfahri>)



Figure 68 Anti-Akhyar tweets

(Source: <https://twitter.com/Alfiansyahfahri>)



Figure 69 Anti-Akhyar tweets

(Source: <https://twitter.com/Alfiansyahfahri>)



Figure 70 Anti-Akhyar tweets

(Source: <https://twitter.com/Alfiansyahfahri>)



Figure 71 Anti-Akhyar tweets

(Source: <https://twitter.com/Alfiansyahfahri>)

The third was corruption allegations. The attack message was based on the allegation of corruption with the MTQ program during Akhyar's term (figure on the right above).⁷⁹⁰ Related to campaign misconduct, Akhyar was also criticised for campaigning in mosques,⁷⁹¹ and he was accused of lying in publicizing that student organization bodies supported his candidacy.⁷⁹²

⁷⁹⁰ Lubis (@Alfiansyahfahri), "Dulu bg eldi juga jd Plt walikota., skrg bg akhyar juga Plt walkot., apa gak malu bg., ngapain lah abg paksain nyalon walikota., malah di usung oleh PKS si raja korupsi di Sumut, terutama medan.. Sadar bg.. Kasihan liat engkau nantinya

#DanaMTQdiKorupsi," 3 September, 2020, <https://twitter.com/Alfiansyahfahri/status/1301552301341945857>.

⁷⁹¹ Nakula (@03__nakula), "Gak usah kaget lah, siapakah yang di usung PKS pasti akan menggunakan isu SARA dan menggunakan Masjid, musholla, Majelis pengajian untuk alat kampanye.

Lalu menuduh lawan politik nya anti Islam, PKI atau Syi'ah.

Tenggelamkan Akhyar!!

Tenggelamkan PKS!!

#BobbyAuliaBenahiMedan," 13 October, 2020, https://twitter.com/03__nakula/status/1315980650277560322.

⁷⁹² Lima8Satu (@Lima8Satu), "Pendukung Akhyar nyatut Logo.

Setelah PMII Sumut, giliran Gerakan Mahasiswa Kristen Indonesia (GMKI) Medan yang berang atas pencatutan logo organisasi mereka di flyer kegiatan deklarasi dukungan Ekspone Cipayung Plus Kota Medan. #CintaDiMedan

<http://jarrakpossumut.com/2020/10/05/logo-organisasinya-dicatat-di-flyer-dukungan-akhyar-gmki-kami-tak-kenal-ekspone-cipayung-plus-kota-medan/>," 6 October, 2020, <https://twitter.com/Lima8Satu/status/1313448556863217665>.

Taking all the attack messages against Akhyar into account, the central negative narratives that opponents intended to impress on voters were that Akhyar as incumbent candidate was an incompetent and irresponsible or failed leader by employing the method of ridicule and labelling through personification of problems.

On the other hand, the challenger candidate Bobby Nasution was consistently attacked on the issue of political dynasty given his relation to the ruling president. Campaign actors who staged the attack were both anonymous, coming via some tweets but mostly retweets. However, these were real accounts operated by Jakarta politicians supporting the incumbent candidate, demonstrating that attack campaigns against the challenger were stronger and highly coordinated on Twitter. Attack messages were first shared by key influencers and reshared by a huge number of buzzers. Analysing two prominent hashtags, #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan and #KalahkanMenantu, from 1 August 2020 – 9 September 2020, returned at least 5,087 tweets/retweets (Figure 72).

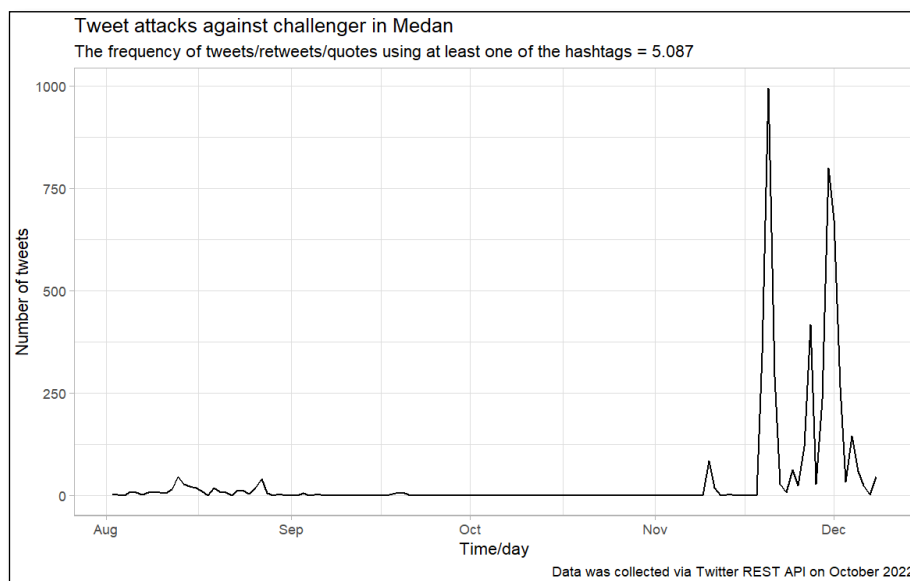


Figure 72 Attack campaign against challenger on Twitter

(Source: Tweets dataset analysis by author)

There was only one key narrative used against Bobby, that of the political dynasty. The key actor who attacked Bobby was PKS politician influencer, Mardani Ali Sera, on 19 November 2020 with a message: “Where's the son of Medan? 🤔 #JokowiSon-in-lawCanBedefeated,” which

received 412 retweets, 80 quote tweets, and 2.543 likes (Figure 73).⁷⁹³ Looking at the meme design, the PKS politician seemed to be trying to duplicate his strategy in creating the #2019GantiPresident in 2018. Another high engagement tweet by Mardani boosting #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan appealed to the religious community in Medan and critics of the Omnibus Law enacted by the government, which received 101 retweets, 14 quote tweets, and 1,025 likes on 10 November 2020 (Figure 74).⁷⁹⁴



Figure 73 Attack on challenger from national politician

(Source: <https://twitter.com/MardaniAliSera>)

⁷⁹³ Mardani Ali Sera (@MardaniAliSera), "Anak Medan mana suaranya? #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan," 19 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/MardaniAliSera/status/1329361254142550019>.

⁷⁹⁴ Mardani Ali Sera (@MardaniAliSera), "Dukungan terus mengalir dari masyarakat yang menamakan dirinya masyarakat menolak omnibus law, dukungan deras juga dari forum keumatan dan komunitas-komunitas yang ada di Medan. InsyaAllah menantu Jokowi bisa dikalahkan. #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan," 10 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/MardaniAliSera/status/1326104131140907009>.



Figure 74 Attack on challenger from national politician

(Source: <https://twitter.com/MardaniAliSera>)

There is strong evidence that attacks against Bobby on Twitter were supported by Jakarta elite politicians and partisan influencers. For example, an authentic account tweet made by @DonAdam98 stated, "Come on, my friends in Medan, keep it up and improve the results of our votes! #JokowiSon-in-lawCanbedefeated,"⁷⁹⁵ referring to a news report on a survey released by Roda Tiga Konsultan (Figure 75),⁷⁹⁶ which received 579 retweets, 69 quote tweets, and 3,487 likes. @DonAdam98 had 196,000 followers by the end of 2022 and was a key political influencer.

⁷⁹⁵ Don Adam (@DonAdam68), "Ayo kawan2ku Anak Medan, pertahankan dan tingkatkan hasil suara kita! #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan," 20 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/DonAdam68/status/1329760027016499200>.

⁷⁹⁶ "Survei Roda Tiga: Akhyar-Salman Kalahkan Menantu Presiden Di Pilkada Kota Medan," rmol.id, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://nusanantara.rmol.id/read/2020/11/20/462154/Survei-Roda-Tiga-Akhyar-Salman-Kalahkan-Menantu-Presiden-Di-Pilkada-Kota-Medan->.



Figure 75 Attack on challenger from national politician influencer

(Source: <https://twitter.com/DonAdam68/>)

Another party-affiliated influencer, Syahril Nasution, tweeted using the testimony of a political pundit, Rocky Gerung, denouncing the extension of the political dynasty from Jakarta into local politics (Figure 76).⁷⁹⁷ A similar use of testimony from religious figure Abdul Somad was tweeted by Mardani using the same hashtag #JokowiSon-in-lawCanbedefeated. He added a new tweet saying, "We pray that Medan will become a witness to the history of the people's victory against oligarchs and dynasties of the central government. #JokowiSon-in-lawCanbedefeated (Figure 77)."⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁷ syahril nasution (@syahril_nst), "Rocky Gerung: saya 2 hari di Medan utk menghalangi oligarki Jakarta masuk ke sini demi kepentingan politik dinasti. Saya akan memerdekakan pilihan millenials di Medan #menantujokowibisadikalahkan

#MedanAMAN
@nasution_lokot
@AndiArief__
@DonAdam68
@panca66

@PresidenKopi," 27 November, 2020, https://twitter.com/syahril_nst/status/1332167614152409090.

⁷⁹⁸ Mardani Ali Sera (@MardaniAliSera), "Kita doakan agar Medan menjadi saksi sejarah kemenangan rakyat melawan oligarki dan dinasti kekuasaan pusat. #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan #AMANMedanKali," 30 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/MardaniAliSera/status/133324673972444674>.



Figure 76 The role of national influencers in attacking challenger

(Sources: @syahril_nst and @MardaniAliSera)



Figure 77 The role of national influencers in attacking challenger

(Sources: @syahril_nst and @MardaniAliSera)

Abdul Somad was a popular Muslim preacher who became an influential public figure in Islamic teaching because of his down-to-earth approach in sermons which was often mixed with comedy and aired beyond conventional media, particularly on YouTube.⁷⁹⁹ He was known for his controversial statements related to prohibitions in Islamic teaching, which saw him denied entry to several countries, like Singapore, Hongkong, and others.⁸⁰⁰ Because of his public influence, he was often approached by political candidates for endorsements, like Prabowo Subianto in the 2019 election.⁸⁰¹ Rocky Gerung was a popular political pundit and philosophy lecturer who tended to be critical towards the ruling government and political establishment. Although not belonging to any political party, he was seen as a critic of Joko Widodo's two administrations. His upfront argumentative stance attracted viewers on national television shows.

The findings showed that the attack campaign against Bobby was intended to promote a negative narrative towards the challenger as part of the political establishment. The overarching narrative was that political dynasty is corrupt and bad for democracy. Hence, the key method used to attack Bobby was identification by associating the target (Bobby) with figures who were depicted as causing problems (i.e., the president). There was a solid collaboration between PKS and the Democrat party's elites on social media attacking Bobby, which would later be highly amplified (retweeted) by buzzers. The systematic mobilization of the Jakarta-based influencers by the incumbent against the challenger explained the normalization of negative campaigning by actors and mechanisms at the local election. However, despite the strongly coordinated campaigning on Twitter and high engagement of #MenantuPresidentBisaDikalahkan, it may not have been emotionally related to the majority of voters in Medan because of the proximity of the candidate himself to voters and the real issues faced by them.

To conclude this section, in Medan, attack messages against candidates revolved around leadership attacks in solving lingering city problems against the incumbent and dynasty politics against the challenger on social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. There were no messages on ethnicity and religious issues against the two candidates. This anomaly may be driven by the similar ethnic and religious identities of the two mayoral

⁷⁹⁹ Puji Rianto, "A preacher says Starbucks customers will go to the hell – the rise of Indonesia's new generation of preachers?," *The Conversation*, [theconversation.com](https://theconversation.com/a-preacher-says-starbucks-customers-will-go-to-the-hell-the-rise-of-indonesias-new-generation-of-preachers-95837), 2 May, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/a-preacher-says-starbucks-customers-will-go-to-the-hell-the-rise-of-indonesias-new-generation-of-preachers-95837>.

⁸⁰⁰ "5 Kontroversi Ustaz Somad yang Pernah Bikin Geger," *wartaekonomi.co.id*, 2019, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://wartaekonomi.co.id/read242261/5-kontroversi-ustaz-somad-yang-pernah-bikin-geger>.

⁸⁰¹ "Abdul Somad Dukung Prabowo, TKN Yakini Pemilih Tak Berpindah Reporter," *tempo.co*, 2019, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1195463/abdul-somad-dukung-prabowo-tnk-yakin-pemilih-tak-berpindah>.

candidates, Batak and Muslim. Attack messages and negative narratives used broad appeals that most local voters would agree with, such as flooding, waste issues, and political dynasty. Attacking opponents with negative religious and ethnic appeals may have been judged to cost the attacking candidate his own voter base.

The negative campaigning in Medan was driven by computational propaganda; however, of lower sophistication than in the national election. The new mechanics of negative campaigning also occurred through the underground operation of unofficial actors dominating the online discourse of the local election with the direct support of real political influencers online. Fake accounts (anonymity), negative messages, and repetitive contents, were dominant characteristics of the operation. The buzzer-dominated attacks against Akhyar Nasution on factual issues related to the daily lives of Medan citizens might have swayed the voters to turn to the challenger candidates, Bobby Nasution, who won the election.

5.3. The 2020 South Tangerang mayoral election

This section analyses negative campaigning in the 2020 South Tangerang mayoral election. The election was contested by three pairs of candidates. The first pair was Muhammad – Rahayu Saraswati D. Djojohadikusumo, nominated by PDIP, Gerindra, PSI, PAN, and supported by Hanura, Nasdem, Beringin, Perindo, Berkarya, and Garuda.⁸⁰² Rahayu was a former member of People's Representative Council from Gerindra, and a nephew of Prabowo Subianto. She was the only non-Muslim candidate in the election. The second pair was Siti Nur Azizah and Ruhamaben. Azizah was a daughter of Vice President Ma'ruf Amin and a member of the Democrat party. Her running mate Ruhamaben was deputy chairman of South Tangerang local council (2009-2014) and a member of the PKS party. This pair was nominated by PD, PKS, and PKB, supported by PKPI. The last pair of candidates was Benyamin Davnie and Pilar Saga Ichsan. Davnie was a two-term incumbent deputy mayor between 2011-2021. He had a long-time career as a civil servant in Tangerang since 1983. His running mate, Pilar Saga Ichsan was a businessman and a member of the Golkar party's local branch.⁸⁰³ Pilar inherited a long political dynasty, which may have contributed to his popularity. He was the son of Ratu Tatu Chasanah, incumbent regent of Serang regency (2016-2024) and cousin of former Vice Governor of Banten, Andika Hazrumy (2017-2022). Moreover, his aunts were also former two-term Governor of Banten (2007-2015), Ratu Atut Chosiyah, and outgoing mayor of South Tangerang Airin

⁸⁰² "Azizah-Ruhama," KPU, 2020, accessed 18 February, 2023, <https://sipangsi.id/profile-azizah-ruhama>.

⁸⁰³ "Benyamin-Pilar," KPU, 2020, accessed 18 February, 2023, <https://sipangsi.id/profile-benyamin-pilar>.

Rachmy Dian (2011-2016).⁸⁰⁴ Although, Golkar and PKB took separate paths in the election, they were still the two biggest supporting parties of Jokowi's government, PDIP and Gerindra nominated the same ticket.

The candidates formed and submitted their official campaign teams to the local election commission along with their campaign props and social media accounts, although some of the page links were broken when accessed or their web page was not available.⁸⁰⁵ The campaign team of Muhamad-Saraswati was led by Andra Soni with 86 other members.⁸⁰⁶ the campaign team of Azizah-Ruamaben was led by Irwan, who was deputy secretary general of the Democratic Party (PD) and member of Commission V of the DPR.⁸⁰⁷ The campaign actors in the South Tangerang election did not consist of a high number of grassroots volunteers, but instead were online buzzers and political influencers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Parties mobilized their top rank elites to campaign for their own candidates and key influencers to attack opponents at the same time. In South Tangerang, the presence of partisan influencers was also highly visible, particularly in supporting Saraswati, such as Guntur Romli, Rano Karno,⁸⁰⁸ Jaja Miharja, Andre Taulany, PSI party elites, and also in attacking her, such as Cipta Panca L (@panca66), Muhammad Said Didu (@msaid_didu), and others. In addition to these campaigners, other significant actors in the campaigning were the political consultants. According to a report, the success of Davnie-Pilar was attributed to the strategy employed by their political consultant from Indonesian Concept Research and Consulting based in South Tangerang.⁸⁰⁹

This section has shown that the three candidates at the 2020 South Tangerang election had direct personal and political relations with the national political elite. Their campaign teams were composed of successful teams registered to the KPU, Jakarta politicians, influencers, as well as social media buzzers. Negative campaigning was mostly carried out by political influencers and buzzers to attack and counterattack opponent candidates.

⁸⁰⁴ "Sejarah Trah Dinasti Ratu Atut Chosiah di Banten dan Peran Sang Ayah Chasan Sochib," suara.com, 2021, accessed 18 February, 2023, <https://banten.suara.com/read/2021/06/29/093055/sejarah-trah-dinasti-ratu-atut-chosiah-di-banten-dan-peran-sang-ayah-chasan-sochib?page=all>.

⁸⁰⁵ "Calon Walikota dan Calon Wali Kota Kota Tangerang Selatan," 2020, accessed 15 October, 2023, <https://sipangsi.id/info-paslon>.
⁸⁰⁶ "Daftar nama Tim Kampanye tingkat provinsi, kabupaten/kota, dan/atau kecamatan," KPU, 2020, accessed 15 October, 2023, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IDS-16a658xkUHeX6JDBUIE0nyAQ3A4u/view>.

⁸⁰⁷ "Azizah-Ruhama Tunjuk Irwan Jadi Ketua Tim Pemenangan," BeritaSatu, 2020, accessed 29 April, 2024, <https://www.beritasatu.com/news/673481/azizahruhama-tunjuk-irwan-jadi-ketua-tim-pemenangan>.

⁸⁰⁸ "Rano Karno Jadi Juru Kampanye Ponakan Prabowo di Tangsel," cnnindonesia.com, 2020, accessed 18 February, 2023, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20200925211756-32-551168/rano-karno-jadi-juru-kampanye-ponakan-prabowo-di-tangsel>.

⁸⁰⁹ , wartakota.tribunnews.com, 2021, accessed 29 April, 2024, <https://wartakota.tribunnews.com/2021/01/06/tim-pemenangan-benyamin-davnie-pilar-saga-ungkap-keberhasilan-memenangi-pilkada-kota-tangsel-2020?page=all>.

5.3.1. Computational attack in South Tangerang mayoral election

This section examines the mechanics of negative campaigning at the 2020 South Tangerang mayoral election through computational propaganda. Computational propaganda in South Tangerang was not as large-scale as that in Medan despite three pairs of candidates running in the election. However, key attack messages and negative narratives were far more uncivil and were disseminated on social media platforms, particularly Twitter, Facebook, and weblog. The challenger candidate was severely attacked on private and identity issues, but only the incumbent faced recurring negative hashtags on Twitter and Facebook, namely #DinastiMulaiPanik, #AntiDinastiAtut, and #PetahanaTangselGagal. And on Facebook, only the #DinastiMulaiPanik hashtag was used to spread negative messages on Facebook public groups, such as TANGSEL ONLINE with more than 27,000 members,⁸¹⁰ and SEPUTAR TANGSEL with more than 13,900 members.⁸¹¹

Anonymity was used in the South Tangerang election, despite the lack of coordinated actions. Buzzers created fake accounts to disseminate strong attack messages about opponent candidates, but it was more fragmented and without a notable pattern of coordinated behaviour of sharing on Twitter. The network graph below (Figure 78) shows that out of 106 tweets analysed there were only three accounts that tweeted together the same retweet (co-retweet) at least 1 time within 400 seconds of each other. Analysing the same tweets dataset above ($N = 106$) to detect a coordinating pattern in hashtags sharing resulted in only 4 accounts that tweeted together the same hashtag at least once within 400 seconds of each other. Specifically, the accounts that tweeted the same message (co-tweet), @Adeyuli16341691⁸¹² and @AbdulWa82135038,⁸¹³ seemed to be dedicated to the campaign created in September 2020. They also had either no followers or below 15 followers and had shared less than 20 tweets, indicating a typical characteristic of buzzer accounts. However, an account that retweeted concertedly (co-retweet), @Leonita_Lestari, was an authentic account with more than 200 tweets and more than 100,000 followers that joined Twitter in December 2019. The same was true with the @mahesatiwi⁸¹⁴ account with 6,000 followers and 30,000 tweets since joining Twitter in January 2018. However, the third account has been suspended by the platform or deleted by the operator. The last coordinated group of accounts was co-sharing of a hashtag (co-hashtag). The @dony_marhaen⁸¹⁵ account looked more like an authentic account but with

⁸¹⁰ Nabil Cahyo, 29 September, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/428342620617564/posts/3281199371998527/>.

⁸¹¹ Abdul Wahid, "#Dinastimulaipanik #MoneyPolitic #Sawer #PolitikUang," 5 October, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/802543756540212/posts/3197338700394027/>.

⁸¹² Adeyuliana (@Adeyuli16341691), 2020, <https://twitter.com/Adeyuli16341691>.

⁸¹³ Abdul Wahid (@AbdulWa82135038), 2020, <https://twitter.com/AbdulWa82135038>.

⁸¹⁴ MahesaTiwi (@mahesatiwi), 2020, <https://twitter.com/mahesatiwi>.

⁸¹⁵ Dony Marhaen (@dony_marhaen), 2020, https://twitter.com/dony_marhaen.

low activity, consisting of 86 followers and 211 tweets, and overall, the tweets related to other PDIP related figures, activities, and candidates, or attacking opposing candidates at the 2020 South Tangerang mayoral election, and it was established in November 2020. The next account, @Kebaika2Penebar, was also created in November 2020 with 17 followers and above 100 tweets. This inauthentic account tweeted and retweeted a greater number of attack messages against the incumbent but focused on public affairs issues facing the city or a lack of solution from the incumbent for problems such as health, education, and environment problems.⁸¹⁶ @KampretSuwe was also an inauthentic account despite its establishment in July 2013 with more than 1,000 tweets and 151 followers.⁸¹⁷ It shared messages similar to @Kebaik2Penebar's. The fourth account was suspended/deleted. The low performance of hashtag engagement may be attributed to the combination with neutral ones, too general, or inconsistent writing, such as #pilkadatangsel, #pilkada2020, #ben-pilar, #petahana, #dinastytangsel, #politikdinasty.⁸¹⁸



Figure 78 Low coordinated attacks against incumbent

⁸¹⁶ Penebar Kebaikan (@Kebaika2Penebar), 2020, <https://twitter.com/Kebaika2Penebar>.

⁸¹⁷ IJustWannaFly (@KampretSuwe), 2020, <https://twitter.com/KampretSuwe>.

⁸¹⁸ Nabilcahyo (@nabilcahyo), "Hei.. Malu dong,... awal menjabat angka kemiskinan d tangsel 1,33%, LALU sekarang di akhir masa jabatan cuma naik 1.76%. PADAHAL SUDAH 10 TAHUN BERKUASA Dimana hebat dan berhasilnya...? #pilkadatangsel #pilkada2020 #ben-pilar #petahana #dinastytangsel #politikdinasty," 1 September, 2020, <https://twitter.com/nabilcahyo/status/1300513269048696835>.

(The colour indicates similarity in content sharing; bigger node means higher number of co-sharing the node has. The edge represents a form of co-sharing; thicker edge/line indicates higher number of co-sharing between the nodes)
(Source: Twitter data analysis with CoorTweet)

Coordinated behaviour can also be seen in the creative production of memes that the buzzer accounts amplified against the incumbent. The following memes (Figure 79 – 82) were shared consistently by several fake accounts on Twitter, such as @KumpretSuwe, @reyhan08890193, @manto_maman, @Yanuar_Mamen, @gerobak78, and so on, altogether on 26 November 2020.



Figure 79 Anti-incumbent memes of coordinated tweets

(Source: Twitter)



Figure 80 Anti-incumbent memes of coordinated tweets

(Source: Twitter)



Figure 81 Anti-incumbent memes of coordinated tweets

(Source: Twitter)



Figure 82 Anti-incumbent memes of coordinated tweets

(Source: Twitter)

The computational propaganda was led by unofficial actors, mainly buzzers using real and fake accounts and political influencers using their own personal accounts. Although in South Tangerang computational attack was sporadic, the election saw nastier attack messages against challenger candidate over private and identity issues.

5.3.2. Narratives of negative campaigning

This section analyses the narratives of negative campaigning staged against candidates in South Tangerang. This qualitative analysis is mainly based on Twitter data, and supported by examples from Facebook posts, blog articles, and online news outlets covering the elections using the names and hashtags associated with the candidates (Table 11). Candidates used common campaign props, such as banners, billboards, posters, leaflets, brochures, and pamphlets.⁸¹⁹ Furthermore, televised debates became key campaign activities as voters could follow the program from their home compared with when candidates indirectly occasionally attacked each other. Regardless of this wide range of media, attack messages were spread on blog posts, banners, and social media using personal identity related issues.

⁸¹⁹ "Muhamad-Saraswati," KPU, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://sipangsi.id/profile-muhamad-saraswati>.

Table 11 Negative and positive hashtags on the candidates

Candidates	Negative hashtags	Positive hashtags
Muhammad – Rahayu Saraswati Djojohadikusumo		#MuhamadSaraswati #BerSatuUntukNKRI #SATUHatiLayaniTangsel #TangselUntukSemua #SatuUntukSemua #TangselPilihMuhamadSaras #MuhamadSarasMenangDebat #MuhamadSaraswatiSejahterakanTangsel #BerSATUmajukanTangsel #BerSATUmajubersama
Siti Nur Azizah – Ruhamaben		#PermataTangsel #AzizahRuhama #CoblosJilbabnya #HarapanBaruTangselMaju #GueDukungAzizahRuhama #02TangselMaju #TangselBebasKoruptor #TangselBebasDinastiKorup
Benyamin Davnie – Pilar Saga Ichsan	#DinastiMulaiPanik #AntiDinastiAtut #PetahanaTangselGagal	#SuaraGueBuatPilar #TangselPilihNomorTiga #BenyaminPilar #BenPilar #SolidaritasBenPilar #BenPilarMenang #TangselRumahKitaBersama #TangselRumahDanKotaKita #BenyaminPilarNomor3

(Source: Twitter data analysis with text mining)

Saraswati Rahayu, vice mayor candidate for the first pair, became the main target of attack messages by authentic and anonymous social media accounts. These attacks focused on identity issues related to gender, religion, character, and corruption issues. First, online harassment on social media related to women's bodies and pregnancy. An authentic Twitter account (@panca66) owned by Cipta Panca Laksana, Deputy for Issues and Narrative division

of Strategic Communications Agency of Democrat party,⁸²⁰ tweeted, “The thighs of the candidate for deputy mayor of South Tangerang are very smooth,” on Friday, September 4, 2020,⁸²¹ referring to a photo tweet by Rahayu Saraswati on the same day on her morning running exercise with friends.⁸²² The tweet was commented upon and retweeted by other accounts. Panca’s tweet was an identity-based attack that can be viewed as coming from the other challenger candidate because the Democrat party, of which Panca was a member, nominated its own candidate at the election, Siti Nur Azizah. Another gender-based attack was harassment over Rahayu’s pregnancy. A Facebook user posted a message saying, “Those who want to vote for the navel, please. The navel has been exposed. Do you deserve to be a role model, let alone the leader of South Tangerang??” with a tag of an old Instagram photo from Rahayu Saraswati’s pregnancy. The post was shared on a Facebook group called “South Tangerang Our Home and City.” The post created a fierce online attack between supporters of candidate 1 and 3 on Twitter and Facebook. Responding to the attack, a supporter of Saraswati and PSI politician countered the attack on her Twitter account arguing, “Sister @RahayuSaraswati, going around South Tangerang for campaigning on her programs. But this person is more interested in discussing navel? If pregnancy photos are used as a tool for harassment, the problem is the brain of the harasser. After flawless thighs, now prick navel. Candidates number 2 & 3 must discipline their supporters.”⁸²³

Second, attack on religious identity. In the early morning of voting day on 9 December 2020, a tweet from an authentic Twitter account posted a meme of complete pictures and biographies of the three candidates, including their religions and educations that received more than 8,000 engagements in a short period of time. It was the design of the banner itself that exploited religious sentiment, which suggested religion was more important than education and that one religion was different from the others. The message goes “Bigger is the size of the religious font than the education” (Figure 83).⁸²⁴ The tweet tried to bring to the attention of the viewers that of all candidates there was only one candidate who had a different religion, Rahayu Saraswati, who was a Christian. There was also a religion-based attack on candidate 1 shared on an Islamic

⁸²⁰ “Panca dan Ferdinand Jadi Pengurus DPP Partai Demokrat,” *republika.co.id*, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/q8wvf0484/panca-dan-ferdinand-jadi-pengurus-dpp-partai-demokrat>.

⁸²¹ “Minta Maaf, Kader Demokrat Hapus Cuitan Paha Mulus Ponakan Prabowo,” *sindonews.com*, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://nasional.sindonews.com/read/156524/12/minta-maaf-kader-demokrat-hapus-cuitan-paha-mulus-ponakan-prabowo-1599455383>.

⁸²² “Calon Wakil Walikota Tangsel Pamer Paha Mulus, Dikomentari Malah Baper,” *radaraktual.com*, 2020, accessed 10 December, 2021, <https://radaraktual.com/46472/calon-wakil-walikota-tangsel-pamer-paha-mulus-dikomentari-malah-baper.html>.

⁸²³ Tsamara Amany (@TsamaraDKI), “Mbak @RahayuSaraswati keliling Tangsel kampanye program. Dan orang ini lebih tertarik membahas udel? Kalau foto kehamilan dijadikan alat pelecehan, yang bermasalah pasti otak pelaku pelecehan. Setelah paha mulus, kini coblos udel. Kandidat no 2 & 3 harus tertibkan pendukungnya,” 24 October, 2020, <https://twitter.com/TsamaraDKI/status/1319970514262163457>.

⁸²⁴ Alderina (@alderina), “Gedeane font agamanya dari pada pendidikannya,” 9 December, 2020, <https://twitter.com/alderina/status/1336477903932911617>.

study WhatsApp group by the head of Benda Baru village, Saidun, on 6 September 2020. The message he shared contained photos and profiles of the three candidates and was followed by a comment about a suggestion from his Koran teacher where he alluded to a religion that was considered a big enemy of Muslims.⁸²⁵ Another religion-based attack on the Muhamad-Rahayu Saraswati pair was also spread on banners. An anonymous banner making out that it was published by the official campaign of the candidate appeared around the neighbourhood where most residents were supporters of the Muhamad-Rahayu Saraswati pair. This banner was viewed as a retaliation to a previous banner installed by a candidate's official campaign promising to oust corrupters in the current local political system if they won. The anonymous banner read, "We, Sheep of God, Fully Support Candidate No. 1," which was interpreted by the pair's campaign team as a provocative attack to divide the society and argued that candidates 1 embraced a multicultural society of South Tangerang and did not promote a certain race, religion, ethnic, or social status only. Guntur Romli of PSI and a key influencer for the pair accused the attack as being staged by opponents who were panic-driven due to the previous "Corrupters flee" banner.⁸²⁶



⁸²⁵ "Lurah Goreng Isu Agama di Pilkada Tangsel, Percakapan WhatsApp Bocor," suara.com, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://jakarta.suara.com/read/2020/10/05/172315/lurah-goreng-isu-agama-di-pilkada-tangsel-percakapan-whatsapp-bocor?page=all>.

⁸²⁶ "Guntur Romli: Kampanye Hitam di Tangerang Selatan," tagar.id, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://www.tagar.id/guntur-romli-kampanye-hitam-di-tangerang-selatan>.

Figure 83 An evocative banner on candidate's religious identity

(Source: twitter.com/alderina)

Third, the corruption issue. Rahayu Saraswati was attacked over an indirect corruption case related to the elite of her political party, Edhy Prabowo, a former close ally of Prabowo Subianto at the party. Edhy was the first minister caught up in corruption cases by the KPK in the case of the alleged receipt of gifts or promises related to permits for ponds, business, or the management of fisheries or other similar aquatic commodities in 2020.⁸²⁷ For example, an anonymous account shared, "Lobster Corruption, Prabowo's Nephew Saraswati Allegedly Involved. The alleged involvement of the South Tangerang deputy mayoral candidate, Rahayu Saraswati Djojohadikusumo, in the lobster seed export corruption case had emerged,"⁸²⁸ accompanied by a link to a news article entitled, "Lobster Corruption, Prabowo's Nephew Saraswati Allegedly Involved," posted on rri.co.id.⁸²⁹ The anonymous account (@RaisaTjokrodnta) also shared tweets that were promoting the activities and politicians of the party but criticised the policies of the incumbent president.

Fourth, authoritarianism. A less visible attack was spread on Facebook criticizing the steps that Rahayu was taking to report her harassers on social media. The post questioned all credentials that she alluded to as being a champion of emancipation for women, open minded, a defender of human rights, and so on, as covered in various news reports (see Figure 84). The exact same attack message was posted also on nine Facebook groups by the same account (Arinda Larazatti Meutia), namely "TANGSEL RUMAH DAN KOTA KITA", "PAMULANG BERSATU", "PONDOK AREN TANGERANG SELATAN", "TANGSEL RAYA", "TANGSEL BANGET", "JK Ben-Pilar", "LASKAR ANGREK", "PEDULI TATA RUANG TANGSEL", and "KLIKSAJATANGSEL." At the end of the Facebook post it rails,

If she is open minded, how come she doesn't accept differences? There are residents who have different opinions about modesty in dress, why are they

⁸²⁷ "Perjalanan Kasus Korupsi Edhy Prabowo: Divonis 5 Tahun Penjara, Diperberat 9 Tahun, lalu Dipangkas MA," [kompas.com](https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2022/03/10/12170681/perjalanan-kasus-korupsi-edhy-prabowo-divonis-5-tahun-penjara-diperberat-9), 2022, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2022/03/10/12170681/perjalanan-kasus-korupsi-edhy-prabowo-divonis-5-tahun-penjara-diperberat-9>.

⁸²⁸ Raisa Tjokrodinata (@RaisaTjokrodnta), "orupsi Lobster, Keponakan Prabowo Saraswati Diduga Terlibat. Dugaan keterlibatan Calon Wakil Wali Kota Tangerang Selatan (Wawalkot Tangsel), Rahayu Saraswati Djojohadikusumo, dalam kasus korupsi ekspor benih lobster mencuat. <https://m.rri.co.id/go/DuvWYki> lewat," 26 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/RaisaTjokrodnta/status/1331818546121240579>.

⁸²⁹ "Korupsi Lobster, Keponakan Prabowo Saraswati Diduga Terlibat," rri.co.id, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, https://web.archive.org/web/20201126043451/https://rri.co.id/nasional/hukum/935658/korupsi-lobster-keponakan-prabowo-saraswati-diduga-terlibat?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=external_link&utm_campaign=General%20Campaign.

even being threatened with iron bars? SHE SAYS HAS AN OPEN MIND? If you understand women's human rights, want to defend women's rights, campaign for it, then embrace the citizens to be educated about women's rights, not to be bullied by criminal threats. IF YOU CAN ONLY REPORT, DON'T BE A LEADER. BECOME AN ADMIN.⁸³⁰



Figure 84 Attack on female challenger candidate on various issues

(Source: www.facebook.com)

Fifth, pro-LGBT issue.⁸³¹ Saraswati was attacked and slandered as being pro-LGBT and people were urged to vote for other candidates. This fake news of the attack messages were published on a number of websites, such as www.kahyangan.net ("Waspada Figur Saraswati, LGBT Bisa

⁸³⁰ Arinda Larazatti Meutia, "Dikit-dikit lapor---DIKIT-DIKIT LAPOR!!!

1. Katanya Pinter soal HAM
2. Punya Pemikiran terbuka
3. Ngerti soal Hak Asasi Perempuan yang harus dikampanyekan.
1. Trus kalo pinter knp sbg pemimpin gak mau terjun buat kasih pendidikan ke calon warganya???
2. Kalo pemikirannya terbuka, kok bisa dia tidak terima perbedaan? ada warga berpendapat beda soal kesopanan berbusana, kok malah diancam jeruji besi? KATANYA PUNYA PIKIRAN TERBUKA?
3. Kalo paham Hak Asasi Perempuan, mau membela Hak Perempuan, kampanyekan dong, rangkul warga untuk dididik soal Hak perempuan, bukan dirundung ancaman pidana.
KALO CUMA BISA LAPOR, JANGAN JADI PEMIMPIN..
JADI ADMIN AJA.
SAYA HERAN...

BENERAN INI MAHA SAYA HERAN...", 12 November, 2020,
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=123327279553913&set=pb.100056299230655.-2207520000>.

⁸³¹ "Saraswati Pro LGBT dan Kontroversi, So Pilih Figur Lainnya Saja," liputan1.com, 2020, accessed 20 December, 2021,
<https://www.liputan1.com/2020/11/19/saraswati-pro-lgbt-dan-kontroversi-so-pilih-figur-lainnya-saja/>.

Tumbuh Subur di Tangsel”) which was viewed by more than a 1,000 time,⁸³² www.liputan1.com (“Saraswati Pro LGBT dan Kontroversi, So Pilih Figur Lainnya Saja”) (see Figure 85),⁸³³ www.grahanusantara.co.id (“Jadi Aktivis LGBT, Rahayu Saraswati di Komentari Warga Tangsel”),⁸³⁴ www.indonesiatravel.news (“Masih Yakin? Figur Pro LGBT Ala Saraswati Ideal Buat Pimpin Tangsel”).⁸³⁵ The website indonesiatravel.news had no information about its owner or organizer. It published more than 10,000 articles which contained a few political attacks. Strikingly, most of its articles were positive stories under two main categories, namely tourism (Pariwisata) and Ministry of Agriculture (Kementerian Pertanian).⁸³⁶ The same level of anonymous identity was seen at kahyangan.net despite having a more diverse categories of articles, from lifestyle to politics, to entertainment. However, there was a strong connection between the news articles of indonesiatravel.news and kahyangan.net as seen in its popular hashtag groups, such as #Mentan, #puslatan, #Kementan, #Syahrul Yasin Limpo, and others with positively toned articles. Contrarily, grahanusantara.co.id was far more transparent and legitimate. It was managed by PT. Media Graha Nusantara Sejahtera and published its complete editorial team and code of ethics.⁸³⁷ The blog covered the story more tactfully but still included a one-sided article.

⁸³² “Waspada Figur Saraswati, LGBT Bisa Tumbuh Subur di Tangsel,” kahyangan.net, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://kahyangan.net/kahyangannews/waspada-figur-saraswati-lgbt-bisa-tumbuh-subur-di-tangsel/>.

⁸³³ “Saraswati Pro LGBT dan Kontroversi, So Pilih Figur Lainnya Saja.”

⁸³⁴ “Jadi Aktivis LGBT, Rahayu Saraswati di Komentari Warga Tangsel,” grahanusantara.co.id, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://www.grahanusantara.co.id/5373/2020/08/12/jadi-aktivis-lgbt-rahayu-saraswati-di-komentari-warga-tangsel/>.

⁸³⁵ “Masih Yakin? Figur Pro LGBT Ala Saraswati Ideal Buat Pimpin Tangsel,” indonesiatravel.news, 2020, accessed 10 March, 2021, <https://www.indonesiatravel.news/indonews/masih-yakin-figur-pro-lgbt-ala-saraswati-ideal-buat-pimpin-tangsel/>.

⁸³⁶ “KATEGORI POPULER,” accessed 10 March, 2021, <https://www.indonesiatravel.news/>.

⁸³⁷ “Redaksional,” grahanusantara.co.id, 2022, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://www.grahanusantara.co.id/redaksional/>.



Figure 85 Anti-Saraswati blog article on LGBT issue

(Source: www.liputan1.com)

The strong attack messages against Rahayu Saraswati included several main topics which help us understand how normalization of negative campaigning in local elections operates. First, her political relations to the ruling administration through Prabowo Subianto as Minister of Defence and Edhy Prabowo, former Minister of Fishery.⁸³⁸ Second, her minority religion identity was a politically easy card to exploit because of the 89% majority of Muslim voters in South Tangerang. Third, her potential to challenge the incumbent was assessed from polling results released, which made her a necessary target of political campaigns by opponents who felt threatened. And the last factor was her being a woman. Most of the harsh attacks on her on social media were mainly related to her physical body and gender role as a mother, exemplifying the objectification of women in public spaces. Overall, the narratives of negative campaigning used

⁸³⁸ Edhy Prabowo, an executive member of Gerindra party, served as Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries at the cabinet of Jokowi-Amin until his arrest for corruption case in November 2020. He was found guilty of 25 billion in bribe in exchange for lobster export policy. "Supreme Court Reinstates Five-Year Sentence for Former Minister Edhy Prabowo," [jakartaglobe.id](https://jakartaglobe.id/news/supreme-court-reinstates-five-year-sentence-for-former-minister-edhy-prabowo), 2022, accessed 14 April 2023, 2023, <https://jakartaglobe.id/news/supreme-court-reinstates-five-year-sentence-for-former-minister-edhy-prabowo>.

against her portrayed her as a sexual object, an authoritarian leader, an enemy of Muslims, and a potentially corrupt leader.

Meanwhile, attack messages against the incumbent candidates were less hostile and smaller in scale (Figure 86). Buzzers attacked incumbents on Twitter with negative memes and hashtags #DinastiMulaiPanik, #AntiDinastiAtut, and #PetahanaTangselGAGAL. The attack hashtags were disseminated mostly by fake accounts. Although coordination was low, #PetahanaTangselGagal (#Tangsel'sIncumbentsFailed) had a significant engagement based on users and tweets. To show the coordinated behaviour of the attacks on Twitter, I disclose tweets, retweets, and hashtag forms of coordination based on a three hashtags dataset, namely coordinated retweet, tweet, and hashtags.

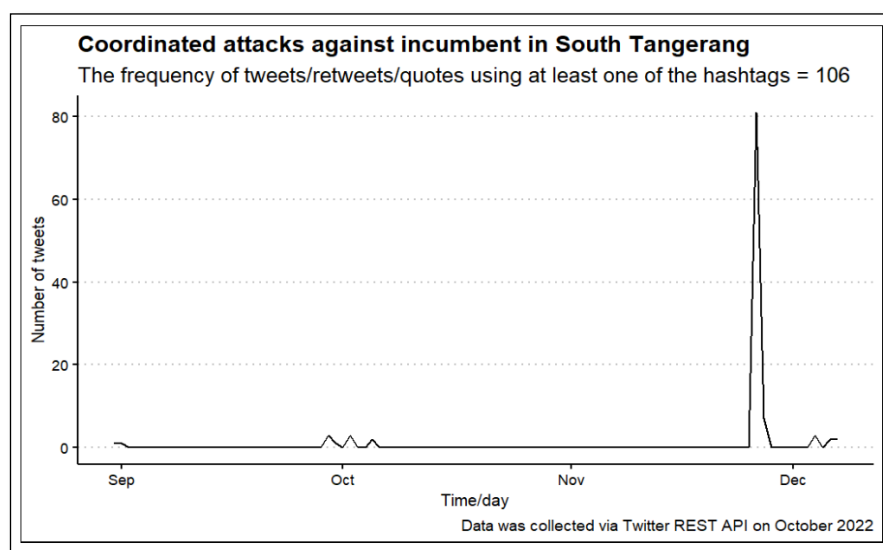


Figure 86 Attack campaign on incumbent candidate

(Source: Twitter data analysis with text mining)

Incumbent candidates also became targets of identity-related attack messages, confirming general convention in the literature. Incumbent candidate, Benyamin Davnie-Pilar Saga Ichsan, was attacked on the three key issues of polygamy, political dynasty, and money politics. First, as regards polygamy, a long banner was installed on the side of Jl. Pahlawan street in the East Ciputat subdistrict attacking the incumbent candidate, Benyamin Davnie, on the issue of polygamy (Figure 87). The banner read, "Mothers, do you really want to elect a polygamous candidate for mayor of South Tangerang?" and was authorized by the Indonesian Young Mama Forum (Mahmudi), which some argued to be a black campaign staged by the campaign team of

another candidate.⁸³⁹ This banner campaign attacked the incumbent candidate on an identity-related issue of its target, but it was not a black campaign message if the target was indeed polygamous. The banner was further shared on Facebook by Rizki Hadari with the message, “How you will take care of the citizens, if you have three wives. Thank God, those in my party who are fond of adding more wives have fled to form a new party” (Figure 88). The post was accompanied with a picture of Benyamin Davnie and three women by his side, and a screenshot of stories from a news blog entitled “Polygamy and Benyamin Davnie's steep steps in facing the South Tangerang Pilkada.”⁸⁴⁰ The news blog (<https://beritatujuh.net/>) was seen as being written outside due journalistic standard and posing partisan stories, suggesting that given the polygamy status of the candidate, voters in South Tangerang would find it very hard to vote for him and the party should have considered that.



Figure 87 Anti-polygamy banner on incumbent candidate

(Source: www.radarkotanews.com)

⁸³⁹ "Satpol PP Tangsel Copot Spanduk Provokasi, Pengamat Menduga Lawan Ben-Pilar Sudah Frustasi," radarkotanews.com, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://www.radarkotanews.com/satpol-pp-tangsel-copot-spanduk-provokasi-pengamat-menduga-lawan-ben-pilar-sudah-frustasi/>.

⁸⁴⁰ "Satpol PP Tangsel Copot Spanduk Provokasi, Pemerhati Pilkada Tangsel Duga Lawan Ben-Pilar Sudah Frustrasi," beritatangsel.com, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://beritatangsel.com/2020/10/17/satpol-pp-tangsel-copot-spanduk-provokasi-pemerhati-pilkada-tangsel-duga-lawan-ben-pilar-sudah-frustrasi/>.



Figure 88 Anti-incumbent tweets on polygamy issue

(Source: <https://beritatangsel.com>)

The second attack message against the pair was directed at Pilar on the issue of political dynasty. Given that the outdoor media were very much used in the campaigns, attacking opponents also commonly occurred on banners and was then shared on Twitter or Facebook. An indirect attack was directed towards the incumbent by one of the challengers, saying "Rahayu Saraswati, Vice Mayor candidate number 1. On 9 December 2020 vote number 1, corruptors will flee, flood free, and smooth traffic of South Tangerang."⁸⁴¹ The banner was installed behind the pavement of the main road in South Tangerang and was ripped by unknown perpetrators. Rahayu uploaded the video of the ripped banner on his personal Twitter account commenting, "There are mischievous hands that destroy the billboard 'Corruptor flee.' Don't they want #SouthTangerang to be free of corruption?"⁸⁴² followed by six self-promotion hashtags. To make the attack more directly, other users commented, including @ DianaAurora96 saying,

⁸⁴¹ "Baliho 'Koruptor Ngacir' Dirusak, Rahayu Saraswati: Ada yang Tidak Ingin Tangsel Bersih dari Korupsi," *suaraislam.co*, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://www.suaraislam.co/baliho-koruptor-ngacir-dirusak-rahayu-saraswati-ada-yang-tidak-ingin-tangsel-bersih-dari-korupsi/>.

⁸⁴² Rahayu Saraswati (@RahayuSaraswati), "Ada tangan-tangan jahil yang merusak baliho 'Koruptor Ngacir', apakah mereka tidak ingin #Tangsel bebas korupsi? #MuhamadSaraswati #RahayuSaraswati #TangseluntukSemua #TangseLancar #SatuUntukSemua #BerSATUmajubersama," 16 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/RahayuSaraswati/status/1328320221963194368>.

“Free South Tangerang from the influence of the Atut Dynasty!!”⁸⁴³ The spokesperson of the incumbent candidate, Reza Ahmad, argued that the attack campaign against his candidates was caused by the consistent increase of electability as voting day was nearing.⁸⁴⁴

The third issue relates to corruption; in deprecating the incumbent, concerted attacks on Twitter were directed at Benyamin Davnie-Pilar by associating their candidacy with corruption cases involving elite members of their supporting political parties, implying that they would also end up committing corruption (Figure 89 – 91). One of the tweets stated, “The apple never falls from its tree, if leaders are committed corruption certainly lower ranks will follow too. Let's stop corruption in South Tangerang by not voting for BENYAMIN DAVNIE AND PILAR. #TangselIncumbentFailed.”⁸⁴⁵

⁸⁴³ Diana Aurora (@DianaAurora96), “Bebaskan Tangsel dari pengaruh Dinasti Atut!!,” 16 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/DianaAurora96/status/1328321593315975168>.

⁸⁴⁴ “Pilkada Tangsel, Timses Benpilar Sesalkan Strategi Kampanye Hitam,” wartanasional.com, 2020, accessed 18 March, 2023, <https://www.wartanasional.com/politik/pr-3902793530/pilkada-tangsel-timses-benpilar-sesalkan-strategi-kampanye-hitam>.

⁸⁴⁵ Putri Tangsel (@reyhan08890193), “Buah tidak pernah jatuh dari pohonnya kalau sudah jelas korupsi pasti ke bawahnya bakalan korupsi mari kita stop korupsi di tangsel dengan tidak memilih BENYAMIN DAVNIE DAN PILAR,” 26 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/reghan08890193/status/1331917196835004421>.; Putri Tangsel (@reyhan08890193), “Sudah jelas terbukti partai yg di usung benpilar banyak terjerit kasus Korupsi #PetahanaTangselGagal,” 26 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/reghan08890193/status/1331917964669452289>.; Putri Tangsel (@reyhan08890193), “Kader partainya aja ogah dukung benpilar karna kasus korupsi di TANGSEL #PetahanaTangselGagal,” 26 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/reghan08890193/status/1331917613832699905>.



Figure 89 Attack against incumbent on corruption issues

(Source: <https://twitter.com/reyhan08890193>)



Figure 90 Attack against incumbent on corruption issues

(Source: <https://twitter.com/reyhan08890193>)



Figure 91 Attack against incumbent on corruption issues

(Source: <https://twitter.com/reghan08890193>)

The fourth attack message on the incumbent related to money politics; an anonymous account on Twitter ([@elpanjullo](https://twitter.com/elpanjullo)) attacked the incumbent, saying, “Money politics and fraud have started to be played by Benyamin-Pilar’s supporters in the 2020 South Tangerang election. It’s already difficult, right? The supporters of the Atut political dynasty are in the habit of playing underhanded and money politics,” using Sundanese dialect and mentioning other supporter accounts.⁸⁴⁶ The tweet also included a meme, with the header, “Beware of cheating by Benyamin-Pilar’s supporters. Someone has already been tried for money politics” Figure 92). A local court found a suspect guilty and sentenced them to three years imprisonment for distributing and promising money for voters who would vote for candidate number 3.⁸⁴⁷

⁸⁴⁶ Gus Jul (@elpanjullo), “Politik Uang dan Kecurangan dah mulai dimainkan oleh pendukung Benyamin-Pilar di Pilkada Tangsel 2020. Emang dah susah ye pendukung dinasti politik Atut kebiasaan bermain curang dan politik uang. Gedeg aye lihatnye! @Rizmaya_ @AnakLolina2 @eLHurryKoRn @arjuno_ireng01 @triwul82,” 30 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/elpanjullo/status/1333275121285357568>.

⁸⁴⁷ “Kasus Politik Uang di Pilkada Tangsel, Seorang Aktivis Divonis 36 Bulan Penjara,” merdeka.com, 2020, accessed 11 March, 2023, <https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/kasus-politik-uang-di-pilkada-tangsel-seorang-aktivis-divonis-36-bulan-penjara.html>.



Figure 92 Money politics issues on incumbent candidate

(Source: <https://twitter.com/elpanjullo>)

There was no productive debate around the many factual problems and direct solutions offered by candidates. Although criticism towards the incumbents did address real issues, such as the unequal direct social assistance distribution during the COVID-19, the incompetent handling of waste, and limited health facilities, among others, the criticism was directed towards the character of the incumbent candidates rather than the policy or approaches. The incumbent also received attacks over their association with supporting political parties, particularly Golkar, that had some of their cadres implicated in corruption scandals, such as Airin and Idrus Marham. The key narratives of negative campaigning used against the incumbent were unfaithful man (polygamy), proponent of political dynasty that was corrupt and bad for democracy, and corrupt leader.

The key messages of negative campaigning at the 2020 mayoral election in South Tangerang revolved around personal and identity attacks. The narratives used to wage the attacks consisted of being an opponent of Islam, indecency, political dynasty, authoritarianism, and being a corrupt politician. The negative campaigning mobilized various methods of attack, such as labelling (polygamy), ridicule (verbal harassment), identification, and association (political dynasty) and was staged by mostly unofficial campaigns on social media and outdoor media. The pattern of attacks indicated that there were three key factors affecting the attack campaigns. The first was incumbency status. Incumbent Benyamin-Pilar by general convention was the

target of attacks by opponents so as to persuade voters they were different from the current leaders and to say how they differed. However, incumbents could also attack as equally as challengers when the stakes were high due to decreasing electability. The second was polling position. Pre-election survey results showed that there was a small margin between challenger Muhamad-Saraswati and the incumbent, which made a good opportunity for the challenger to push their campaign a bit more to get ahead in the poll. Also, when the gap or margin between the challenger and another contestant is small, there is an electoral incentive for going negative, especially close to the voting day. Indikator Politik Indonesia released the pre-election survey results at first in August 2020, where Muhamad-Saras got 18.1%, 26.7%, in September, and 36.2% in October, defeating the incumbent at 33.1%.⁸⁴⁸ The third was the personal and political characteristics of challenger candidates in relation to national political alliances.

To conclude, in South Tangerang the strong issues were religious sentiment, gender, and polygamy, in addition to dynasty, corruption, and money politics. Attacks were directed against the challenger because of her identity and political relationship with figures in national politics. These findings validate the normalization of negative campaigning in local elections by not only the actors and mechanics, but also by the messages, narratives, and methods of attack they employed in attacking opponents through computational propaganda.

Negative campaigning in the South Tangerang local election was defined by character attacks against candidates, either incumbent or challengers, particularly on identity issues in the local context. The negative campaigning, although adopting computational propaganda, did not use political bots in the social media campaigning. But the anonymity and coordinated behavior resembled the patterns of that of the 2019 national election despite the lack of sophistication. A potential challenger candidate with a high popularity tended to face more negative campaigning relative to the rest of the candidates, like that faced by Saraswati, which echoed literature on drivers of negative campaigning, that is, being a front runner made her a threat to her opponents during the campaign periods. As direct attacks from candidates could backfire, negative campaigning was carried out by mostly unofficial campaigning and partly underground. It may be the case that the electability of the first challenger candidate was affected by the sheer amount of the negative campaigning attacking Saraswati.

⁸⁴⁸ "Survei Indikator: Muhamad-Saras Unggul di Pilkada Tangsel," www.idntimes.com, 2020, accessed 11 March, 2023, <https://banten.idntimes.com/news/banten/muhammad-iqbal-15/survei-indikator-muhamad-saras-unggul-di-pilkada-tangsel?page=all..> The release of the surveys was widely publicized and covered by mainstream media.

5.4. The digital media system and negative campaigning at local politics

This section analyses the influence of the hybrid media system on negative campaigning at local elections. Disruptive digital media has paved the way for a hybrid media system which “is built upon interactions among older and newer media logics—where logics are defined as technologies, genres, norms, behaviours, and organizational forms—in the reflexively connected fields of media and politics.”⁸⁴⁹ In a hybrid media system, “Actors create, tap, or steer information flows in ways that suit their goals and in ways that modify, enable, or disable others’ agency, across and between a range of older and newer media settings.”⁸⁵⁰ The concept of hybridity in digital media has been explained in Chapter 4. Hybridity in local media contexts in Indonesia has clear ramifications for local elections. Scholars have shown that a concentration of media ownership tends to curb the diversity of viewpoints in Indonesian media,⁸⁵¹ including direct interventions within the contents and programs during election periods⁸⁵². A concentration of ownership overlaps with strong political alliances, which are made worse during elections with partisan coverage. In the digital era, through acquisitions and mergers, media conglomerates in Indonesia established a ‘digital oligarchy’ that did not only control national media outlets but also dominated local media both offline and online as a consequence of their market expansions.⁸⁵³ Furthermore, digitalization that allowed media convergence in Indonesia gave the opportunity for fortunes to be made by the larger media companies and made owners richer and more powerful in a political sense while stifling opportunities for smaller media to compete, meaning local media could not survive financially.⁸⁵⁴ Tapsell observed that media convergence in Indonesia followed two significant trends: first, convergence was shaped by oligarchical groups of media owners with direct political interests; second, even some social media platforms and citizen journalism were incorporated into the multiplatform mainstream media sites.⁸⁵⁵ The dot.com revolution in the news media system made geography become irrelevant, which meant national online news media outlets could become locally oriented at the same time given the unlimited online space to cover regions of interest to them. According to a recent observation, there were 11 digital media groups major online news sites in Indonesia namely: Kompas Gramedia Group, Detik Network, Kapanlagi Youniverse, Pikiran Rakyat Media Network, Arkadia

⁸⁴⁹ Andrew Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁸⁵⁰ Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*.

⁸⁵¹ Masduki and Leen D’Haenens, “Concentration of Media Ownership in Indonesia: A Setback for Viewpoint Diversity,” *International Journal of Communication* 16 (2022).

⁸⁵² Hellena Yoranita Souisa, “Broadcasting Paradox? A Study of Content Diversity and Ownership in Contemporary Indonesian Television” (PhD The University of Melbourne, 2020), <https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/items/4aed65be-1c82-53cd-9abb-bf78a45b2f36>.

⁸⁵³ Tapsell, *Media Power in Indonesia: Oligarchs, Citizens and the Digital Revolution*.

⁸⁵⁴ Ross Tapsell, “The political economy of digital media,” in *Digital Indonesia, Connectivity and Divergence*, ed. Edwin Jurriens and Ross Tapsell (Singapore: ISEAS, 2017).

⁸⁵⁵ Tapsell, “Platform convergence in Indonesia: Challenges and opportunities for media freedom.”

Digital Network, MNC, IDN Media, JPNN, GDP Venture (Jarum Group), Tempo Inti Media, and Mahaka Media. They all controlled prominent online news media in Indonesia.⁸⁵⁶ Partisan and highly concentrated media in the age of convergence was a powerful tool for cross-media political campaigning, but a great hindrance to local democracy because Jakarta-based elites were increasingly controlling narratives in local areas.

Before showing examples of the influence of the hybrid media system on negative campaigning, I explain the media system in Medan and South Tangerang.

Medan is well known for its established media system. Some local newspapers still survived the dot.com revolution such as *Harian Analisa* established in 1972, *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru* (1970), *Harian Umum Medan Pos* (1966) and *Harian Umum Nasional Waspada* (1947).⁸⁵⁷ Medan also has various different FM radio channels, both local and networks of the national company. Today, all national main TV channels are accessible in Medan through UHF frequency including key news outlets such as Kompas TV, Metro TV, CNN Indonesia, and TVRI.⁸⁵⁸ Locally developed online news media are also strong in Medan. There are at least 10 online news outlets in Medan registered at AMSI (Indonesia's Cyber Media Association), namely kabarmedan.com, medantoday.com, tribun-medan.com, edisimedan.com, beritasumut.com, imajilive.com, digtara.com, indomedia.com, medanheadlines.com, and gosumut.com.⁸⁵⁹ This is not to mention 36 more online media registered at JMSI (Indonesia's Cyber Media Network).⁸⁶⁰ South Tangerang does not really have its own developed media system. Its close location to Jakarta has benefitted its population's access to news and entertainment through various media platforms produced from national media headquarters in Jakarta. However, South Tangerang has its locally established online media with up to 23 domains registered at JMSI, such as bantennow.com, bantensatu.co, liputankota.com, lensabanten.com, metanews.com, serpongupdate.com, and wartatangerang.com.⁸⁶¹

In what follows I show selected examples of issue convergence or inter-media agenda setting in attack messages of negative campaigning against candidates in the two elections.

⁸⁵⁶ Sofie Syarief, *The Media Landscape in Indonesia: The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same* (Singapore, 2022), https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ISEAS_Perspective_2022_77.pdf.

⁸⁵⁷ Each of this media also has its own online edition. See "Data Perusahaan Pers," accessed 11 March, 2023, <https://dewanpers.or.id/data/perusahaanpers>.

⁸⁵⁸ For full list of news media outlets in Indonesia, see "Data Perusahaan Pers."

⁸⁵⁹ "Anggota," accessed 11 March, 2023, <https://www.amsi.or.id/anggota> (Jumlah: 419 Anggota).

⁸⁶⁰ "ANGGOTA JMSI SUMATERA UTARA," 2020, accessed 11 March, 2023, <https://anggota.mediasiber.id/index.php?provinsi=sumatera-utara>.

⁸⁶¹ "ANGGOTA JMSI BANTEN," 2020, <https://anggota.mediasiber.id/index.php?provinsi=banten>.

The first example was the amplification of #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan in the Medan mayoral election. It was first shared on Twitter by @iwanaljufrii on 7 November 2020⁸⁶² and then across the other social media platforms of Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, and it dominated the campaign, particularly after being posted by political influencers, such as @MardaniAliSera, @panca66, @syahrial_nst, @DonAdam68, and others. The attack message was reported on weblogs, such as portal-islam.id (PKS: Insya Allah Menantu Jokowi Bisa Dikalahkan),⁸⁶³ oposisicerdas.com (Mardani: Insya Allah Menantu Jokowi Bisa Dikalahkan),⁸⁶⁴ ngelmu.co (Pilkada Medan: Mardani Ucap 'Insya Allah Menantu Jokowi Bisa Dikalahkan', Warganet Mengamini),⁸⁶⁵ suaramedan.com (Roda Tiga Konsultan: Aman 53.1%, Bobby-Aulia 37.3%, Prediksi #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan Bisa Jadi Kenyataan),⁸⁶⁶ and medanbisnisdaily.com (Istri Mardani Ali Sera Sumbang Cicin Emas untuk Biaya Kampanye AMAN). The end of the last article even directly stated that "Just a reminder as Mardani Ali Sera visited Medan City he introduced #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan."⁸⁶⁷ All these items above were also redistributed again on social media platforms as a link.

The second example of inter-media agenda setting occurred in South Tangerang. The challenger candidate Rahayu Saraswati was harassed on Twitter and Facebook on her gender role as a woman and a mother. The attack messages against her were widely circulated on social media, weblogs, online news media, and mainstream traditional media as well. A tweet started with "Paha calon wakil walikota Tangsel itu mulus banget" on 4 September 2020 by Cipta Panca Laksana (@panca66), and then was commented upon by Said Didu with "Huzzz-no pict hoax." Later Panca apologized and deleted his tweet, but it was too late to stop it from circulating on social media platforms and mainstream news media. Table 12 shows how it set the agenda on different platforms.

Table 12 Attack messages convergence against Saraswati across online media

⁸⁶² Abah iwan (@iwanaljufrii), "#MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan," 7 November, 2020, <https://twitter.com/iwanaljufrii/status/1324958984479023104>.

⁸⁶³ "PKS: Insya Allah Menantu Jokowi Bisa Dikalahkan," www.portal-islam.id/2020/11/pks-insya-allah-menantu-jokowi-bisa.html, 2020, accessed 11 March, 2023, <https://www.portal-islam.id/2020/11/pks-insya-allah-menantu-jokowi-bisa.html>.

⁸⁶⁴ "InsyaAllah Menantu Jokowi Bisa Dikalahkan," www.oposisicerdas.com, 2020, accessed 11 March, 2023, <https://www.oposisicerdas.com/2020/11/mardani-insyaallah-menantu-jokowi-bisa.html>.

⁸⁶⁵ "Pilkada Medan: Mardani Ucap 'Insya Allah Menantu Jokowi Bisa Dikalahkan', Warganet Mengaminkan," www.ngelmu.co, 2020, accessed 11 March, 2023, <https://www.ngelmu.co/pilkada-medan-mardani-ucap-insya-allah-menantu-jokowi-bisa-dikalahkan-warganet-mengaminkan/>.

⁸⁶⁶ "Roda Tiga Konsultan: Aman 53,1%, Bobby-Aulia 37,3%, Prediksi #MenantuJokowiBisaDikalahkan Bisa Jadi Kenyataan," [suaramedan.com](http://www.suaramedan.com), 2020, accessed 11 March, 2023, <http://www.suaramedan.com/2020/11/roda-tiga-konsultan-aman-531-bobby.html?m=0>.

⁸⁶⁷ "Istri Mardani Ali Sera Sumbang Cicin Emas untuk Biaya Kampanye AMAN," medanbisnisdaily.com, 2020, accessed 11 March, 2023, https://medanbisnisdaily.com/news/online/read/2020/11/15/122465/istri_mardani_ali_sera_sumbang_cicin_emas_untuk_biaya_kampanye_aman.

No	Media	Title	Date	URL
1	suara.com	Said Didu Bahas Paha Mulus Calon Wawali Tangsel, Sara Beri Jawaban Telak	05/09/2020	https://www.suara.com/news/2020/09/05/191156/said-didu-bahas-paha-mulus-calon-wawali-tangsel-sara-beri-jawaban-telak?
2	radaraktual.com	Calon Wakil Walikota Tangsel Pamer Paha Mulus, Dikomentari Malah Baper	05/09/2020	https://radaraktual.com/46472/calon-wakil-walikota-tangsel-pamer-paha-mulus-dikomentari-malah-baper.html
3	radamuhu.com	Rahayu Saraswati Nilai Penjelasan Panca soal 'Paha Mulus Calon Wawali Tangsel' Tak Masuk Akal	06/09/2020	https://radamuhu.com/rahayu-saraswati-nilai-penjelasan-panca-soal-paha-mulus-calon-wawali-tangsel-tak-masuk-akal/
4	detik.com	Ini Daftar Calon Wawali Tangsel, Paha Siapa yang Dimaksud Panca PD?	06/09/2020	https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5161943/ini-daftar-calon-wawali-tangsel-paha-siapa-yang-dimaksud-panca-pd
5	updatebanget.com	Ini Daftar Calon Wawali Tangsel, Paha Siapa yang Dimaksud Panca PD?	06/09/2020	https://www.updatebanget.com/d-5161943/ini-daftar-calon-wawali-tangsel-paha-siapa-yang-dimaksud-panca-pd
6	demokrasi.co.id	Paha Mulus-Sekamar Saja, 2 Isu P*lecehan di Awal Pilkada 2020	12/09/2020	https://news.demokrasi.co.id/paha-mulus-sekamar-saja-2-isu-plecehan-di-awal-pilkada-2020/?amp
7	kedaipena.com	Hapus Cuitan Soal 'Paha Mulus Calon Wawali Tangsel', Politikus Demokrat Minta Maaf	07/09/2020	https://www.kedaipena.com/hapus-cuitan-soal-paha-mulus-calon-wawali-tangsel-politikus-demokrat-minta-maaf/
8	fin.co.id	Bahas Paha Mulus Cawalkot Tangsel, Politikus Demokrat Minta Maaf	NN	https://fin.co.id/read/34752/Bahas-Paha-Mulus-Cawalkot-Tangsel-Politikus-Demokrat-Minta-Maaf
9	viva.co.id	Viral Cuit Paha Mulus Cawalkot Tangsel, Panca Demokrat Minta Maaf	07/09/2020	https://www.viva.co.id/berita/nasional/1299846-viral-cuit-paha-mulus-cawalkot-tangsel-

				panca-demokrat-minta-maaf?page=2
10	cyberthreat.id	Sempat Bela Diri, Panca Demokrat Akhirnya Hapus Cuitan dan Minta Maaf Soal Paha Mulus Rahayu Saraswati, Ponakan Prabowo yang Calon Wakil Walikota Tangsel	07/09/2020	https://cyberthreat.id/read/8325/Sempat-Bela-Diri-Panca-Demokrat-Akhirnya-Hapus-Cuitan-dan-Minta-Maaf-Soal-Paha-Mulus-Ponakan-Prabowo-Rahayu-Saraswati
11	cerdikindonesia.pikiran-rakyat.com/	Ini Klarifikasi Panca Soal Twit Sebut Paha Cawawalkot Tangerang Selatan Mulus	07/09/2020	https://cerdikindonesia.pikiran-rakyat.com/gaya/pr-86725203/ini-klarifikasi-panca-soal-twit-sebut-paha-cawawalkot-tangerang-selatan-mulus?page=2
12	republika.co.id	Calon Wawalikot Tangsel Pertimbangkan Ambil Jalur Hukum	07/09/2020	https://sindikasi.republika.co.id/berita/qga9q3396/calon-wawalikot-tangsel-pertimbangkan-ambil-jalur-hukum
13	tribunnews.com	Kini Dihapus, Viral Twit Politisi Demokrat Dinilai Lecehkan Keponakan Prabowo, Said Didu Ikut Bala	07/09/2020	https://wow.tribunnews.com/2020/09/07/kini-dihapus-viral-twit-politisi-demokrat-dinilai-lecehkan-keponakan-prabowo-said-didu-ikut-balas?page=all
14	akurat.co	Sindir Cipta Panca, Ruhut: Sakitnya Tak Seberapa Tapi Malunya ini	09/09/2020	https://akurat.co/sindir-cipta-panca-ruhut-sakitnya-tak-seberapa-tapi-malunya-ini
15	kompas.com	Sebelum Foto Hamil, Rahayu Saraswati Pernah Merasa Dilecehkan Lewat Postingan Paha Mulus	26/10/2020	https://pemilu.kompas.com/read/2020/10/26/21575641/sebelum-foto-hamil-rahayu-saraswati-pernah-merasa-dilecehkan-lewat

(Source: Various online news websites)

The issue was also captured by Kompas TV, who held a live talk show on it (Figure 93).⁸⁶⁸ The show evaluated the deplored tweet, where Saraswati explained that it took her two days to prepare a response to the attack. She also urged the public to recognise that the tweet might be directed to the other two vice mayoral candidates, who were male. However, she insisted that if it were directed towards her, it was an objectification of women, and an example of the notorious injustice against women nationally. Another similar example of inter-media agenda setting from the attack messages against Rahayu Saraswati was posted on Facebook. A post was shared by Bang Djoel on TANGSEL RUMAH DAN KOTA KITA open group tagging a pregnancy photo of Saraswati from her Instagram. Although finally deleted, the message went viral on social media.⁸⁶⁹ A counterattack to that came from Saraswati's sympathiser which exacerbates the gender-based issues during the campaign and asks opponents to manage their supporters well (Figure 94).



Figure 93 Attack messages on Facebook reshared on Twitter for counterattack

(Source: twitter.com/TsamaraDKI)

⁸⁶⁸ KOMPASTV, "Perlawanan "Paha Mulus" Rahayu Saraswati - KAMAR ROSI," 16 September, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2r9wpriJKvw>.

⁸⁶⁹ Amany, "Mbak @RahayuSaraswati keliling Tangsel kampanye program. Dan orang ini lebih tertarik membahas udel? Kalau foto kehamilan dijadikan alat pelecehan, yang bermasalah pasti otak pelaku pelecehan. Setelah paha mulus, kini coblos udel. Kandidat no 2 & 3 harus tertibkan pendukungnya.."



Figure 94 Kompas TV talk show on attack message against Saraswati

(Source: YouTube @KOMPASTV)

This section has analysed the influence of the hybrid media system on the conduct of negative campaigning at the 2020 local elections in Medan and South Tangerang. Media convergence, which gives ground for hybrid media campaigning, had innovated how negative campaigning was conducted at local elections in Indonesia. This is an important finding in understanding negative campaigning and features of its normalization at local elections. The significance of this inter-media agenda setting is twofold. First, the distribution of attack messages was multiplied at no cost driven by the need for news or content production or an excess of partisanship of the corresponding media. Second, the effect on voters was due to the problematic quality of the disseminated information while having low voter understanding of the influential operations of political campaigners. The normalization of negative campaigning at local elections did not only politically benefit candidates but also risked voter information manipulation.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that negative campaigning via computational propaganda was not only a national trend, but also a key strategy of candidates at local elections in Indonesia. It showed that computational propaganda at local elections had become normalized via the use of character and identity attacks against candidates. By normalization here I mean the process of making computational propaganda a consistent form of negative campaigning as a regular part of the electoral strategy. The normalization was driven by new digital technologies, such as social media, and a convergent or hybrid media system. The findings of this chapter provide

evidence for computational propaganda at local election levels using social media fake accounts and coordinated inauthentic behaviour (CIB). This CIB was driven by buzzers and partisan influencers, mobilising social media teams acting with anonymity to amplify attack messages and malicious information against candidates. In particular, the thesis found that computational propaganda on social media had been dominantly directed towards challengers, rather than incumbent candidates, as seen in the elections in both Medan and South Tangerang. Thus, this chapter substantiates that incumbency is not the exclusive determinant of being the target of strong negativity, as is iterated in the literature. At subnational elections, the political affiliations of candidates in relation to the national political rivalry—incumbent vs opposition linearity—played a role in whether a candidate was the target or not of negative campaigning.

The implications of this normalization of negative campaigning have been counter-productive to financially transparent and policy-substantive election campaigning. The anonymity of social media campaigning to attack political opponents has left potential voters with little ability to evaluate and compare the candidates on policy issues. Negative campaigning via computational propaganda distracted public attention from potential key policy ideas of candidates and how they would implement them if elected. In addition, as some candidates used national political adversaries to associate opponents as bad candidates, they have extended divisions in society that did not really correlate much with wider national politics.

Indonesian parties and politicians alike have learnt the strategic functions of digital media, particularly social media, for electoral supports for the last ten years or so since the 2012 election in Jakarta. This was driven of course by the adoption of social media by the general public both for political and general purposes. Importantly, social media has made staging negative campaigning easier and cheaper as well as safer from backlash while overcoming one-sided coverages of partisan media in favour of opponents. Second, there was a gap in the regulation of digital campaigning, which suggested a lack of control in the algorithmic-driven social media campaigning, full of anonymity and malicious information. A particular significance factor related to that was the lack of funding reporting and transparency in digital campaigning, whereas at the same time illicit money often found its way into the campaigns of candidates. These trends suggest a fertile ground for computational propaganda and negative campaign tactics to flourish via the manipulation of information and public opinion for political aims.

Chapter 6 The effects of negative campaigning

One of the challenges in studying negative campaigning is a simple but important question: What impact does it have on voters? As I outlined in Chapter 1 and further below, many existing studies have attempted to answer this question by examining specific outcomes (such as voter turn-out) and broader impacts (such as impact on democracy). For this thesis, I was most interested in answering the question of whether negative campaigning affected voter choice in a national presidential campaign, in terms of which presidential candidate voters preferred. But, due to the limitation of my data this chapter will primarily show an exploratory survey of students' perception of negative campaigning and recommend how future study could advance the investigation of effect. It is followed by a subsequent analysis of effects of negative campaigning on candidate evaluation and vote choice during the 2019 presidential election, between presidential candidates Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto which does not guarantee causality. This chapter argues that negative campaigning is a functional form of campaign information from the perspective of electoral democracy in empowering voters despite hesitation towards its employment. Also, it shows that negative campaigning is generally effective in lowering the electability of the target candidate. My data shows an overall negative correlation between negative campaign messages and voter preference, which means the more voters are exposed to and accept negative campaign messages the more likely the chances of voting for the target candidate will decrease. However, some caveats are required, such as distinguishing between correlation and causation.

In this chapter I explain how negative campaign effects exposure, evaluation, and vote choice by looking where computational propaganda played a role (the examples were first introduced in Chapter 4). I lay out my methods in collecting and analyzing the data and analyze voters' acceptability of negative campaigning as an electoral strategy. I analyze voter's exposure to negative campaigning at the 2019 presidential election and the effect of negative campaign messages on evaluations of the attacker. Finally, I analyze the effect of negative campaign messages on voter choice. The argument put forward in this chapter is that character-based negative campaign messages on identity issues have some sort of influence on decreasing the likelihood of voting for the target candidate. I have to make it clear at the outset that I am fully aware of the vulnerability of the survey data that I used for the analysis. For the student survey and expert survey, the number of respondents was small, and it might skew some tendencies based on respondent characteristics. For the secondary data analysis using Charta Politica's

observational data, there is a potential presence of reverse causality in the analysis of effect that the design of the study did not eliminate.

As I have shown in Chapter 4, computational propaganda plays a role in negative campaigning. Indicators of negative campaign messages used in this analysis are messages that are created and amplified by buzzers, influencers, and volunteers on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and online news as investigated in Chapter 4. Computational propaganda contributes to exposure and acceptance of negative campaign messages by voters during the 2019 presidential election in many ways. It indicates the use of social media platforms for amplification of malicious information to manipulate public opinion by exploiting the logic and affordances of social media by coordinated actors: politicians, volunteers, buzzers, and influencers. The operation of computational propaganda on social media is also amplified by the mainstream media, which extends its influence to wider audiences.

Measuring the effect of negative campaigning in an election is not easy. It is fair to say that existing research on the effects of negative campaigning often show inconclusive results, while some studies contradict each other. Ansolabehere and Iyengar found in the US that negative advertising suppressed voter turnout and made people feel disillusioned with politics, which affects voter turn-out,⁸⁷⁰ while Finkel and Geer found that negative advertising did not influence turnout and vote choice.⁸⁷¹ Similarly, Pinkleton et al. found that negative political advertising had no effect on cynicism, efficacy, and apathy toward politics.⁸⁷² Other studies argued that, in fact, negative advertisements mobilize citizens to turn-out to vote, as they can enrage an otherwise bored electorate.⁸⁷³ In short, studies showed that negative campaigns can both mobilize and demobilize voters, depending on the specific characteristics of the message and voter.⁸⁷⁴

Of course, there are many variables in determining the effectiveness of a negative campaign. Exposure is a first step towards an extended effect. Exposure to negative campaigns is shaped by the strategic decisions of campaign actors, who decide the volume of attack messages, target audience, and media to use in amplifying it. Garramone argued that the effects of negative campaign on voters were influenced by three important variables: voters predisposition or preferences, level of involvement, and demographic.⁸⁷⁵ Involvement simply means “the personal

⁸⁷⁰ Ansolabehere and Iyengar, *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate*, 9.

⁸⁷¹ Finkel and Geer, "A Spot Check: Casting Doubt on the Demobilizing Effect of Attack Advertising."

⁸⁷² Bruce E Pinkleton, Nam-Hyun Um, and Erica Weintraub Austin, "An exploration of the effects of negative political advertising on political decision making," *Journal of Advertising* 31, no. 1, Spring (2002).

⁸⁷³ Goldstein and Freedman, "Campaign Advertising and Voter Turnout: New Evidence for a Stimulation Effect.."

⁸⁷⁴ For the latest review, see Nai and Walter, *New perspectives on negative campaigning: Why attack politics matters*.

⁸⁷⁵ Garramone, "Voter Responses to Negative Political Ads."

relevance or meaning that a particular message such as political advertisement or a response (e.g., voting) has for the individual."⁸⁷⁶ Scholars and consultants agreed that negative campaigns affected voters on three stages: cognition, attitude, and behavior.⁸⁷⁷ Cognition, or more simply, recognition, occurs when voters become aware that the candidate is running. Affect happens when voters start to form opinions about the candidate. The evaluation stage occurs when voters make their decisions in voting. Research on the effectiveness of negative campaigning showed different effects on memory, knowledge, opinion, and evaluation of sponsors and targets alike.⁸⁷⁸ There was also a tendency for voters to accept negative campaign messages based on their partisan bias. Scholars found that partisanship was strongly associated with belief in misinformation against candidates, depending on if the target candidate was their own or an opponent candidate.⁸⁷⁹

As many Indonesian respondents confirmed during my fieldwork, employing various forms of negative campaign tactics as an electoral strategy could benefit the attackers, but also could backfire.⁸⁸⁰ My aim here is not to reconcile these conflicting conclusions in the global literature, but to test the hypothesis that identity-based attack messages can be effective in the context of multi-party presidential election in Indonesia. Chapter 4 showed how key negative campaign messages at the 2019 presidential election were more character-oriented as opposed to policy-oriented messages. Although negative campaigning at the 2019 presidential election was directed towards both candidates, a higher number and dirtier attacks targeted the incumbent across all mediums. The key attack messages were also highly relevant to the majority of Indonesian voters, which were religiously Muslim, but this might not be meaningful in making quality decisions following democratic values. A previous study found that the notion that political use of social media associated with exposure to the selected negative campaign messages discussed above was statistically unproven.⁸⁸¹ The study also found that political use of newspaper and television was positively associated with exposure to campaign conspiratorial misinformation, and the political use of WhatsApp and Instagram, as well as discussing politics in person, were associated with exposure to general misinformation. Education and income

⁸⁷⁶ Garramone, "Voter Responses to Negative Political Ads," 251.

⁸⁷⁷ Fridkin and Kenney, "The Impact of Negative Campaigning on Citizens' Actions and Attitudes." Barbara G. Salmore and Stephen A. Salmore, *Candidates, parties, and campaigns: Electoral politics in America* (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1985).

⁸⁷⁸ Kim Fridkin Kahn and Patrick J Kenney, "How negative campaigning enhances knowledge of Senate elections," in *Crowded airwaves: Campaign advertising in elections*, ed. James A. Thurber, Candice J. Nelson, and David A. Dulio (Washington: Brookings Institute Press, 2000).; Richard R Lau and Lee Sigelman, "Effectiveness of negative political advertising," in *Crowded airwaves: Campaign advertising in elections*, ed. James A. Thurber, Candice J. Nelson, and David A. Dulio (Washington: Brookings Institute Press, 2000).

⁸⁷⁹ Neyazi and Muhtadi, *Comparative Approaches to Mis/Disinformation| Selective Belief: How Partisanship Drives Belief in Misinformation*, 15.

⁸⁸⁰ Kim Leslie Fridkin and Patrick J. Kenney, "Do Negative Messages Work?," *American Politics Research* 32, no. 5 (2016).

⁸⁸¹ Neyazi et al., "Who Gets Exposed to Political Misinformation in a Hybrid Media Environment? The Case of the 2019 Indonesian Election."

were positively associated with exposure to campaign conspiratorial misinformation. The authors' work laid the ground for understanding the distribution and consumption of political misinformation in the Indonesian context. My analysis extends the understanding that the positive association between television use and exposure to campaign misinformation might be driven by the convergence of media production or news media's relying on social media content for news production where computational propaganda operated. My finding also extends this previous study by offering information on how voters reacted to and found negative information helpful or otherwise and on the possible effect of this campaign misinformation on electability of the implicated politicians.

The negative campaign messages against the incumbent President Jokowi could be subsumed under five themes: accusations of membership with PKI, accusations that he was anti-Islam, accusations that he was subservient to or receiving support from PRC, he was Chinese, and he or his family were Christian. Whereas key campaign attacks against the opposition candidate Prabowo centered around the allegation of his involvement in the 1997/1998 students' kidnapping and allegation that his family were Christian. The large-scale negative campaigns were intended to evoke fear, anger, and hatred towards the target candidate. In this chapter I show how the nature of attack messages became important in shaping voters' awareness and political knowledge about the candidates. These attack messages included the use of computational propaganda, which I argue in this thesis is central to the new forms of negative campaigning in Indonesia.

6.1. Method

There are two main methods in this chapter: survey and secondary data analysis. A survey is a systematic method for gathering information from (a sample of) entities for the purpose of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members.⁸⁸² In this study I administered the surveys online⁸⁸³ using the online application SurveyMonkey.com with two different groups of respondents: university students and experts. The university student survey ($N = 238$ respondents) was carried out to capture perceptions, attitudes, exposures to, and acceptance of negative campaign messages in the 2019 presidential election. The expert survey ($N = 34$) of academics, editors, and NGO leaders was

⁸⁸² Robert M Groves et al., *Survey methodology* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

⁸⁸³ To clarify, this survey is not an online survey. An online survey would require the entire or selected internet users as population of the survey. Online survey is gaining popularity particularly after Covid-19 given its efficiency and speed. Nevertheless, online survey will always contain a problem due to the fact that not all people are online.

held to get a more objective assessment of the prevalence of the negative campaign. These two surveys were taken together for a descriptive analysis of exposure, acceptance, and prevalence of negative campaign directed against the two candidates.

Next, given that the data of the two surveys was not reliable for meaningful statistical interpretation of effect considering the limited number and non-probabilistic samples, I used secondary data analysis for measuring effect. Secondary data analysis can be understood as the use of statistical material and information originally gathered for another purpose.⁸⁸⁴ Despite its limitations, secondary data is important because it is accessible, inexpensive, and ready to be used by other researchers. Secondary data analysis gives access to large amounts of information, coverage of a broad range of samples representative of some broader population and covers a broad range of topics.⁸⁸⁵ Most importantly in this project, secondary data is used to compare with primary data I have collected, in order to triangulate the findings and put the data into a larger perspective.⁸⁸⁶ I requested raw data from Charta Politika ($N = 2,000$) on one of its national survey series held ahead of the election that specifically captured variables of interest to this study. I also used the secondary data of publicly available survey reports from CSIS, SMRC, and Indikator Politik Indonesia related to the election available on their websites.

After finishing the collection and cleaning of the data, I analysed the data separately and for different purposes. The data analysis employed descriptive statistics. Descriptive analysis describes and summarizes variables and shows correlation between two or more variables. First, I ran a descriptive analysis of attitude, exposure, acceptance, and prevalence of negative campaigning using data from the students, experts, and national surveys separately, without combining the data. The different data were used to substantiate findings and arguments for more meaningful insights, not combining them in any way. The analysis was handled by counting the frequency distribution and percentage of each variable in Microsoft Excel and displaying the results in tables or charts. Second, I measured the effect of negative campaigning on vote choice with multivariate analysis using a logistic regression technique to see the relationship between negative campaign messages and vote choice. Regression analysis is a technique for measuring relationships between two or more variables and can also be used to predict actual outcomes. The value that we want to predict the outcome is the dependent variable (here it was vote choice). Independent variables are inputs into the regression equation that are assumed to have a direct effect on the dependent variable (here, exposure to and

⁸⁸⁴ Marc Riedel, *Research Strategies for Secondary Data* (New York: Sage Publications, 2000).

⁸⁸⁵ Thomas P Vartanian, *Secondary data analysis* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁸⁸⁶ Nicholas Walliman, *Research methods: The basics* (Routledge, 2021).

acceptance of negative campaign messages). Regression techniques provide a mathematical equation that describes the relationship between dependent and independent variables,⁸⁸⁷ by holding certain variables constant in order to assess the independent influence of key variables of interest. Specifically, logistic regression is the method suitable for assessing the influence of independent variables on dependent variables which is measured in nominal scale.⁸⁸⁸ Finally, I calculated the size of the influence (effect size) each independent variable had on vote choice using the odds ratio, following the logistic regression coefficients. The odds ratio is the change in odds of being in one of the categories of outcome (vote A/not vote A) when the value of a predictor increases by one unit.⁸⁸⁹ Therefore, for descriptive analysis I used data from the online surveys, expert surveys, and secondary data from the national surveys. But for the analysis of effect, I only used the raw data provided by Charta Politika.

6.1.1. Survey of university students

My first data collection was the survey of university students conducted between November 2020 and March 2021 using the online application SurveyMonkey. Two hundred and thirty-eight (238) respondents from six universities completed the survey till the end.⁸⁹⁰ A few points about the student respondents in Indonesia should be made clear. University students tend to have similar characteristics in terms of level of being middle class, having a reasonable amount of political knowledge, and large exposure to social media. Thus, obviously I do not argue that this sample is representative of all of Indonesia. Respondents declared that they did not have direct experience with an election campaign, and they were in at least semester 6 (21 years old), which made them eligible voters in the 2019 presidential election.

The key variables I measured in the student survey were voter choice, evaluation of candidate, perceived effect on democracy, attitude towards negative campaign, exposure to and acceptance of negative campaign messages, perceived function of negative campaign, actors of negative campaign, and media where negative campaign are mostly encountered. I collected data for general variables such as gender, age, domicile, religion, ethnicity, political interest, interest in the campaign, and personal identification—how close the voters felt to the

⁸⁸⁷ Richard V McCarthy et al., *Applying predictive analytics* (Springer, 2022).

⁸⁸⁸ Walliman, *Research methods: The basics*.

⁸⁸⁹ Barbara G Tabachnick, Linda S Fidell, and Jodie B Ullman, *Using multivariate statistics*, vol. 6 (pearson Boston, MA, 2013).

⁸⁹⁰ These universities are UIN Yogyakarta, UNIMED Medan, UNRAM Mataram, UKI Jakarta, UMN Tangerang, and PETRA Surabaya.

candidates.⁸⁹¹ I collected these variables based on previous literature and used some election-related instruments from the online database of American National Election Studies (ANES)⁸⁹² and Comparative Studies of Electoral System (CSES).⁸⁹³ The goal of this student survey was to conduct a descriptive analysis of variables related to negative campaigns at the 2019 presidential election. Of course, because this survey was administered online, I am not arguing that the distribution of the sample represents the composition of all Indonesian voters.

Organization of the student survey went as follows: first, I contacted the social science programs at selected universities based on contacting a balanced number of private and public universities. Prior to administering the survey, interested course lecturers were briefed on how the questioner should be accessed. On the selected day of the survey, students came into their regular class. At the end of the class, the lecturer informed them and gave a short description about the survey that they would take if they consented. Next, the lecturer showed a password and link which would take them to the online questionnaire on surveymoneky.com. The questionnaire could only be completed at that moment and was limited to a 25-minute period. At each round of the survey, I validated the number of students in the class, the number of participants, and final entry on my SurveyMonkey.com dashboard. Irregularities were to be removed; however, none occurred. After completing the questionnaire students got a voucher for their mobile phone amounting to AU\$5 (some declined). Characteristics of the online respondents can be seen in Table 13.

Table 13 Sample characteristics of student survey

Characteristics		N = 238
Gender	Male	35%
	Female	65%
Age	18 – 20 years old	63%
	21 – 23	36%

⁸⁹¹ "Identification leads to the (temporary) adoption of an external point of view and to viewing the world through an alternative social reality. The varying intensity of identification reflects the extent to which one exchanges his or her own perspective for that of another and is able to forget him- or herself." Jonathan Cohen, "Defining Identification: A Theoretical Look at the Identification of Audiences With Media Characters," *Mass Communication and Society* 4, no. 3 (2001).

⁸⁹² ANES is a collaboration of Stanford University and the University of Michigan, with funding by the National Science Foundation. For more see <https://electionstudies.org/>

⁸⁹³ The CSES Secretariat is in cooperation between the Center for Political Studies and GESIS - Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, with support from the American National Science Foundation, GESIS, and the University of Michigan. For more see <https://cses.org/>

	24 – above	1.3%
Religion	Muslim	36%
	Protestant	40%
	Catholic	16%
	Hindu	1.7%
	Buddha	4.6%
	Konghucu	0.4%
	Other	0.8%
Ethnicity	Javanese	36%
	Sundanese	3.3%
	Batak	13%
	Bugis	1.3%
	Minangkabau	0.8%
	Betawi	3.3%
	Other	42%
Region of domicile	Sumatera	7.9%
	DKI Jakarta and Banten	33.4%
	Central Java and Yogyakarta	22.2%
	East Java	17.5%
	West Java	9.2%
	Bali, NTB and NTT	5.8%
	Kalimantan	2%
	Sulawesi	1.2%
	Maluku and Papua	0.8%
Party ID	Yes	7.5%
	No	92.5%
Sources of election information (multiple answers)	Newspaper	33%
	Magazine	4.6%
	Radio	21%
	Television	96%
	Online news	98%
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.)	96%
	WhatsApp	37%
Political interest	Strongly interested	0%

	Interested	6.3%
	Less interested	41%
	Not interested	46%
	Don't know	6.%
Interest in the campaign	Strongly interested	21%
	A little interested	60%
	Not really interested	18%
Vote choice	Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin	64.9%
	Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno	10%
	Not voted	25.1%

(Source: Student survey, Nov 2020/March 2021)

6.1.2. Secondary data analysis

My second data source is secondary data. There are two secondary data of surveys used in this analysis: publicly available survey reports and raw data of survey. I used publicly available survey results from national pollsters conducted either close to or on voting day: Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC, March 2019),⁸⁹⁴ Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS, March 2019),⁸⁹⁵ Indikator Politik Indonesia (Exit poll, April 2019)⁸⁹⁶ as indicated in the corresponding analysis. The data was used as evidence to support arguments that I make regarding the findings on the effect of negative campaigning or as context for understanding the analysis of data from Charta Politika survey. I requested the raw survey data from a national survey conducted by Charta Politika, a prominent national pollster.⁸⁹⁷ The survey was held a

⁸⁹⁴ The survey collected data from 2,479 respondents for analysis between February and March 2019, using multistage random sampling, with margin of error ± 2 (95% interval of confidence). SMRC, *KONDISI EKONOMI, MOBILISASI IDENTITAS, DAN PILPRES MENJELANG 2019 EVALUASI PUBLIK NASIONAL* (24 Februari 5 Maret 2019), SMRC (2019), <http://www.saifulmujani.com/blog/2019/03/17/publik-tidak-percaya-kabar-bohong-tentang-jokowi>.

⁸⁹⁵ The survey was conducted between 15 to 22 March 2019 collecting data from 1,960 respondents with margin of error $\pm 2.21\%$ (CI: 95%). CSIS, *Laporan Hasil Survei Nasional: Pertarungan antara Elektabilitas dan Mobilisasi Pemilih*, Center for Strategic and International Studies (2019), <https://www.csis.or.id/publications/laporan-hasil-survei-nasional-pertarungan-antara-elektabilitas-dan-mobilisasi-pemilih>.

⁸⁹⁶ The exit poll employed stratified systematic two-stage random sampling with estimated margin of error ± 2 within 95% confidence interval. It collected data from 2,975 respondents from 2,975 voting stations with face to face interview. *EXIT POLL PEMILU 2019*, 17 APRIL 2019, Indikator Politik Indonesia (2019), http://indikator.co.id/uploads/20190419215553.Exit_Poll_Pemilu_2019_Indikator.pdf.

⁸⁹⁷ I extend my sincere gratitude to the institute for allowing me to use their data for this analysis. For more information about *Charta Politika*, visit <https://www.chartapolitika.com/>

month before the election on 1 – 9 March 2019 with 2,000 respondents and a margin of error of $\pm 2.19\%$ at a 95% confidence level. The primary sampling unit for this survey was a village/ward with 10 people each from 200 villages/wards spread across Indonesia.

The key reason for using the data was that it asked questions about the examples of negative campaign messages though using different phrases, such as ‘negative issues about the president.’ The survey used multistage random sampling from the national population, which is more significant for interpretation. It was administered around the 2019 election campaign periods with face-to-face interviews. I only used the data of variables that were relevant to my analysis: intended vote, exposure and belief in negative campaigns against Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto, party choice, government evaluation, prominent issue, gender, domicile, age, ethnicity, religion, and education. Characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 14.

Table 14 Sample characteristics of Charta Politika survey

Characteristics		<i>N</i> = 2,000
Gender	Male	50%
	Female	50%
Age	17 – 20 years old	3.5%
	21 – 25	27.4%
	36 – 50	42.8%
	Above 50	26.4%
Education	No schooling	1.6%
	Elementary school	20.9%
	Junior high school	24%
	Senior high school	41.6%
	Diploma	4.8%
	Undergraduate (S1) and higher	6.4%
	Don't know/Not answer	0.9%
Religion	Muslim	88.8%
	Protestant	6.2%
	Catholic	2.9%
	Hindu	1%
	Buddha	0.4%
	Other	0.8%

Ethnicity	Javanese	42.2%
	Sundanese	15.6%
	Batak	3.7%
	Malay	3.5%
	Madura	3.4%
	Bugis	3.3%
	Minangkabau	3.2%
	Betawi	3.1%
	Other	21%
	Don't answer	1%
Region of domicile	Sumatera	20%
	DKI Jakarta and Banten	8.3%
	West Java	17.5%
	Central Java and Yogyakarta	16%
	East Java	16%
	Bali, NTB and NTT	5.5%
	Kalimantan	6.3%
	Sulawesi	7%
	Maluku and Papua	3.5%
Prominent issues	Rising prices of basic needs	36.3%
	Difficult to find jobs	17%
	Expensive cost of basic education	8.3%
	Expensive health services	5.5%
	Inter-regions conflicts	3.8%
	High corruption cases	3.7%
	Insufficient of road infrastructure	3.1%
	Terrorism	2.6
	Others	15%
Government evaluation	Strongly satisfied	14.8%
	Fairly satisfied	51.1%
	Dissatisfied	27.1%
	Strongly dissatisfied	2.6%
	Don't know/No answer	4.5%

Party choice	PDIP	24.8%
	Gerindra	15.7%
	Golkar	9.8%
	PKB	7.2%
	Democrat	5.1%
	Nasdem	4.9%
	PKS	4.1%
	PPP	3.6%
	PAN	3.2%
	PSI	1.4%
	Perindo	1.3%
	Hanura	0.8%
	PBB	0.4%
	Berkarya	0.4%
	PKPI	0.3%
	Garuda	0.2%
	Don't know/No answer	17.1%
Vote choice	Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin	53.6%
	Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno	35.4%
	Don't know/Not answer	11%

(Source: Charta Politika, March 2019)

6.1.3. Expert assessment

I surveyed independent experts about their assessment of negative campaigning at the 2019 presidential election. This expert survey was administered to obtain a more objective assessment of the occurrence or prevalence of attack messages against both candidates. An expert, as defined in political communication is “a scholar with expertise in electoral politics, political communication (including political journalism), and/or electoral behaviour, or related disciplines, for the country where the election was held.”⁸⁹⁸ However, I added NGO activists and

⁸⁹⁸ In an observation of populism, Nai et al. selected experts data sources based on the presence of one of the following criteria: (1) existing relevant academic publications; (2) holding a chair in those disciplines in a department within the country; (3) membership in a relevant research group or professional network, or (4) self-assessed expertise included on a professional webpage (e.g., bio on university webpage). Alessandro Nai, Ferran M. I. Coma, and J. Maier, “Donald Trump, Populism, and the Age of Extremes: Comparing the Personality Traits and Campaigning Styles of Trump and Other Leaders Worldwide,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (2019): p. 9.

senior journalists whose work related to elections. The use of expert opinions to measure negative campaign was an innovation,⁸⁹⁹ as it extends the content analysis tradition that tends to focus on political advertisements.

The expert survey was held from 21 November to 28 December 2020 with 33 participants. The survey was organized in three steps. The first step was generating the list of experts. This was done through seeing their appearances on news reports commenting about the election, from official websites of universities that had social and political sciences programs, and from NGO websites related to social political issues debated by candidates during the campaign. The second step was collecting the contacts. I collected the publicly available name, position, and email contacts of the experts. (The original list had 80 names, who were all Indonesians, from which the survey was successfully completed by 34 respondents (see Table 15)). The third step was sending the invitations. I invited the experts to participate in the survey by explaining my background, purpose of the survey, and asking for consent. The final step was the completion of the questionnaire by the respondents. Those who were interested in participating by replying to the invitation email were sent a password-protected link to the online questionnaire created on SurveyMonkey.com. Each expert who completed the survey was given AU\$20 as a token of appreciation for participating and for any costs incurred in accessing the questionnaire online.

Table 15 Expert characteristics

Characteristics		N = 34
Gender	Male	85%
	Female	15%
Age	30 – 39	21%
	40 – 49	38%
	50 – 59	32%
	60 – 69	9%
Education	Doctoral degree	59%
	Master's degree	32%
	Bachelor's degree	9%

⁸⁹⁹ François Gélinau and André Blais, "Comparing measures of campaign negativity: Expert judgments, manifestos, debates and advertisements," in *New Perspectives on Negative Campaigning: Why Attack Politics Matters*, ed. A. Nai and A. Walter (United Kingdom: ECPR Press, 2015).

Profession	Academic	71%
	NGO activist	12%
	Editor/Journalist	12%
Main expertise	Law and human rights	6%
	Media studies and journalism	12%
	Political communication	21%
	Election and voting behaviour	50%
	Comparative politics	6%
	Political party	3%
	Other	3%
Evaluation of the survey	Easy to understand	91%
	Difficult to understand	9%

(Source: Expert survey, 2020)

6.2. Measures of variables

In quantitative research like surveys, researchers analyse social phenomena by measuring its characteristics based on theoretical concepts and variables and record the observation by attaching numerical values to the variables of interest. A variable is a quality or characteristic of something (phenomena, object, subject, etc.) that varies such as age, gender, or level of education. Measuring a variable would require a processes of assigning numbers to aspects of objects or events according to one or another rule or convention.⁹⁰⁰ In this study, the attachment process (scoring) in the student and expert surveys was done by myself following a coding protocol. Scoring for the Charta Politika survey was done by the institution, but I recoded the data to meet the criteria for running logistic regression analysis, which I explain later. For the main analysis of effect, I only used data from Charta Politika, selecting one dependent variable and two independent variables of negative campaign in this measurement. The student survey and expert survey was used to run an exploratory analysis and provide context for the effect.

⁹⁰⁰ Elazar J Pedhazur and Liora Pedhazur Schmelkin, *Measurement, design, and analysis: An integrated approach* (psychology press, 2013).

Dependent variable. For the main analysis of effect, I had one dependent variable, namely vote choice. Vote choice was measured based on intentional voting captured in a pre-election survey of 2019 presidential election by asking respondents who they voted for, either “Joko Widodo–Maruf Amin,” “Prabowo Subianto–Sandiaga Uno”, or “Not answer/Don’t Know.”

Independent variables. The key independent variables were exposure to and acceptance of negative messages. I operationalize negative campaigns messages as verbal attack messages against an opponent candidate to present them in an unfavourable light. Exposure and acceptance of negative campaigning was measured based on key negative campaigning messages against the candidates during the 2019 presidential election. Exposure to negative campaign against Joko Widodo and Ma’ruf Amin was measured by two indicators: “Do you know, or have you ever heard of news or information that says Joko Widodo comes from a Christian family?” and “Have you ever heard of news or information that says Joko Widodo has Chinese/Chinese ethnicity?” coded as 1 = “Yes, I know” and 2 = “No I don’t.” It was recoded into 1 and 0 to generate an index of exposure to negative campaign resulting in composite scores. Acceptance of negative campaign messages against Joko Widodo and Ma’ruf Amin was measured by three indicators: “Do you agree or disagree with the opinion that President Joko Widodo is a member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), at least related to the PKI, or protecting communists?” “Do you believe the news/information that says Joko Widodo comes from a Christian family?” and “Do you believe the news/information that says Joko Widodo has Chinese/Chinese ethnicity?” The responses were coded as 1 = “Agree/Believe,” 2 = “Disagree/Disbelieve,” and 3 = “Don’t know or No answer” to generate an index of acceptance. Exposure to negative campaign messages against Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno was measured by agreement or not to two indicators: “Do you know, or have you ever heard of news or information that says Prabowo Subianto comes from a Christian family”, and “Prabowo Subianto was involved in the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists in 1997-1998.” Acceptance of negative campaign messages was measured by agreement or not to two indicators: “Do you believe the news/information that says Prabowo Subianto comes from a Christian family”, and “Prabowo Subianto was involved in the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists in 1997-1998.”

Control variables. I also added control variables to the analysis to estimate the effect of the independent variables on vote choice. In logistic regression controlling for a variable is done by adding control variables on the right side of the equation as independent variables.⁹⁰¹ As collected by Charta Politika, these control variables were party choice (PDIP = 1, Non-PDIP =

⁹⁰¹ In multiple regression analysis, including a variable in the model holds it constant while the independent variable fluctuates.

0), government evaluation (Strongly satisfied = 4, Fairly satisfied = 3, Less satisfied = 2, Not satisfied at all = 1, Not answer = 0), gender (Male = 1, Female = 0), age (17 – 20 years old = 1, 21 – 35 = 2, 36 – 50 = 3, Above 51 = 4), education (Undergraduate or higher = 6, Diploma = 5, Senior high school = 4, Junior high school = 3, Elementary school = 2, No schooling = 1, Not answer = 0), religion (Islam = 1, Non-Islam = 0), and ethnicity (Javanese = 1, Non-Javanese = 0).

6.3. Attitude towards negative campaigning in general

This section analyses how voters perceived negative campaigning in general. The analysis was intended to investigate the scale of negativity in election campaigns following the argument that what constitutes negative campaigning is subjective. Attitude here means the level of agreement and disagreement with the use of negative campaigning—acceptability of its use. Voters tended to agree with the use of negative campaigning when they could identify its direct benefits on them. This is important to understand because it explains how voters evaluated the conduct of negative campaigning against candidates regardless of the target. To analyze voters' attitudes towards negative campaigning, I examined three key indicators with regard to negative campaigning: acceptability, perceived function, and perceived consequences on democracy. I only used data from the student survey for the analysis.

This section demonstrates that there were mixed feelings towards negative campaigning. On one hand, negative campaign was welcomed for the idea that democracy requires negative campaigning in that it made voters well-informed of the strengths and weaknesses of candidates.⁹⁰² Negative campaigns also reveal hidden information by making it public particularly in a system where news media tend to be partisan, like in Indonesia. On the other hand, negative campaigning was seen as a liability for the democratic system, and scholars have found that negative campaigning engendered cynicism towards politics.⁹⁰³ However, as explained before, the contention may be due to idiosyncratic definitions and categories of negative campaigning across different political systems, giving the sense that what constitutes negativity lies “in the eye of the beholder”.⁹⁰⁴ In Indonesia, the perceptions of boundaries and acceptabilities of negative campaigning differ from that of the West, and among Indonesian

⁹⁰² William G Mayer, "In defense of negative campaigning," *Political Science Quarterly* 111, no. 3 (1996).

⁹⁰³ Goldstein and Freedman, "Campaign Advertising and Voter Turnout: New Evidence for a Stimulation Effect.."

⁹⁰⁴ Richard R. Lau and Ivy Brown Rovner, "Negative Campaigning," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12, no. 1 (2009).

politicians themselves they are complicated with the local term for them being a “black campaign.”⁹⁰⁵

Acceptability was measured by three indicators: acceptability of negative campaigning as a general campaign strategy, acceptability of specific types of negative campaign, and acceptability of candidates who use certain types of negative campaign, or the attacker. The findings showed that 61.4% of respondents ($N = 238$) disagree and strongly disagree with the use of negative campaigning, 32.3% agree and strongly agree with its use, and 6.3% did not know (see Table 16).

Table 16 Acceptability of negative campaign as electoral strategy

No	Negative campaign in general	Response ($N = 238$)				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
1	During campaigning, some candidates may attack their political opponents by criticizing their characters, performances, policies, leadership, and integrity, which is called a negative campaign. Other candidates could campaign by promoting their success and achievements in the past called a positive campaign. With that understanding, do you agree or disagree with the use of negative campaigns in Indonesia's elections?	53 (22.3%)	93 (39.1%)	71 (29.8%)	6 (2.5%)	15 (6.3%)

(Source: Student survey, Nov 2020/March 2021)

To understand acceptability in more depth, I asked respondents a further 8 questions about different types of negative campaigns by message relevance (see Table 17). Their responses showed variations in attitudes towards different negative campaigns. The results showed that

⁹⁰⁵ For most political elites, “black campaign” is attack campaigning based on false information such as slander or smear. On this sense, black campaign is certainly prohibited and against the law. However, some politicians would agree on going on this strategy if their candidates are first attacked with the same strategy.

attacks on policies and past mistakes of opponent's supporting parties had a strikingly higher acceptability than the rest of the negative campaign messages. On the contrary, attacks on members of family, religion, and ethnicity of the candidate were highly unacceptable. Most importantly, the use of false information for attacking political opponents was seen as the most unacceptable negative campaign messages, which follows the general moral values. However, there were a few respondents who accepted or strongly accepted the use of any kind of negative campaigning regardless of its relevance and truthfulness.

Table 17 Acceptability of specific types of negative campaigns

No	Specific types of negative campaign	Response (N = 238)				
		Strongly unacceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Strongly Acceptable	Don't know
1	A candidate attacks the policies of his political opponent	12 (5.0%)	64 (26.9%)	131 (55.0%)	17 (7.1%)	14 (5.9%)
2	A candidate criticizes the lifestyle of his political opponent's wife and family	95 (39.9%)	106 (44.5%)	19 (8%)	5 (2.1%)	13 (5.5%)
3	A candidate questions the religion of his political opponent	132 (55.5%)	76 (31.9%)	15 (6.3%)	7 (2.9%)	8 (3.4%)
4	A candidate questions the ethnicity of his political opponent	132 (55.5%)	71 (29.8%)	22 (9.2%)	3 (1.3%)	10 (4.2%)
5	A candidate accuses his political opponent of having a bad temper	88 (37%)	110 (46.2%)	23 (9.7%)	4 (1.7%)	13 (5.5%)
6	A candidate talks about corruption cases committed by his political opponents in the past	30 (12.6%)	49 (20.6%)	113 (47.5%)	30 (12.6%)	16 (6.7%)
7	A candidate talks about the past mistakes of his political opponent's party	21 (8.8%)	73 (30.7%)	109 (45.8%)	12 (5%)	23 (9.7%)

8	A candidate conveys false information about his political opponent	164 (68.9%)	45 (18.9%)	18 (7.6%)	3 (1.3%)	8 (3.4%)

(Source: Student survey, Nov 2020/March 2021)

The last indicator for acceptability relates to the attacker candidate who used negative campaigns. The results showed that regardless of the issue or the message—identity or policy—respondents tended to dislike candidate who attacked their opponent (see Table 18). Specifically, 89% of respondents strongly dislike or dislike a candidate who attacked his political opponent on religious identity, and 65% on policy aspects. Only 19.7% respondents like or strongly like the attacker if the issue of attack was on the policy or program of the target candidate. These findings were in line with the first indicator of acceptability of negative campaigning, in general suggesting that voters tended to associate negative campaigning directly with the candidate regardless of the attack coming from buzzers or influencers.

Table 18 Acceptability of the attacker

No	Types of attackers	Response (N = 238)				
		Strongly dislike	Dislike	Like	Strongly Like	Don't know
1	If a political candidate came to your area and gave a political speech in which he attacked his political opponent on their religious identity, would you like or dislike that candidate?	142 (60%)	69 (29%)	10 (4.2%)	2 (0.8%)	15 (6.3%)
2	If a political candidate came to your area and gave a political speech in which he attacked his political opponent on their policies, programs and vision and mission, would you like or dislike this candidate?	45 (19%)	109 (46%)	44 (18%)	4 (1.7%)	36 (15%)

(Source: Student survey, Nov 2020/March 2021)

Voters might say that they disliked negative campaigning, but they could still find it functional at least during the election. The table (Table 19) below shows that voters found negative campaign messages helpful (75.2%) in learning about the candidates. Likewise, the majority of respondents (73.1%) also strongly agree or agree that negative campaign messages were helpful in differentiating one candidate from the other. This finding suggests that despite notable disagreement with the use of negative campaigning, the majority of respondents found negative campaign messages useful in their political decision-making processes.

Table 19 Perceived functions of negative campaign

No	Indicators	Response (N = 238)				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
1	Negative campaign messages during the 2019 presidential election helped me to learn about the two pairs of candidates	12 (5.04%)	7 (2.94%)	15 (6.3%)	164 (68.9%)	40 (16.8%)
2	Negative campaign messages during the 2019 presidential election helped me to distinguish the first pair of candidates from the second or vice versa	12 (5.04%)	6 (2.52%)	12 (5.04%)	162 (68.1%)	46 (19.3%)

(Source: Student survey, Nov 2020/March 2021)

The majority of respondents tended to see negative campaigning as having a negative impact on democracy (56%) and some others said it had a positive impact (25.6%) (see Table 20).

Table 20 Perceived impact of negative campaign on democracy

No	Indicator	Response (N = 238)				
		Strongly negative	Negative	Positive	Strongly positive	Don't know
1	There are people who think that negative campaigns are bad for democracy, but there are also those who think they are good. With the same understanding as above that negative campaign is a political attack on other candidates on the aspects of character, policy, performance, leadership and integrity of the opponent, how would you describe the effect of negative campaigning on democracy?	37 (15%)	102 (41%)	60 (24%)	4 (1.6%)	43 (17%)

(Source: Student survey, Nov 2020/March 2021)

This section has analyzed how voters perceived negative campaigning by measuring the acceptability and assessment of negative campaigning in general. While this survey of course has some limitations, the preliminary findings were useful indicators to give a sense of awareness of negative campaigning in Indonesia, and how voters perceived it. The findings showed that respondents tended to disagree (61.4%) with the use of negative campaigning, suggesting they thought it was problematic and should not be practiced (given their dislike of candidates who 'attack' opponents), and (as shown in the third example above) they believed that negative campaigning was detrimental to democracy. However, at the same time, a majority of respondents said that they found negative campaign messages useful in learning about as well as differentiating between the candidates. The findings suggested, as this thesis has argued earlier, that the concept of negative campaign was fluid, complex, and even at times contradictory. I would argue that when respondents identified the direct function of negative campaigning messages, they perceived it positively. I now look in more depth at Indonesian voter choice around negative campaigning because understanding how voters evaluated the conduct of negative campaigning may hold clues as to its evolution in the digital era, as well as its increasing ubiquity in Indonesian election campaigns.

6.4. Exposure to and acceptance of negative campaign messages at the 2019 election

This section examines how respondents perceived information in a specific negative campaign by looking at presidential candidates Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto and the 2019 election. As explained in Chapter 4, Indonesia's 2019 election was considered highly polarising and hugely divisive, with many negative campaigns waged online and through social media. To show the magnitude of voters' exposure to negative campaign messages, the analysis used data from the national survey from Charta Politika, SMRC, and the student survey. I start by analyzing exposure to negative campaigns and then followed by acceptance of the negative campaign.

I chose two indicators of exposure to negative campaign on Joko Widodo (see Table 21), as this was the data most used by polling companies.

Table 21 Exposure to negative campaign messages against Jokowi

Indicators of exposure	Response (N = 2,000)	
	Yes, I know	No, I don't
Do you know or have you ever heard of news or information that says Joko Widodo comes from a Christian family?	542 (27.1%)	1.458 (72.9%)
Have you ever heard of news or information that says Joko Widodo has Chinese/Chinese ethnicity?	696 (34.8%)	1.204 (65.2%)

(Source: Charta Politika, March 20019)

Those who were exposed to the first negative campaign message (Joko Widodo comes from a Christian family) through any means of communications tended to be male (51% vs female 49%), Javanese (41%) and Sundanese (15%), Islamic (90%), and aged between 21-50 years old (75%). Similarly, those who had been exposed to the second attack message (Joko Widodo has Chinese ethnicity) tended to be male (53%), Javanese (41%), Sundanese (15%) and Bugis (5%), Islamic (91%), and aged between 21-50 (78%). Another survey conducted by Indikator Politika Indonesia (16-26 December 2018, N = 1,220) found that 20% said they knew the first negative campaign message, of which 20% believe, 57% don't believe, and 23% did not respond. As for the second attack message, 23% knew of it, 24% believe, 58% don't believe, and 18% did not respond.

In the meantime, as table 22 shows there were 28% who knew about the first negative campaign message against Prabowo Subianto ("Prabowo Subianto comes from a Christian family", and

more than 43% who had heard of the second negative messages (“Prabowo was involved in the kidnapping of 97/98 activists”).

Table 22 Exposure to negative campaign messages against Prabowo

Indicators of exposure	Response (N = 2,000)	
	Yes, I know	No, I don't
Do you know or have you ever heard of news or information that says that Prabowo Subianto comes from a Christian family?	560 (28%)	1,440 (72%)
Do you know or have you ever heard of news or information that says that Prabowo Subianto was involved in the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists in 1997-1998?	876 (43.8%)	1,124 (52.6%)

(Source: Charta Politika, March 20019)

Not all those who were exposed to negative campaign messages agreed and believed in the attack messages. Those who did agree or believe tended to come from a similar segment of the respondents. Table 23 shows the proportion of respondent who agreed or believed in the negative campaign messages against Joko Widodo from three different surveys: Charta Politika (March 2019), Indikator Politik Indonesia (April 2019), and student survey (November 2020/March 2021).

Table 23 Acceptance of negative campaigns against Joko Widodo

Charta Politika			
Indicators	Response (N = 2,000)		
	Agree/Believe	Disagree/ Don't believe	Don't know/No answer
Do you agree or disagree with the opinion that President Joko Widodo is a member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), at least related to the PKI, or protecting communists?	252 (12.6%)	1,197 (59.85%)	551 (27.55%)

Do you believe the news/information that say	112	608	1.280
Joko Widodo comes from a Christian family?	(5.6%)	(30.4%)	(64%)
(base: those who heard)			

Do you believe the news/information that	174	640	1.186
Joko Widodo has Chinese/Chinese	(8.7%)	(32%)	(59.3%)
ethnicity? (base: those who heard)			

SMRC			

Indicators	Response (N = 2,479)		
	Agree	Disagree	Don't know/No answer

Do you agree or disagree with the opinion that President Joko Widodo is a member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), at least related to the PKI, or protecting communists?	6%	73%	22%

Do you agree or disagree with the opinion that Joko Widodo is accomplice of the Republic of China (RRC)?	10%	69%	21%

Do you agree or disagree with this opinion: "President Jokowi anti-Islam or Muslims"?	6%	76%	18%

Student Survey			

Indicators	Response (N = 238)		
	Believe	Don't believe	Don't know/No answer

Do you believe in the opinion that President Joko Widodo is a member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), at least related to the PKI?	11	135	92
	(4.6%)	(57%)	(39%)

Do you believe the news/information that say	20	107	111
Joko Widodo comes from a Christian family?	(8.4%)	(45%)	(47%)

Do you believe the news/information that	9	140	89
Joko Widodo has Chinese ethnicity?	(3.8%)	(59%)	(37%)

(Source: Charta Politika, March 20019; SMRC, February 2019;⁹⁰⁶ Student survey, Nov 2020/March 2021)

The national surveys of Charta Politika, SMRC, and the student survey found that of the three key messages of negative campaigning directed against Joko Widodo, between 3.8% to 12% believed or agreed with the three attack messages directed towards him. The lowest percentage, which was on the Chinese identity issue, occurred in the student survey data. The sample was taken using purposive sampling and could possibly have come from supporters of Jokowi, which might explain the wide range in the percentages. That would also explain the higher percentage who believed in the attack message against Prabowo in the student survey, as shown in Table 24. Those who believed or agreed with the attack messages could change the outcome of the election if the majority of believers had not decided their final political choices when exposed to the messages. Needless to say, the negative campaigns primarily targeted the undecided voters, the number of which dropped as the campaign progressed.

Table 24 Acceptance of negative campaigns against Prabowo Subianto

Charta Politika			
Indicators	Response (N = 2,000)		
	Believe	Don't believe	Don't know/No answer
Do you believe the news/information that Prabowo Subianto comes from a Christian family?	273 (13.7%)	400 (20%)	1,327 (66.4%)
Do you believe the news/information that say Prabowo Subianto was involved in the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists in 1997-1998?	412 (20.6%)	480 (24%)	1,108 (55.4%)
Student Survey			
Response (N = 238)			

⁹⁰⁶ SMRC, *KONDISI EKONOMI, MOBILISASI IDENTITAS, DAN PILPRES MENJELANG 2019 EVALUASI PUBLIK NASIONAL* (24 Februari 5 Maret 2019).

Indicators	Believe	Don't believe	Don't know/No answer
Do you believe the news/information that Prabowo Subianto comes from a Christian family?	75 (31.5%)	49 (20.6%)	114 (47.9%)
Do you believe the news/information that say Prabowo Subianto was involved in the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists in 1997-1998?	104 (43.7%)	12 (5.0%)	104 (51.3%)

(Source: Charta Politika, March 20019)

This section has examined voters' exposure to negative campaign messages and their evaluations of it. In conclusion, those who were exposed tended to disagree or disbelieve in the negative campaign messages. There was only a small proportion who believed or agreed with the three negative campaign messages against Joko Widodo, ranging between 3.8% to 12%. However, even though only a small proportion of voters believed in the negative campaign messages, the electoral gain of going negative against an opponent would still pay off considering the nature of the competition and the competitive election, where a tiny shift in the votes may change the election. This is ultimately why campaign actors participate in negative campaigning tactics.

6.5. Evaluation of the attacker

This section examines the effect of negative campaigns on the attacking candidate using data from the student survey. As the previous section explained, exposure to negative campaign messages created awareness of attackers, issues, and the target of the negative campaign. Different from conventional negative campaigning using political ads or televised debates, the frequency of negative campaign messages using computational propaganda was hard to precisely assess as was which candidate contributed more to the negative campaigning in the context of the hybrid media system. It would require cross-media comparison in a longitudinal analysis during the campaign periods, which is not done here. However, to get a general grasp of the prevalence of negative campaigning scholars have proposed to use a survey of experts'

opinion. Therefore, I asked 33 experts who were mostly academics in the fields of political science, law, and communication at different universities and researchers at NGOs. I asked them a simple question: “Please remember the 2019 presidential election. In your best opinion, campaigns of which candidates would you believe attacked more often?”⁹⁰⁷ The result showed that 88% said that Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno were dominant in attacking their opponents (Figure 95).

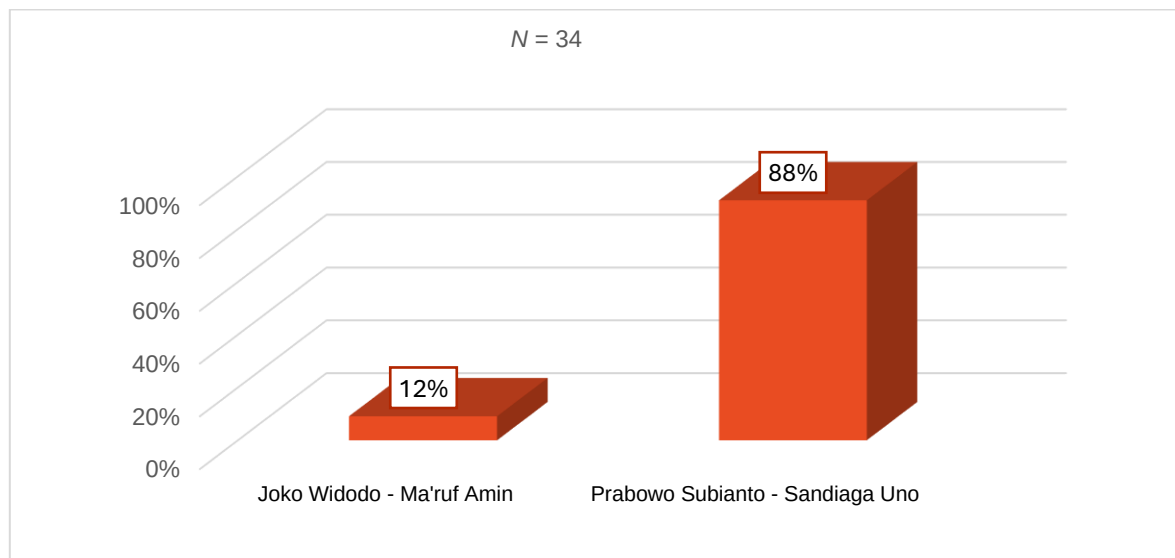


Figure 95 More frequent attacking candidate

(In your best opinion, campaigns of which candidates would you believe attacked more often?)
(Source: Expert survey data, November 2020)

The finding of the expert survey supported the student survey, which showed that Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno were perceived to be using more negative campaigning (38.8%) than Joko Widodo and Maruf Amin (6.94%). The proportion was drawn from answers to the following question: “As previously mentioned, during campaigning there are candidates who like to talk about their political opponents by criticizing their programs, policies, ideas and qualifications, which is also called negative campaigning. However, there are also those who focus on themselves by conveying programs, success and self-qualification, or called positive campaigns. With that in mind, looking back at the 2019 presidential election, how do you see

⁹⁰⁷ The question is meant to include all negative campaigns either directly staged by the candidates or by their campaign teams, buzzers, and influencers as thought by the respondents. The questioner was provided on online application for the experts to access with ID and password are provided as soon as the experts confirmed their consents to participate.

the campaign of the candidate 1 Jokowi-Amin, highly negative or highly positive?” This was followed by, “Similarly, how do you view the campaigns of candidate 2 Prabowo-Sandi, highly negative or highly positive?” (See Table 25).

Table 25 Proportion of campaign negativity

No	How negative or positive is the candidates' campaigns	Response (N = 238)				
		Highly negative	Negative	Balance	Positive	Highly positive
1	Joko Widodo – Maruf Amin	0	17 (6.94%)	118 (48.2%)	92 (37.6%)	18 (7.335%)
2	Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno	11 (4.49%)	84 (34.3%)	122 (49.8%)	26 (10.6%)	2 (0.82%)

(Source: Student survey, Nov 2020/March 2021)

The student survey also found that the most common actors in negative campaign identified by the respondents were campaign teams and volunteer groups, followed by members of political parties, the candidate themselves, and others (Table 26). There was a digital media dominated exposure to negative campaign messages as reported by the respondents too. The top three channels through which respondents encountered more negative campaign messages were online news websites, social media platforms, and WhatsApp groups (see Table 27). This could be interpreted as being because the most preferred media used by the respondents were digital media given their demographic characteristics. But it also tells us that the operation of the negative campaigning occurred on digital media even when only measured by a limited section of the entire voters, in this case university students.

Table 26 Actors of negative campaigning

Actors/Sources	Target candidate				Average	
	Jokowi-Amin	%	Prabowo-Sandi	%		%
Presidential and vice-presidential candidates	131	55	86	36	109	46
Members of political parties	136	57	116	49	126	53
Campaign teams of opponent	179	75	158	66	169	71

Volunteer groups of opponents	140	59	138	58	139	58
Independent figures	82	34	85	36	84	35
Others	52	22	61	26	57	24

The question was: “To your best knowledge or experience, which actors would you say attacked the presidential/vice presidential candidate [names of candidate] more often during the 2019 presidential election? [Multiple answers are allowed]”

(Source: Student survey, Nov 2020/March 2021)

Table 27 Media of exposure to negative campaigning

Media	Target candidates				Average %	
	Jokowi-Amin	%	Prabowo-Sandi	%		
Newspaper	48	20	49	21	49	20
Television	149	63	147	62	148	62
Radio	21	9	28	12	25	10
Online news website	183	77	184	77	184	77
Social media	208	87	206	87	207	87
WhatsApp group	126	53	120	50	123	52
Others	23	10	27	11	25	11

The question was: “To your best knowledge or experience, in which media would you say the presidential/vice presidential candidate [names of candidate] receive more negative campaigns during the 2019 presidential election? [Multiple answers are allowed]”

(Source: Student survey, Nov 2020/March 2021)

Furthermore, the most direct evaluation of candidates’ negative campaign could be seen from the way voters felt about the messages of negative campaigns. Following the student survey, I asked respondents about their feelings towards negative campaigning staged by the candidates. The question was, “Now we want to know how you feel about negative campaigns (attack messages). Regarding the attack messages that came from [candidate names] during the 2019 presidential election. Would you say that attack messages used by [candidate name’s] campaigns make you feel.....?” (see Table 28). The results showed that the emotional evaluation of negative campaigns by Prabowo-Sandi tended to be evaluated more negatively by respondents, evoking more negative emotions (sacred, angry, sad, offended) than negative campaigns by Jokowi-Amin’s campaign (see Table 28). Likewise, Jokowi-Amin’s negative campaigns tended to be evaluated more with positive emotions (hopeful, proud, enthusiastic) than Prabowo-Sandi’s negative campaigns. Regardless of these findings, we should always keep in mind that the evaluation of candidates by voters was influenced by several factors, such

as voters' perception of characters, policy and ideology, or the political parties supporting the candidates.⁹⁰⁸

Table 28 Emotional effect of negative campaign

No	Would you say that attack messages used by candidate	Response (N = 238)			
		Jokowi-Amin		Prabowo-Sandi	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Make you scared	49 (21%)	190 (79%)	83 (35%)	156 (65%)
2	Make you angry	60 (25)	179 (75)	123 (51)	166 (49)
3	Make you sad	57 (24)	182 (76)	83 (35)	156 (65)
4	Make you feel offended	35 (15)	204 (85)	71 (30)	168 (70)
5	Make you hopeful	84 (35)	155 (65)	50 (21)	189 (79)
6	Make you proud	62 (26)	177 (74)	30 (13)	209 (87)
7	Make you enthusiastic	92 (38)	147 (62)	60 (25)	179 (75)

(Source: Student survey, Nov 2020/March 2021)

To put the evaluation of the attacker succinctly, I used an instrument allowing a summative indicator, called a feeling thermometer, using a scale of 0 to 100 to show level of favourability of voters towards politicians. In this context the question was, "We would like to know your feeling towards the candidates who attacked their opponent at the 2019 presidential election. In a scale of 1 (Very cold/unfavourable feeling) to 100 (Very warm/favourable feeling), how would you describe your feeling towards candidate [name of candidate] when they were attacking during

⁹⁰⁸ Benoit, *Communication in political campaigns*.

the campaign?” The results (student survey, $N = 236$, $NA = 2$) showed that Prabowo Subianto was less likeable among respondents. There were 55% who felt unfavourable towards him, whereas those with unfavourable feelings towards Joko Widodo were only 34%.

This finding from the student survey was also corroborated by an exit poll held by Indikator Politik Indonesia on the election day (17 April 2019). Voters were asked to what extent they liked the presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Prabowo Subianto was the least liked (59%) among all candidates (Joko Widodo 68%, Maruf Amin 65%, and Sandiaga Uno 60%). Subsequently, voters were asked who was the most honest or trustworthy among the candidates and found that Prabowo Subianto (22%) was seen as the least trustworthy presidential candidate and Jokowi Widodo the most trusted presidential candidate (43%), whereas Maruf Amin was seen as the least trustworthy vice-presidential candidate (8%) compared to Sandiaga Uno (16%); and 11% did not answer.⁹⁰⁹

This section has shown the voters’ evaluation of attackers. Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno tended to be perceived of attacking far more than Joko Widodo and Maruf Amin; they also tended to engender more negative emotions from respondents. Consequently, respondents evaluated Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno as attacking candidates more negatively than Joko Widodo and Maruf Amin based on a feeling thermometer. This finding was also verified by the dominance of the attack messages directed towards the incumbent candidate Joko Widodo and Maruf Amin, as discussed in Chapter 4. Knowing the dominant attacker helps us to comprehend the potential effect of negative campaigning on electability of a target candidate—for instance, why electability of a candidate suffered the most. However, given the nature of the student survey with its non-probabilistic sampling, it was possible that the majority of respondents had a prior inclination towards Jokowi that caused the result. The same condition may apply to the survey respondents of Indikator Politik Indonesia above. If so, it indicates that attitude towards the attacker was also influenced by voters’ partisanship regardless of the number of respondents included. However, we must also keep in mind that the effect on voting was not only influenced by the proportion of attack messages but also by the methods of attack, the narratives employed, and their meaning to the majority of voters.

The use of negative campaigning by candidates, when to use it, and what it can achieve has split political consultants and pollsters in Indonesia. My interviews with several pollsters and political consultants showed that negative and black campaign were used and that there were

⁹⁰⁹ EXIT POLL PEMILU 2019, 17 APRIL 2019.

diverse factors that could influence the effectiveness of negative campaigning. Eskon Ruketo, a CEO of pollster in Jakarta explains,

I think positive campaigns and negative campaigns are used in Indonesia. Even black campaigns, in the form of slander, are also used, such as in the 2019 presidential election, both against Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto. The campaign model in Indonesia and its issues are no different from other countries such as those in America or perhaps Europe. This shows that negative campaigns are influential, or at least believed to be an influential tool by election contestants. Despite public politeness when politicians will tend to say: 'we are better off upholding unity and oneness, conducting positive campaigns, and so on.' But in my opinion, all politicians believe that negative campaigns are effective, some even agree that there is nothing wrong with slandering your opponent if it is useful for winning the election and if it is not punishable. If there is a black campaign, that's okay, as long as it doesn't matter legally. I see all of this in Indonesia. And I believe there is a lot of evidence both in 2014 and 2019 elections in Indonesia.⁹¹⁰

Most consultant and pollsters interviewees saw black campaigning from a normative perspective, as being based on lies rather than truth. Amos Inago (not his real name), a political consultant in Jakarta explained,

A black campaign is a campaign whose arguments or basis were actually lies, for example: 'Jokowi was Chinese,' 'Jokowi was of Singaporean descent,' 'Jokowi was PKI,' and had no factual basis. Negative campaigns, for example 'Jokowi failed economically, because he promised economic growth by 7%, but it turned out to be only 5%, for example. So, both are attacks, but the black campaign is a hoax, it has no factual basis. This is the difference between Indonesia and America. In America, attacking campaigns are normal and accepted, but in Indonesia there is reluctance. Consequently, there is no such thing as negative campaigning in our regulation and even in the televised debates it is often avoided. In fact, a design of the debate must be created to open up opportunities for candidates to attack each other. If we talk about the issue of SARA, it is actually a global phenomenon. There is anti-immigrant,

⁹¹⁰ Ruketoh, In-person Interview, 25 November, 2020

there is Charlie-Hebdo, xenophobia, in various parts of the world coupled with the phenomenon of social media. Social media creates a flood of information. This flood of information is what makes negative campaigns and black campaigns have powerful impact and influence. Social media in Indonesia only became popular in March 2014, and not before. I am sure that in Indonesia this method of firehose of falsehood was also used in the context of the Indonesian presidential elections in both 2014 and 2019, only the channel underwent modifications according to technological growth.⁹¹¹

Furthermore, Hasan Nasbi, a long-time consultant behind Jokowi's political rise, explained that the composition of a voter's ethnic background, which tended to follow geographical location, determined the effectiveness of negative campaigning:

We have to talk about territory. Some regions such as Sumatra, Sulawesi, East Indonesia are more exposed to attack campaigns on a regular basis. However, in places with a majority of the population is Javanese ethnicity, such as the entire Java, Lampung, Riau Island, this type of campaign is not a good campaign tactic. That is when you aggressively attack it will give a bad impression among voters. The Javanese ethnic group has a very complex, but complete culture. They have a philosophy about everything, including choosing leaders. Meanwhile, this attack campaign pattern is not compatible with Javanese culture, which happens to be the majority of Indonesia's population. So, for example, if Anies Baswedan wants to run for president, if I were to give him a professional advice, I would say: 'Just be a vice presidential candidate!'. No matter how hard he tries to prove himself, he is still an Arab. Idealistically, he has the right to progress to become anything. This is no one's fault, not Anies' fault; I don't agree with talking like this in the context of democracy, but as a political consultant I have to be realistic.⁹¹²

This cultural analysis might also explain why negative campaigning was not commonly used during formal campaigns on mainstream media, such as televised debates or public meetings. Because the mainstream media of television was still the most accessed media for political information by the majority of Indonesian, if negative campaigning was openly used on television, then negative campaigning could possibly have a stronger effect on target

⁹¹¹ Inage, In-person Interview, 27 December, 2020

⁹¹² Nasbi, In-person Interview, 18 January, 2021

candidates. The minimal effect that negative campaigning had could be explained from various perspectives. One line of argument offered by Burhanuddin Muhtadi, CEO of Indikator Politik Indonesia, whose works had included evaluating candidate's performance, campaign teams, and strategies, including dealing with negative issues, explained that the effect of negative messages on candidate electability was minimal given the imperfect environment for the conduct of negative campaigning in Indonesia, particularly at presidential elections. He explained,

And my conclusion is that in general, especially at the presidential election level, negative issues, black campaign issues, have little impact on the rise and fall of the electability of candidates contesting in the presidential elections. In general, whoever uses this issue, basically electorally it is only able to strengthen the political faith of their respective supporters but has not been able to effectively attract opposing supporters. So, electorally, the impact is very minimal. From one of the studies we conducted, not all respondents we asked knew about this negative issue; So, these issues are more elitist in nature. Most people don't know those issues debated on twitter. How can it be influential if not many are aware of it. Even in terms of exposure to the negative issues. And because this is a negative issue, people don't dare to speak more openly, because people are not comfortable talking about negative things, unless they are very partisan. And the negative issues of the attack were not brought much to the mainstream media either. The mainstream media has limitations for attacking campaigns. It is impossible for television for example to report that 'Jokowi is a communist,' or that 'Prabowo is temperamental.' So those who talk about negative issues end up running to social media, and that also depends on which type of social media. So, that could be the reason why the impact of the negative campaign is very small. Another reason, of all those who are exposed to negative issues, not all believe in the credibility of the issue. In fact, most of those exposed to this negative issue don't believe it. Lastly, those who believe tend to be for partisan reasons following confirmation bias that also choose their own media to get information from. So, there is less exposure to opposing information for them.⁹¹³

Considering the political information environment context in Indonesia, as explained above, partisan bias seems to have had a strong relevance in understanding the functioning of negative

⁹¹³ Muhtadi, In-person Interview, 14 January, 2021

campaigning in Indonesia, particularly in the national elections. This echoes a long held theoretical tradition since the publication of *The American Voter* that argues partisanship shapes attitudes towards political candidates and issues.⁹¹⁴ In recent times, for example, Bartels in the US found that “partisan bias in political perceptions plays a crucial role in perpetuating and reinforcing sharp differences in opinion between Democrats and Republicans.”⁹¹⁵ Furthermore, the electability of a candidate is dynamic and the influence that negative campaign has on it is dependent on time, which also informs when surveys should be conducted to measure the effect of certain negative campaigning. Some of the major negative messages about Jokowi and Prabowo had started as early as the 2014 presidential election, and in response various efforts had been made to counter the attacks and provide a defence against the negative information prior to the 2019 election. That is why another seasoned political consultant in Jakarta, Eep Saifullah Fatah, argued that the use of negative campaigning could not be translated directly to getting more votes for the implementers. He went on,

Electability is growing. We often ask voters: ‘If the election were held today, who would you choose?’ After that, we ask: ‘Is your choice fixed or is it still possible to change?’ This second data is much more important than the first one. Then, ‘When did/will you make that final decision? Is it: One month before, three days, or on voting day?’ This means that the campaign is not important for those who have already made their choice before voting and they are already firm. The campaign is only for those who have not yet made a choice. The campaign portion is shared by other factors: for example, whether a major event occurs that could benefit one of the candidates.⁹¹⁶

6.6. Effect on vote choice for the target candidate

This section examines the effect of negative campaigning on the electability of a target candidate by asking voters their voting preferences for target candidates using the pre-election survey of Charta Politika. Electability is a function of popularity and likeability of the candidate which might change as a campaign evolves and be different across different segments of voters. To measure the effect of negative campaigning on electability of a target candidate, I used data from the national survey held by Charta Politika in March 2019—a couple of weeks before voting day—

⁹¹⁴ Angus Campbell et al., *The American voter, an abridgment* (New-York; London; Sydney: John Wiley and Sons, 1967).

⁹¹⁵ Larry M. Bartels, “Beyond the Running Tally: Partisan Bias in Political Perceptions,” *Political Behavior* 24, no. 2 (2002).

⁹¹⁶ Fatah, In-person Interview, 6 January, 2021

where it asked 2,000 respondents, among others, the following question: "If the election for President and Vice President were held today, which pair would you choose?" as a measure of vote choice. To corroborate the result, I also used descriptive analysis of electability by comparing the target candidate's electability before the 2019 election campaigning with during the campaigning and at election day, using data from various pre-election surveys (Charta Politika, SMRC, and CSIS) and comparing these to official votes from KPU. This was meant to see if negative campaigns affected the electability of target candidate.

To examine the effect of negative campaigning on the electability of target candidates I run multiple logistic regression with a binomial model using data from the Charta Politika survey and measured the effect size following the regression coefficients. As explained above, logistic regression is a suitable method for assessing the influence of independent variables on dependent variables measured on a nominal scale by showing correlation and its effect size accordingly. The dependent variable was vote choice and the independent variable was negative campaign—exposure to and acceptance of negative campaign messages against the target candidate. Negative campaigning here was operationalized as "the act of attacking the opponent on his own program, values, record or character,"⁹¹⁷ irrespective of the veracity of the attack messages and civility of its delivery. I assessed effects of negative campaign messages on vote choice for both candidates using the same regression model by calculating the probability and effect size of each variable following the regression coefficients. The goal was to show whether or not negative campaigning affected electability of the target candidate and to what extent it could do so.

Vote choice or electability of the target candidate was measured by a self-reported answer to a question coded 1 for Joko Widodo and 0 for others when assessing the effect on Jokowi and 1 for Prabowo Subianto and 0 for others when assessing the effect on Prabowo Subianto. Exposure to negative campaigns was an index composed of two questions asking whether or not the respondents know and had ever heard of selected negative campaign messages staged against the candidates. The value of the exposure index was the mean of score for the two indicators, ranging from 0 to 1. Acceptance—an agreement that something is true—of negative campaigning was an index based on level of agree/disagree and believe/unbelieve in negative campaign messages against the target candidate, taking only respondents who answered at least one of the indicators in the regression analysis. This resulted in 1,622 respondents (378 respondents either did not answer or responded "don't know") in the regression model for Joko

⁹¹⁷ Nai and Walter, "The War of Words: The Art of Negative Campaigning."

Widodo and 1,850 respondents in the model for Prabowo Subianto. The value of acceptance index was the mean of corresponding indicators, ranging from 0.3 to 2 (3 questions) after recoding the responses. In the regression model for Prabowo Subianto, the acceptance index value ranged from 0.5 to 2 (2 questions) after recoding the responses (see Table 29). I also used control variables for the analysis, such as gender, domicile, age, ethnicity, religion, education, party choice, and government evaluation. I transformed all scores of categorical variables onto a binomial scale between 1 and 0 using Islam, Java, and PDIP as references for corresponding variables.

Table 29 Indicators of negative campaign

EXPOSURE		
No	Indicator	Response
Do you know, or have you ever heard of news or information that says...?		
1	Joko Widodo comes from a Christian family	Recoding: Yes = 1 No = 0
2	Joko Widodo has Chinese ethnicity	
3	Prabowo Subianto comes from a Christian family	
4	Prabowo Subianto was involved in the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists in 1997-1998.	
ACCEPTANCE		
No	Indicator	Response
Do you agree or disagree with the opinion that ...? (1)		
Do you believe the news or information that says...? (2-5)		
1	President Joko Widodo is a member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), at least related to the PKI, or protecting communists	Recoding: Believe = 2 Not believe = 1 Don't know/Not answered = 0
2	Joko Widodo comes from a Christian family	
3	Joko Widodo has Chinese ethnicity	
4	Prabowo Subianto comes from a Christian family	
5	Prabowo Subianto was involved in the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists in 1997-1998.	

(Source: Charta Politika, March 2019)

The regression analysis employed a logit model using GLM function in R. In what follows, I show the logistic regression of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin first, followed by regression of voting for Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno. To interpret the output, we focused on three aspects: coefficients, significance (p value), and positive/negative sign of coefficients. First, the regression output of voting for Jokowi-Amin returned a smaller residual deviance of the logistic regression model (1,420.4, $df = 1,612$) than its null deviance (2,247.1, $df = 1,621$), which suggests that the model was fit. The output showed that most variables were statistically

significant ($p < .05$; except for gender), which suggested that the independent variables did correlate with the dependent variable (vote choice). The model explained a 53% (pseudo $R^2 = 0.53$) variation in the dependent variable (vote choice). From the regression coefficients (B) we could see that age, religion, education, exposure, and acceptance had negative coefficients, which suggested a negative correlation between the variables and voting for Joko Widodo. Whereas gender, party choice, and evaluation of government had positive coefficients, which suggested a strong positive association between the predictors and voting for Joko Widodo (see Table 30).

Table 30 Logistic regression of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin

	B	SE
(Intercept)	0.00	(0.50)
Gender1	0.16	(0.13)
Age	-0.24 **	(0.09)
Ethnicity1	0.43 **	(0.14)
Religion1	-1.14 ***	(0.23)
Edu	-0.15 ***	(0.03)
GovEva	1.21 ***	(0.09)
PartyChoice1	2.71 ***	(0.24)
Exposure_to_NC_Jokowi	-0.45 *	(0.20)
Acceptance_of_NC_Jokowi	-1.55 ***	(0.20)
N	1622	
AIC	1440.41	
BIC	1494.32	
Pseudo R2	0.53	

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

The table entries are multiple logistic regression coefficients, with standard errors in parenthesis. The dependent variable is preferential vote of respondent at the 2019 presidential election. The question wording was: "If the election for President and Vice President were held today, which pair would you choose?" (Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin or Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno)
(Source: Charta Politika, March 20019)

Most coefficients of variables were statistically significant, which suggested that the independent variables significantly correlated with voting for Jokowi, one way or another. Primarily, exposure to and acceptance of negative campaign messages negatively correlated with the intention to vote for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin. To see more clearly the contribution of each predictor to the probability of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin, I calculated probability for the logit

coefficients with $P(y=1) = \text{odds}/(1 + \text{odds})$, by using odds generated from $\text{odds} = \exp(\text{coef}(\text{model}))$. The result shows that the default probability of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin was 50% ($p = .50$) when predictors were absent (intercepted). The probability of a male voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin was 54%. The probability of being Islamic and voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin was 24%. The probability of being Javanese and voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin was 60%. There was a 43% probability of an increment of age from 20 years old every four years to vote for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin. There was a 77% probability of voting for Jokowi-Amin for every 1-point increment in satisfaction with the government. Every 1 level increment in educational background contributed a 46% probability of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin. Meanwhile, there was a 93% probability that a voter for PDIP would vote for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin. Most importantly, exposure to negative campaign messages gave a 38% probability of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin. In addition, the probability of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin decreased by 17% as acceptance of negative campaign messages increased. In other words, as the regression output showed, more acceptance of negative campaign messages decreased the odds of voting for Joko Widodo ($B = -1.55$; $p > .001$). A key finding of the analysis was that negative campaigns did affect vote choice—an increase in the acceptance of negative campaign messages decreases the probability of voting for a target candidate. And given the selected negative campaign messages being measured, it showed that identity-related negative campaign messages that had deep meaning for voters decreased the electability of the incumbent candidate, Joko Widodo.

To understand more specifically the strength of the effect of each independent variable on vote choice for Joko Widodo, I calculated effect size of the variables based on the odds ratio using the “plot_model” function of “sjPlot” package in R following the regression coefficients above with a 95% confidence interval. By rule, an effect size (odd ratio) larger than 1 indicated an increased occurrence of an event (vote); smaller than 1 indicated a decreased occurrence of vote at the corresponding values (see Figure 96). Following Chen, Cohen and Chen,⁹¹⁸ odds ratio (OR) < 1.68 was a very small effect, $1.68 \leq \text{OR} < 3.47$ was small, $3.47 \leq \text{OR} < 6.71$ was medium, and $\text{OR} \geq 6.71$ was a large effect size. The results showed, most importantly, that every 1-point increase in exposure to negative campaign messages decreased the likelihood of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin by 0.64 times. Acceptance of negative campaign messages against Joko Widodo decreased the likelihood of voting for the candidates by 0.21 times. Males were 1.18 times more likely to vote for Joko Widodo – Maruf Amin. The same

⁹¹⁸ Henian Chen, Patricia Cohen, and Sophie Chen, "How Big is a Big Odds Ratio? Interpreting the Magnitudes of Odds Ratios in Epidemiological Studies," *Communications in Statistics - Simulation and Computation* 39, no. 4 (2010).

pattern was true for being Javanese at 1.54 times more likely. Further, every 1-point increase in positive evaluation of the government increased the odds of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin by 3.35 times. Voting for PDIP increased the likelihood of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin by 15 times, which is a large effect size. Every 1 level increase in group age (4 years) decreased the odds of voters voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin by 0.78 times. Being Islamic decreased the odds of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin by 0.32 times. Finally, every 1 level increase in education background decreased the odds of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin by 0.86 times.

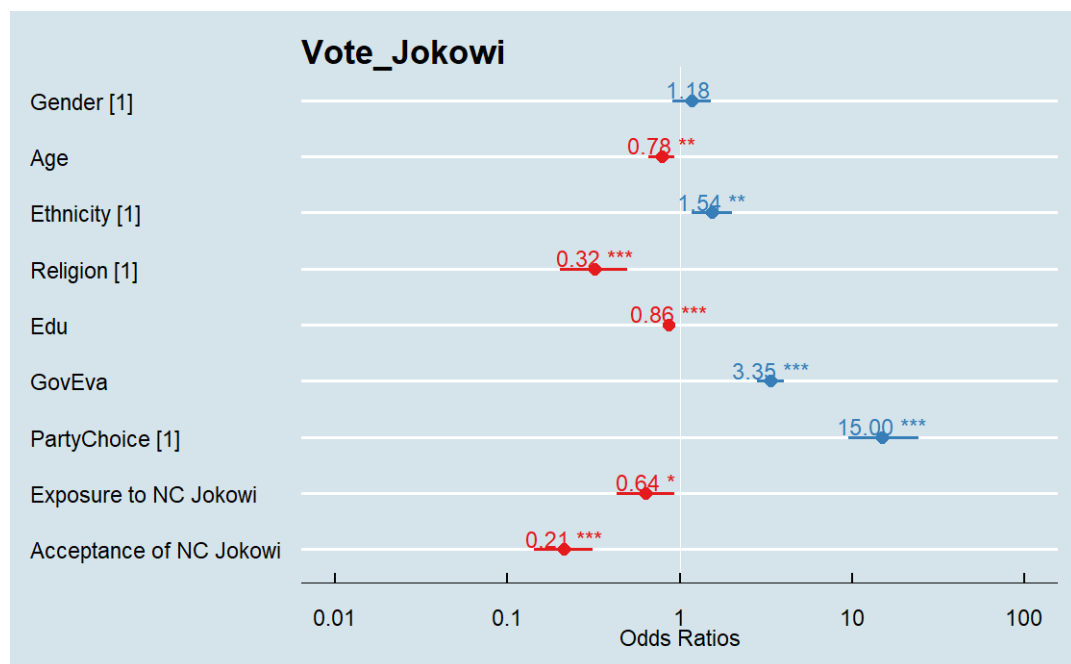


Figure 96 Effect size of predictors on vote for Jokowi-Amin

Dependent variable: Vote choice for Joko Widodo.
(Source: Charta Politika, March 20019)

Logistic regression of voting for Prabowo also showed a fit model where the residual deviance (1,954, $df = 1,840$) was smaller than the null deviance (2,519.6, $df = 1,849$). However, the model only explained 35% of the variation in vote choice. The regression analysis returned four statistically significant coefficients: gender, ethnicity, government evaluation, exposure, and acceptance. There were four predictors with positive coefficients, which indicated a positive association between the variables and vote for Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno. And there were five variables which had negative coefficients (see the Table 31). Ultimately, both exposure and acceptance of negative campaign messages were negatively associated with the intention of voting for Prabowo-Sandi.

Table 31 Logistic regression of vote for Prabowo-Sandi

	B	SE
(Intercept)	3.79 ***	(0.43)
Gender1	-0.24 *	(0.11)
Age	0.04	(0.07)
Ethnicity1	0.46 ***	(0.12)
Religion1	0.03	(0.18)
Edu	-0.05	(0.03)
GovEva	-0.21 **	(0.07)
PartyChoice1	0.02	(0.14)
Exposure_to_NC_Prabowo	-1.65 ***	(0.11)
Acceptance_of_NC_Prabowo	-1.90 ***	(0.15)
N	1850	
AIC	1974.03	
BIC	2029.26	
Pseudo R2	0.35	

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

The table entries are multiple logistic regression coefficients, with standard errors in parenthesis. The dependent variable is preferential vote of respondent at the 2019 presidential election. The question wording was: "If the election for President and Vice President were held today, which pair would you choose?" (Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin or Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno)

(Source: Charta Politika, March 20019)

To reveal the effect of negative campaigning on voting for Prabowo-Sandi, I calculated the size effects of the predictors based odd ratios values following the regression coefficients (see Figure 97). The results showed that every 1-point increase in exposure to negative campaigning decreased the odds of voting for Prabowo-Sandi by 0.19 times. The odds of voting for Prabowo-Sandi decreased by 0.15 times for every 1-point increase in acceptance of negative campaign messages. The effects size of the two predictors were very small.

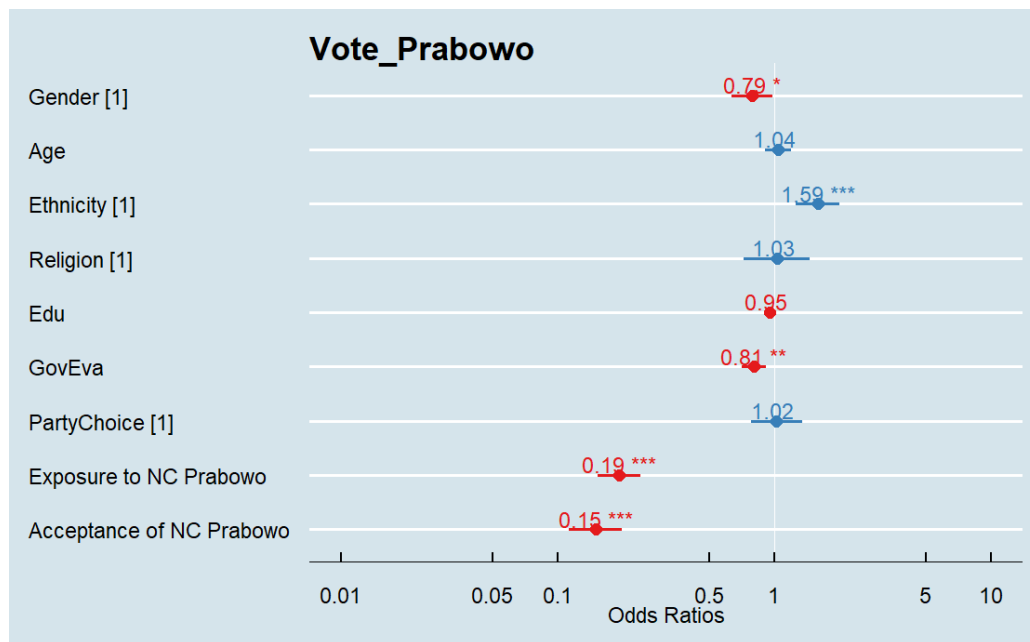


Figure 97 Effect size of predictors on vote for Prabowo – Sandi

Dependent variable: Vote choice for Prabowo Subianto
(Source: Charta Politika, March 2019)

To summarize, the analysis showed that both exposure to and acceptance of negative campaign messages against the two candidates were statistically significant correlated with a decreasing probability of voting for them. The difference was in the size of the effect. On one hand, the effect size results showed that every 1-point increase in exposure to negative campaign messages decreased the likelihood of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin by 0.64 times. In addition, acceptance of negative campaign messages against Joko Widodo decreased the likelihood of voting for Joko Widodo by 0.21 times. On the other hand, every 1-point increase in exposure to negative campaigning against Prabowo Subianto decreased the odds of voting for Prabowo-Sandi by 0.19 times, and every 1-point increase in acceptance of negative campaign messages against him decreased the odds of voting for the pair by 0.15 times. Although there was a higher negative effect of negative campaigning on the odds of voting for Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin (0.21 times) than the odds of voting for Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno (0.15), the effect size of the negative campaigning on vote choice for target candidate was very small. However, in a highly competitive election with close margins, constantly tiny decreases in an opponent's electability towards voting day might be enough reason to keep attacking an opponent candidate.

This analysis certainly has some limitations. First, given the negative campaign messages contained different levels of veracity, with more false information towards Joko Widodo than

towards Prabowo Subianto, the analysis did not show how the level of truthfulness shaped the effect. Also, it was not known how the level of civility of the negative campaign could have explained the effect. The two dimensions were important aspects in the election campaign communication. Second, as voters tended to interpret campaign messages not only rationally but also emotionally, the emotional affect may have moderated the way voters evaluated the candidates and vote choice. The same negative campaign messages might have evoked different negative emotions (such as anger, anxiety, and hate) in voters, particularly when it came to religious issues or issues that had dark connotations for voters. It was not the messages per se but the emotional arousal of it that was influential. Third, due to the lack of items in the questionnaire it was not known how much respondents were exposed to factual negative campaign messages (volume) at the time of the data collection (March 2019) compared to their prior knowledge. This leads to the possibility of partisan bias in answering the questions on exposure and acceptance of negative campaign messages at the 2019 presidential election. To improve the analysis, further study could include extending the dimensions of the negative campaign messages, for example, including veracity and civility, and measuring the role of emotion in data collection. Most importantly, a survey experiment could overcome the partisan bias interference in measurement of effect of exposure and acceptance of negative campaigning by randomly assigning respondents into treatment and control groups. In a randomized experiment, we could avoid the potential presence of reverse causality that commonly occurs in observational research design like this.⁹¹⁹

Characteristics of voters who voted for and against the target candidate showed consistent trends. A national pre-election survey (Indikator Politik Indonesia, 2019; $N = 1,220$) showed that voters who believed that Jokowi's parents were Christians tended to come from Prabowo's voters (6% vs 30%). The same pattern was true for those who believed in the issue that Jokowi was Chinese (7% vs 39%). Prabowo's voters also tended to constitute primarily those who believed in the rise of PKI in Indonesia (14% vs 42%), an issue that was often used to attack Jokowi. On the other hand, those who believed in the issue against Prabowo that he was involved in the kidnapping of activists in 1997/1998 primarily came from Jokowi's voters (65 vs 21%). There was a clear pattern of partisanship by voters who might have been exposed to the negative campaigning. Similarly, a more precise exit poll survey (Indikator Politik Indonesia, 2019; $N = 2,975$) found that those who voted for Jokowi-Amin tended to be less educated and

⁹¹⁹ What some scholars have been often quote as general qualification to claim causality is the criteria set by a philosopher John Stuart Mill. He established three qualifications to make sure a causal relationship exists: (1) the cause preceded the effect, (2) the cause was related to the effect, and (3) we can find no plausible alternative explanation for the effect other than the cause. Thomas D Cook, Donald Thomas Campbell, and William Shadish, *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference*, vol. 1195 (Houghton Mifflin Boston, MA, 2002).

of economically lower status; members of a religious minority; Javanese, Batak and other ethnicities; residing predominantly in Yogyakarta, Central Java, East Java, Bali, Maluku and Papua; and also voters for incumbent's coalition parties, namely PDIP, PSI, PKB, Perindo, Golkar, Hanura and PPP. On the other hand, Prabowo-Sandi's voters tended to be highly educated; Madura, Sunda, Minang, and Betawi ethnicities; residing predominantly in Sumatera, Banten, and West Java; and had voted for Gerindra, PKS, PAN, Demokrat, and Berkarya parties.

Muslims voted more Prabowo-Sandi than Jokowi-Amin despite there only being a small margin. An exit poll of Indikator Politik Indonesia showed that Jokowi-Amin tended to be voted for by less educated and lower income voters. Importantly, by ethnicity, mostly only Java and Batak ethnic groups voted for Jokowi-Amin, 65% and 72%, respectively, whereas Sundanese, Madura, Betawi, and Minangkabau mostly voted for Prabowo-Sandi. There was a slightly different distribution of Islamic voters for Jokowi-Amin (49%) and Prabowo-Sandi (51%). However, minority religion (non-Muslim) voters overwhelmingly voted for Jokowi-Amin (97%), with only a very small number voting for Prabowo-Sandi (3%). Interestingly, Muslim voters affiliated with NU tended to vote for Jokowi-Amin (56%), but voters affiliated with other Islamic organizations tended to vote for Prabowo-Sandi, such as Muhammadiyah (34% vs 66%) and other Islamic organizations (36% vs 64%).⁹²⁰ This result seemed to resonate well with the key attack messages and methods of attack mobilized by the campaign teams of Prabowo-Sandi against Jokowi-Amin.

Some scholars have argued that findings like this indicate a trend of motivated reasoning where voters tended to receive and believe in information that they wanted to hear regardless of its truth, hindering potential opportunities for discussing issues opposing their beliefs.⁹²¹ However, it could have also been the case that the massive amplification of negative campaign messages against target candidates during the campaign periods either instilled new information for the first time for voters or reminded them of information they already were aware of, which influenced their political preferences one way or another. An alternative explanation was that they voted against Joko Widodo because of the exposure to and influence of the negative campaign messages despite the very small size of effect. However, it is also possible that negative campaigns consolidated the attacker's own voters during the campaign rather than just swaying undecided voters or demobilizing opponents' supporters, which is beyond the scope of the

⁹²⁰ EXIT POLL PEMILU 2019, 17 APRIL 2019.

⁹²¹ Neyazi et al., "Who Gets Exposed to Political Misinformation in a Hybrid Media Environment? The Case of the 2019 Indonesian Election."; Neyazi and Muhtadi, *Comparative Approaches to Mis/Disinformation* | *Selective Belief: How Partisanship Drives Belief in Misinformation*, 15.; Mujani and Kuipers, "Who Believed Misinformation during the 2019 Indonesian Election?."

current study. It is equally possible that true motivation of campaign actors for staging negative campaign are multifaceted: it is meant not only to lower favourability of voters towards opponents, but also to strengthen and solidify candidate's own vote base.⁹²² The general convention goes that negative campaign works or so is believed by politicians and their political consultants that negative campaign could lower the electability of target candidate. But this study shows that the effect is very minimal. The minimal effect for the context of 2019 presidential election may moreover be affected by the main distribution of the key attack messages which was social media particularly twitter. Twitter is a segmented social media platform compared to the entire or majority of Indonesian voters who obtain their information from television.

Another piece of evidence to test the decreasing electability of the target candidate (Joko Widodo) was to plot a longitudinal trend of his electability. There was a declining trend of Joko Widodo's electability from September 2018 (60.4%), when the official campaign of the presidential election was just started, to April 2019 with March 2019 being the lowest at 51.4%—including after being paired with Ma'ruf Amin. Contrarily, the electability of Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno steadily increased during the same period, from 29.8% to 45.5% of the official votes released by KPU. One thing we could draw from this trend is that Prabowo-Sandi's electability was much higher during the campaigning towards election day than earlier in the campaign period, whereas Jokowi-Amin's electability was lower after the campaigning period compared to that of before the campaign in April 2018. In general, the political campaign did affect candidates' electability for good or for bad. But the key question to answer here is to what extent the declining trend of Jokowi-Amin's electability could be attributed to the influence of negative campaign against the candidate. Precise evidence of the effect would require a more systematic study; however, there is a correlation between the increasing frequency of negative campaign against Joko Widodo, as found in Chapter 4, and the decreasing trend of his electability along the same period of time (see Figure 98).

⁹²² Simon Stuckelberger, "Mobilizing and chasing: The voter targeting of negative campaigning – lessons from the Swiss case," *Party Politics* 27, no. 2 (2021).

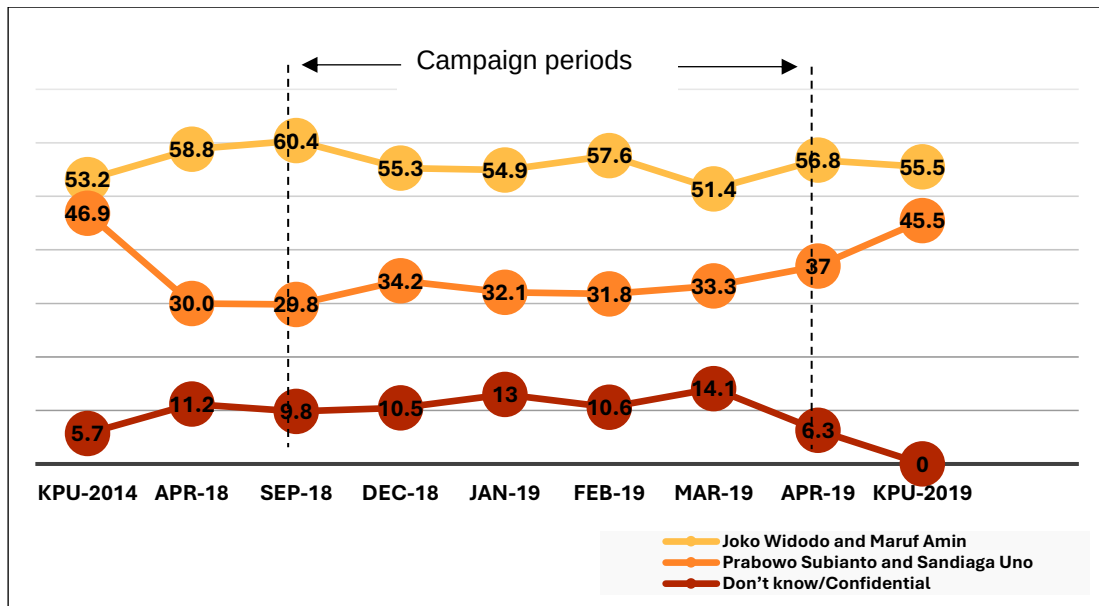


Figure 98 Candidate electability trends

(Source: Charta Politika, April 2018; SMRC, April 2019; CSIS, March 2019; KPU, 2014/2019)

As explained above, voters could potentially learn from the negative campaign messages and connect the messages with the beliefs and attitudes that they already held about the candidates. The result would be either reinforcing or persuading voters beliefs, depending on the amount of information they had. Due to the data limitations of the Charta Politika survey, it was not possible to measure the understanding of the issues being used in the negative campaign. However, the data showed that there was a strong resonance between the key attack messages against Joko Widodo – Ma’ruf Amin and the reasons why voters did not vote for the candidate (see Figure 99). The figure shows that beside general reasons, there was a resonance between the key attack messages of negative campaign against Joko Widodo – Ma’ruf Amin, as shown in Chapter 4, with reasons why voters did not vote for them. These reasons were “More in favour of foreigners” (6.9%), “Not in favour of Islam” (3%), “Discrediting the Ulama (1.8%), and “Dividing Islam” (1.3%). There was a strong Islamic narrative driving the voting behavior at the 2019 election, which candidate’s benefitted from appealing to either in positive or negative campaigns. An exit poll by Indikator Politik Indonesia on the election day showed that more than half of the Indonesians either “always” (25.6%) or “very often” (33.5%) made their electoral decisions by

considering their religious teachings or values.⁹²³ Given that the majority of Indonesian voters are Muslims, the amplification of attack messages against incumbent were mainly targeted at Muslim voters who arguably would make their political decisions based on personal and social values they held dear, including religious values—a strategic campaign targeting issue.

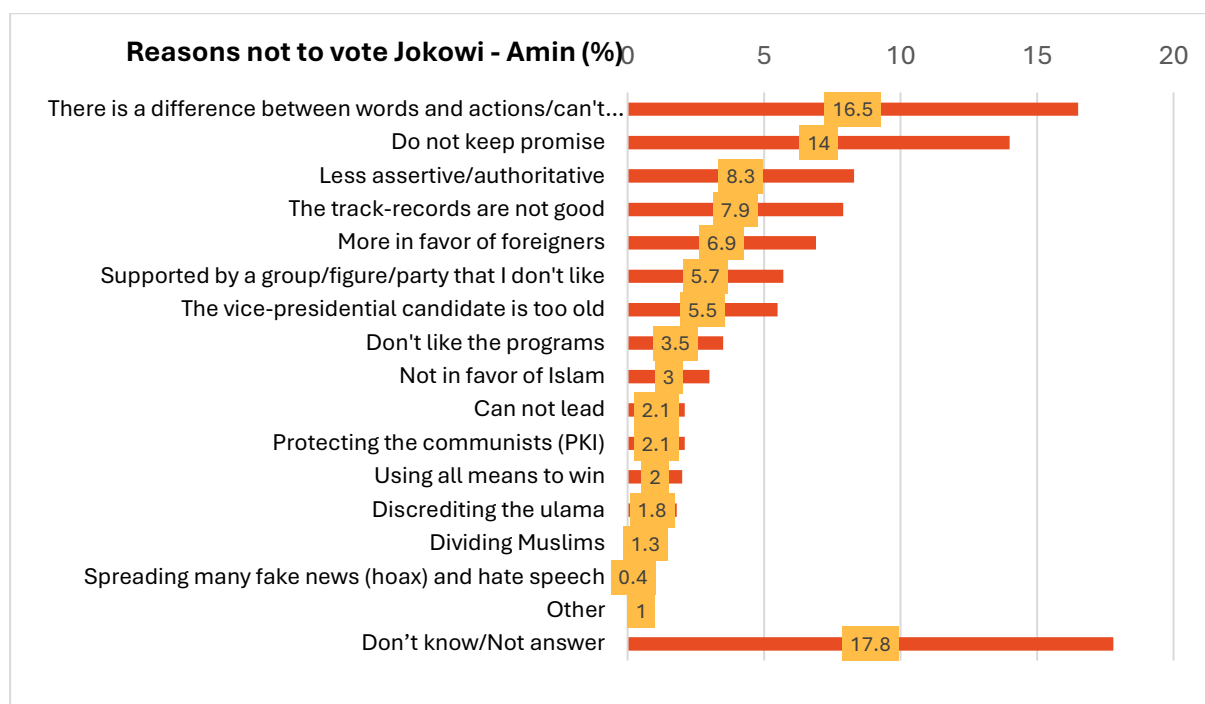


Figure 99 Reasons of not voting for Joko Widodo – Ma’ruf Amin

(Source: Charta Politika, March 20019)

This section has argued that negative campaigns have the potential to affect the voters’ choice of both the incumbent and challenger target candidate. The findings showed exposure to, and acceptance of, negative campaign messages significantly negatively correlated with the electability of both Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto. There was a higher negative effect of negative campaigning on electability of Joko Widodo – Ma’ruf Amin than on Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno. However, both effect sizes were very small. Those who tended to accept negative campaign messages increased the chances of not voting for the target candidates. The effectiveness of negative campaign messages was driven by the recurring attack messages and negative narratives that were meaningful to voters, particularly on identity-based messages

⁹²³ EXIT POLL PEMILU 2019, 17 APRIL 2019.

of negative campaigns that specifically evoked strong negative emotions (fear, anger, or hatred) for voters. Labelling or associating the target of negative campaigning with negative narratives may have primed their perceptions and evaluations of the candidate, with them voting accordingly.

6.7. Other consequences of negative campaigning

This section examines other consequences of negative campaigning in Indonesia through relating the 2019 presidential election to existing literature on negative campaigning. Existing literature has shown various types of unintended consequences of negative campaigning, such as a boomerang effect, demobilization, cynicism, political efficacy, alienation, and distrust in government or electoral process.⁹²⁴ I make two broad conclusions from my data to include Indonesia in these global questions scholars are raising. These are largely preliminary conclusions, and further quantitative data would provide more extensive findings.

6.7.1. Polarisation

Existing scholarly studies have argued that negative campaigning leads to greater polarisation, with the US and UK sites being the most examined. By polarisation, they generally mean political party polarization, such as “the tendency for partisans to dislike and distrust those from the other party.”⁹²⁵ Although democracy involves some level of polarization, extreme polarization could be detrimental to a well-functioning democracy. Polarization is considered as dangerous to democracy because it brings discriminatory behaviour towards opposing partisans and decreases political trust among supporters of losing candidates, which both hinder the cooperation needed to govern.⁹²⁶

However, political party polarization in Indonesia is not the same as that in the West. As in most multiparty systems where party identification and membership is shrinking, polarization in Indonesia is not driven by the ideologies of the political parties but rather by the personalities of the politicians. Many scholars of Indonesia have written that polarization caused by electoral rivalry was visible in the 2014 presidential election. There was amplification of labelling by the

⁹²⁴ For an extensive overview, see Nai and Walter, *New perspectives on negative campaigning: Why attack politics matters*.

⁹²⁵ James N. Druckman et al., “Affective polarization, local contexts and public opinion in America,” *Nature Human Behaviour* 5, no. 1 (2021).

⁹²⁶ Andres Reiljan, “Fear and loathing across party lines’(also) in Europe: Affective polarisation in European party systems,” *European journal of political research* 59, no. 2 (2020).

supporters of the candidates, which led to polarizing identities and discourses using derogatory labels to demean opponents, such as *cebong* (tadpoles), referring to Jokowi's supporters and *kampret* (bats) and *kadrun* (dab lizard), referring to Prabowo's supporters. Hence, the Indonesian case showed that negative campaign messages reinforced affective polarization—increasing dislike towards the opponent's supporters—both online and off-line, indicating an unexpected influence of negative campaigning in the hybrid media environment.

The role of social media, with its enabling affordances for interaction and interactivity among different opposing groups, increased the opportunity and intensified the encounters between the two opposing groups seeking to claim influence over each other. The intensification of symbolic conflict between the opposing groups was exacerbated by amplification by the mainstream media in the hybrid media environment. The mainstream media increased the gap between the two opposing groups, fighting for victory by their favoured candidate. Negative campaign messages bred affective polarization, which then extended extreme partisan animosity among the opposing groups. The official campaign, as one study found, did not entail ideological struggles over how Indonesia should be debated in the campaigns.⁹²⁷ In short, this study suggests there was a correlation between the growing polarization in Indonesia and the growth of negative campaigns amplified on social media and strengthened by the hybrid media system.

6.7.2. Voter turn-out

Negative campaigning did not seem to lower electoral participation in the Indonesian context. The demobilization hypothesis argues that negative campaigning makes voters feel bad about politics, and they then decide to stay at home rather than vote on election day. However, data on electoral participation in presidential elections showed that voter turnout tended to increase in the two most competitive and negative election campaigns in Indonesia's democracy, which went from 69.79% in 2014 to 81.97% in 2019 (see Figure 100). One explanation for this trend might have been that negative campaigns against popular candidates tended to motivate voters to participate at the election because of the risk of defeat through not voting, or more likely, voter turnout in countries like Indonesia (and elsewhere like US) can be determined by a range of factors, including community and the level of state mobilisation to encourage voters to turn out. In 2019, as the election was close, there was a strong political party mobilisation on polling day. If it is in the political parties and the state's interests to have a higher turnout, this factor is more

⁹²⁷ Timo Duile and Sukri Tamma, "Political language and fake news," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 49, no. 143 (2021).

likely to influence turn out than whether there were significant forms of negative campaigning on social media.

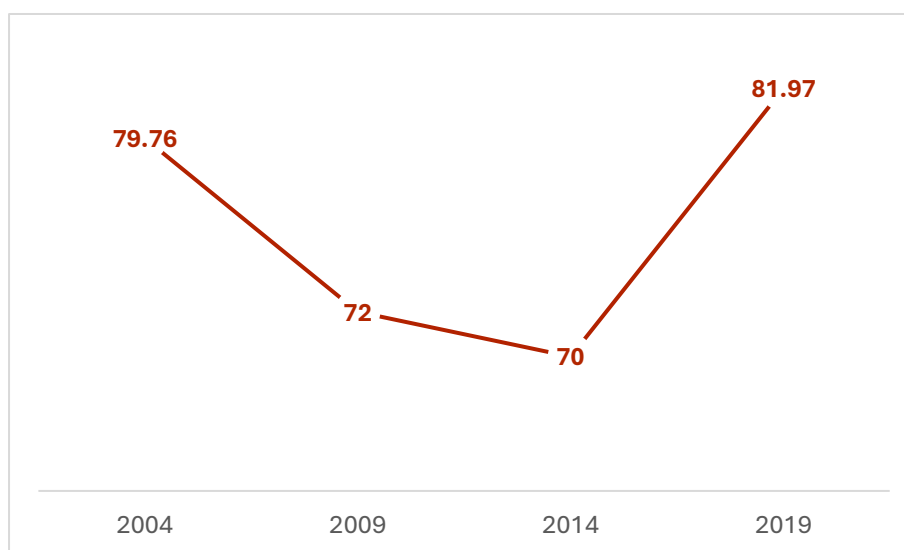


Figure 100 Voter turnout at Indonesian presidential elections (%)

(Source: KPU)

6.8. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that negative campaigning is, overall, has the capacity to lower electability of a target candidate. This is not to say negative campaigning is *always* effective, or the only way to win over a voter. Of course, the success of a negative campaign depends on the campaign environment, such as the type of content, how voters interpret it, and more broadly existing voter perceptions of candidates. However, the findings from Indonesia showed that certain forms of negative campaigning, such as identity-based attacks, could be effective in lowering the incumbent candidate's electability. The logistic regression results showed that more exposure to, and positive acceptance of, negative campaign messages decreased the likelihood of voting for a candidate targeted by negative campaigning.

These findings contribute to the key argument of this thesis in that they prove that negative campaigning is a growing concern in Indonesia and one that requires greater scrutinization. The student survey showed that respondents tended to disagree with the use of negative campaigning—only 32.5% agreed with its use. For those who did agree, they saw negative campaigning as justifiable only when attacking certain policies of opponents, highlighting previous corruption cases committed by political opponents, or negative campaigns against a

particular party rather than an individual. Nonetheless, the majority of respondents said that negative campaign messages were useful in learning about, as well as differentiating between, the candidates.

Although negative campaigns decreased the probability of voting for target the candidate, the effect sizes were very small, and correlation should not be confused with causation. However, in a competitive election where candidates often win on close margins (as is the case in Indonesia), a tiny decrease in the opponent's electability is more than enough reason to attack an opponent via negative campaigning. Mobilizing identity-based negative narratives could decrease vote choice for the target candidate enough to lose an election, and this is ultimately why campaign managers employ these kinds of tactics. In Indonesia in particular, the central role of identity-based attack messages in a highly religious society is even more pertinent. Messages of negative campaigning around race and religion, as shown in Chapter 4 and 5, clearly had traction with a large cohort of Indonesian voters.

Analysis of the effect size of the regression showed that exposure to, and acceptance of negative campaign messages significantly negatively correlated with electability of both Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto. But there was a higher negative effect of negative campaigns on the electability of the Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin pairing than on the Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno pairing. Results of the expert survey showed that Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno's campaigns were perceived as being far more attacking than Joko Widodo and Maruf Amin's. This finding was also verified by the dominant attack messages directed towards Joko Widodo and Maruf Amin, as discussed in Chapter 4. In simple terms, Jokowi was more likely to be attacked than Prabowo in 2019, in particular via a message that he was anti-Islam, which ultimately hindered his campaign. Prabowo was attacked in various ways which did impact his electability in the eyes of voters, but less so around the issue of religion, and overall, less so compared to Jokowi.

The overall findings indicated the influence of the employment of computational propaganda in negative campaigning against the candidates. The indication was proven by the actors of the negative campaigns, social media platforms, and the resonance of the negative campaign messages between social media amplification, voters' exposure, and acceptance of negative campaign messages. From the student survey, the most identified actors of negative campaigning at the 2019 presidential election were the campaign teams and the volunteer groups of candidates. The volunteers included the large-scale, fragmented network of buzzers that attacked opponent candidates during the 2019 election. The student survey also showed that online news and social media platforms were the two main channels where they encountered negative campaign messages. There were also resonances of negative campaign

messages between what the actors disseminated, as shown in Chapter 4, with messages voters were exposed to on social media, as shown above, and with what voters were actually exposed to and accepted of the negative campaign messages in the multiple surveys—student, Charta Politika, and publicly available. In addition, the surveys found some sections of the voters did believe the malicious information about the candidates that had been amplified through computational mechanisms. I would argue that computational propaganda had either instilled new false information or kept enforcing what they already misbelieved that affected their perception of the candidates. Nevertheless, how precisely the computational contribution to the effect of negative campaigning is something for further studies to investigate given the hybrid media system within it.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to examine how new digital media technologies had modernized negative campaigning as a strategic example of digital political communication, and its effect on contemporary Indonesian elections. This phenomenon deserved a systematic investigation given the legitimacy of elections as a fundamental mechanism of representative democracy and to understand the trajectory of Indonesian democracy at large. To examine the problem systematically, this thesis posed three questions: How have new digital technologies shaped the mechanics of negative campaigning in Indonesia? What are the key narratives of negative campaigning in Indonesia's digital-era elections? And how effective is negative campaigning in affecting voters? This thesis has shown that new digital technologies have modernized negative campaigning with computational enhancement using social media, anonymity, automation, and coordinated behavior to produce and disseminate attack messages and negative narratives against candidates. The use of computational propaganda in negative campaigning allowed campaign actors, such as buzzers and influencers, to mobilize fake (as well as real) accounts on social media to manipulate information and to prioritise certain negative campaign messages. In a hybrid media environment, these messages were amplified, and conducted without fear of backlash, legal penalties, and platform transparency enforcement. Furthermore, the innovation in the mechanics of negative campaigning was not only a new trend at national elections but also a normalized practice at local elections in Indonesia. Given the logic of social media and key narratives of election campaigning in Indonesia, character attacks and identity issues dominated the negative campaign messages in the digital era.

In this chapter, I summarize the main findings of the thesis and discuss its implications for electoral campaign communication research and Indonesia's elections and democracy. I show the limitations of the study and suggest potential areas for future research. I conclude by discussing why election campaign reform is needed for the sake of Indonesian democracy.

Before I lay out the key findings of the thesis, I would like to reassert my working definition of negative campaigning embracing the perspective of political communication and its relationship with other types of campaigning in the context of Indonesian politics. I employed a definition of negative campaigning as communication strategy of a candidate where he or she disseminates messages that criticize or attack policies, values, records, and character of their opponents to paint them unfavourably to influence public perception and voter decisions. This definition follows Nai and Walter's assessment, who defined negative campaigning as "the act of attacking

the opponent on his own program, values, record or character".⁹²⁸ Writing in 2015 in their edited book *The New Perspectives on Negative Campaigning, Why Attack Politics Matters*, Nai and Walker sought to set a foundation for more international collaboration and perspective in investigating and understanding negative campaigning.

This thesis found that digital media had modernized negative campaigning, making negative campaigning, massively large-scale, faster, and impactful. Character attacks rather than policy attacks have dominated the types and narratives of negative campaigning in Indonesia particularly so in the digital era. The study also found a significant negative correlation between exposure to negative campaigning and the decreasing likelihood of voting for the target candidates. Negative campaigns using identity-related messages were highly likely to reduce the electability of targeted candidates. The findings contribute to the literature on digital campaigning that indicate that the campaigns are mainly dominated by computational propaganda to manipulate public opinion in a context of hybrid media environment rather than encouraging fruitful online debates on issues that are important to solving public problems. Digital media technology has modernized the mechanics of negative campaigning, dominated by manipulative acts rather than genuine efforts by candidates to differentiate opponent from self. Negative campaign messages and narratives were directed towards the character of the target candidate rather than towards policy or ideology. The finding confirmed previous studies' findings that negative campaign could influence the electability of a target candidate. The effect can be explained by the nature of the negative campaign messages, the methods, and the characteristics of Indonesian voters.

This thesis showed that negative campaigning in Indonesia via digital media operated massively, faster, and undetected in manipulating information. The results of this study indicated that negative campaigning in the digital era was far from being a legitimate electoral process to inform better decision making of voters. Hence, election campaigns had become a manipulation of information and voters by illicit actors to gain power and to control public government. Overall, this study strengthened the idea that negative campaigning was used by actors to win elections through computational enhancement, confirming its global employment from the context of Southeast Asia. The principal theoretical implication of this study was that negative campaigning with the employment of digital media in Indonesia did not serve its democratic function to provide voters with information they needed to make sound judgments in their political decisions. The idea of a marketplace of ideas during an election campaign has led into further escalation of a

⁹²⁸ Nai and Walter, "The War of Words: The Art of Negative Campaigning."

massive distribution of problematic information—a paradox of democracy where “a free and open communication environment that, because of its openness, invites exploitation and subversion from within.”⁹²⁹ Negative campaigning in new digital media contexts distorted public discourse during the election campaigns to the level that it could set a staged media agenda and manipulate public opinion without much awareness by the voters.

The empirical findings in this study provided a new understanding of negative campaigning in the context of a multiparty system, where the main actors were not political parties, and the intention to stage campaign negativity did not follow the pattern of US-based parameters, such as being in opposition, position at polls, limitation of resources, personality traits, ideological standing, and so on. This study has shown that new determinants of negative campaigning for candidates include the presence of candidate identity of being a minority, personal relation with national political elites, and candidate relation to national government coalition. At the 2019 presidential election, intensifying negativity was driven by the attack-counterattack patterns between the two candidates, implying that attack breeds more attack. It was proven in this thesis that massive engagement of attack messages across new and old media platforms (see Chapter 4, hybrid media environment) was in many ways triggered by negativity bias in human actors (social media users, political actors, and journalists). In a highly competitive media market, attention-based news consumption needed to rely on attention-grabbing issues, and negativity in campaigning was an emotionally powerful, attractive topic.

As this thesis has shown, negative campaigning was not entirely new to Indonesia with the arrival of the digital era. Key global literature of the pre-digital era relied on TV political ads⁹³⁰ and newspaper reports⁹³¹. The pre-digital era was characterized by the centralized organization of campaigning led by political parties following mass media logic and face-to-face interactions, such as canvassing, rallies, public meetings, and the like. As Chapter 2 found, negative campaigning in Indonesia at the pre-digital era was driven by elites and shaped by the context of the electoral system that upheld the central role of the party in 1955 and by government elites during Indonesia’s authoritarian era (1966-1998). However, from 2004 to 2009, negative campaigning developed in terms of actors and targets because of the introduction of a direct election for the presidential election, leading to candidate-driven campaigning. Political context, candidates, personalization of politics and professionalization of campaigning helped intensify

⁹²⁹ Zac Gershberg and Sean Illing, *The Paradox of Democracy: Free Speech, Open Media, and Perilous Persuasion* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

⁹³⁰ Ansolabehere and Iyengar, *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate.*; Geer, *In defense of negativity: Attack ads in presidential campaigns.*

⁹³¹ Buell Jr. and Sigelman, *Attack Politics: Negativity in Presidential Campaigns since 1960.*

the tactics of what became known as *Kampanye hitam* or black campaigning in Indonesia. Topics revolved around communism and the bogeyman of the PKI, foreign threats, Islamic piety and practice, which tended to involve more slanderous attacks rather than substantial policy criticisms. Methods of negative campaign revolved around evoking fear and even hatred against target candidates, and association of an opponent with problematic or unpopular principles (such as being pro-LGBTQ), often including accusations of the candidate being funded by a foreign (usually Western) 'liberal' organization. Thus, as Chapter 2 showed, the emergence of negative campaigning as a prominent tactic in Indonesia was not solely due to new technologies, and did not arrive because of the digital era. And it should be clear that it is not digital media that shaped character-based negative campaigning in Indonesia, but the ever declining party system with its diminishing ideological differences and supremacy that paved the way for personalization of electoral politics in Indonesia strengthened by direct election system and professionalized campaign strategy. However, this thesis has shown how the digital era has increased the potential for growth in negative campaigning, to the extent that it really has started to dominate election discourse and is impacting voters and hindering Indonesian democracy.

7.1. Key findings

There key findings of this thesis relate to the following three areas: first, computational propaganda, key negative narratives, and the impact of negative campaigning on voters.

7.1.1. Computational propaganda

This thesis has shown how the digital era technologies in Indonesia were employed to create new forms of negative campaigning, defined broadly in scholarship as computational propaganda. Computational propaganda can be understood as "the attempt to influence public opinion and behavior via strategic synthesis of social media platforms, autonomous agents, micro-targeting, and datamining, with active participation from targeted individuals who help perpetuate the message."⁹³² The new digital media technologies enhanced the employment of negative campaigning in Indonesia's elections in the digital era, changing production, distribution, actors, and media content. The digital era saw a shifting of the drivers of negative campaigning away from mainly mass media-era content to citizen-based actors that primarily used social media with computational enhancement. Digital media, particularly social media,

⁹³² Delwiche, "Computational Propaganda and the Rise of the Fake Audience."

decentralized if not democratized the organization of election campaigns, allowing ordinary citizens to be key campaign actors utilizing fake accounts, automation, and social media algorithms. Networks of citizen-based campaign actors—often employed directly by political parties or government officials—ultimately served the interests of political elites who could pay for these kinds of information distribution networks.

Chapter 3 has shown that negative campaigning in the era of digital media entailed the emergence of massive numbers of citizen-based actors in negative campaigning thanks to the enabling features of digital media platforms. Consequently, negative campaigning in the digital era became more massive, cheaper, decentralized, and followed a micro-targeting strategy. Sophistication of manipulation was unprecedented in its strategy, with messages persuading voters by focusing on emotion and using identity issues to instigating fear and hate. This identity appropriation followed a purity and loyalty moral-based narrative⁹³³ to segregate target candidates from the rest of the perceived common people of the nation. Despite the new digital media, the influence of the traditional media did not disappear in electoral campaigning. There was a strong mutually beneficial relationship, rather than replacement between old and new media, in amplifying negative campaign messages in Indonesia. In the 2012 Jakarta election, the 2014 presidential election, the 2017 Jakarta election, and the 2018 concurrent local elections, negative campaigning mobilized social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and blogs operated by buzzers and volunteers' groups. However, not until the 2019 presidential election did negative campaigning massively mobilize the use of social media with fake accounts and political bots to amplify attack messages against opponents using computational propaganda in a coordinated way.

The employment of computational propaganda was unprecedented in the employment of knowledge of social media algorithms in negative campaigning. It intensified negative campaigning in many ways, with greater benefits for the candidates. As Chapter 4 has shown, the new digital technologies enhanced the production and dissemination of electoral campaigning in Indonesia for the last 10 years or so using social media algorithms.

This thesis has shown that the use of the new mechanics of negative campaigning in the 2019 election was led by buzzers and influencers, who amplified attack messages and negative narratives against candidates through computational propaganda. Computational propaganda in negative campaigning refers to the employment of automation (political bots), anonymity,

⁹³³ Kennedy et al., "The (moral) language of hate."

social media platform, algorithms, coordinated behaviour, and human agents in operating fake and real accounts to influence the flow of information in favour of a candidate by amplifying attack messages and narratives against opponent. Political bots were used to spread slander about candidates through coordinated provocative hashtags. The employment of these computational attacks was led by unofficial actors related to the candidates, namely buzzer and influencers. These unofficial actors worked in coordination to influence the flow of information by tricking social media algorithms to gain message popularity. As the attack messages rose to become top issues, mainstream media often extended the exposure by reporting on it leading to hybrid campaigning—the resonance of attack messages across all media platforms. This whole network of communication could create a digital two-step flow of communication, building a powerful instrument not only for increasing popularity but also for gaining legitimacy and expanding influence.

The negative campaigning was led by buzzers and influencers enabled by the affordances of social media. Social media changed the playing field of electoral competition by offering new techniques and creating new actors of negative campaigning. Unofficial campaigns led by buzzers produced and distributed attack messages on social media portraying opponents in an unfavourable light through mostly inauthentic communication, affording anonymity and the dispersal of problematic information, such as slander and disinformation. Buzzers created fake accounts and made or used bots to spread some of the most insidious information on the candidates. Anonymity and automation allow them to attack the candidates without the fear of detection, repercussion, or guilt. These buzzers were paid to support a candidate and attack an opponent at the same time using pseudonyms on social media accounts that allowed them to spread even the vilest messages without fear of reprisals. Given the nature of social media, amplification of attack messages could also happen with the support and engagement of regular social media users motivated by personal reasons related to either the candidates or the narratives being amplified.

There seemed to be a grey area between official and unofficial campaigns in organizing negative campaigning. Unofficial actors were recruited based on personal connections, trained, tasked with specific job descriptions, and some were paid well above the regional minimum wage. Although, attack campaigning was led by unofficial actors, they tacitly received support from the official campaign, particularly in the forms of funding, facilities, and content. They used data provided by official campaigns, such as survey data, consultants' advice, and social media analytics to plan, design, and run the attack campaigns. When campaigns escalated, the official campaigns, including candidates themselves, never officially and openly banned and deplored baseless accusations directed towards their opponents, which reflected how the tactics brought certain electoral incentives for them. Based on this evidence, the dichotomy of official and

unofficial campaigns seemed incorrect and to be the reflection of incomprehensive electoral regulations.

The use of computational propaganda by the campaign actors in Indonesia did not only happen during national or presidential elections, but also at local elections. Chapter 5 showed that computational propaganda at local elections had become normalized via the use of character and identity attacks against candidates. By normalization here I mean the process of making computational propaganda a consistent form of negative campaigning as a regular part of the electoral strategy. The findings of this thesis provide evidence of computational propaganda at local election levels, using social media fake accounts and coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB) driven by buzzers and partisan influencers, who mobilized social media teams, with anonymity to amplify attack messages and malicious information against candidates. In contrast to the literature, this thesis found that computational propaganda was dominantly directed towards challengers rather than incumbent candidates, as seen in Medan and South Tangerang. This substantiated that incumbency is not the exclusive determinant of being the target of heavy negativity as highly reiterated in the literature. The political affiliations of candidates in relation to the national political rivalry—incumbent vs opposition linearity—played a role to be a target of negative campaigning. The context of the political system in Indonesia, a multi-party system with a tendency for big coalition governments, left little space for opposition. And as the formal party elites relationship were fluid following self-interested political maneuvers, genuine opposition did not develop. But personal relations among actors based on friendship and kinship took a strong grip. This reality shaped parties and elites' behaviors during elections both at national and local elections. Overall, the employment of computational propaganda in negative campaigning suggested a shift of purpose in the campaign communication from supplying comparative information about candidates to voters to manipulation of information in a legitimate electoral process.

7.1.2. The narratives of negative campaign

Although new actors and mechanics of negative campaigning emerged, negative campaign messages and narratives were still mostly following old messages and narratives of negative campaigning from early election despite there being new ones. The negative campaign's narratives mainly centered around character attacks amplified through computational enhancement following methods of attacks from allegations, fear arousing, ridiculing, labelling, and apposition. This thesis found that the key narratives of negative campaigning in Indonesia's election in the digital era revolved around six key themes: disobedience to Islam, opponent of Islam, subservient to foreign interest, lack of integrity, proponent of communist (PKI), and

unfaithful man. At the local elections, specific narratives also emerged, such as incompetent and irresponsible or failed leader, part of corrupt political dynasty, polygamist, and money politics. As I have explained throughout the thesis, negative campaign messages can be disseminated directly by candidates and indirectly by their campaign teams and paid actors within an explicit or implicit reference to the target candidate.

The thesis has shown that useful and relevant information dominated the early negative campaigning in the pre-digital era, driven by elites and expressed openly and directed at political parties. But as the electoral system changed towards the end of the pre-digital era, useless, irrelevant, and sometimes problematic information began to be more prominent in negative campaigns, directed against the character of the candidates rather than party or policy. There was a trend of issues and narratives mainly defined by Islam and religious piety, leading to disseminating either relevant but useless information or useful but false information. One exception here was the use of economic nationalism sentiment to criticize internationally oriented parties like PKI in 1955 and the criticism towards Boediono as a proponent of neo-liberalism in the 2009 election. There was an indication of a pattern of negative campaigning narratives from 1955 focusing on *kafir* (infidel) and *haram* (forbidden) labelling in the New Order era, with PKI and *haram* (forbidden) labelling in the reform era of 2009, where *kafir*, *haram*, faithfully disloyal (i.e., not wearing a hijab), communist or PKI, Java-centric, and Christianization rhetoric were mixed. Overall, Islam was a leading source of narrative in negative campaigning as candidates attacked opponents as unfaithful, deviant, and being an enemy of Islam from 1955 to 2009. The underlying principle behind this trend could be attributed to the fact that Indonesia was a Muslim majority country and there was nothing more powerful than religion that could be used to mobilize and persuade voters.

Politicians and campaign actors need strong political narratives to make their campaigns more appealing to voters since narratives vary in power and regular political information is often boring. Scholar argues that political narratives “help effectively communicate this information by providing context, assigning meaning, explaining peoples’ actions and motivations, and establishing a moral order.”⁹³⁴ When political narratives disseminated by politicians are accepted by citizens, “ they become more likely to see the political world as personally relevant and, subsequently, become more committed to supporting that candidate.”⁹³⁵ Political narratives are

⁹³⁴ Bryan McLaughlin, "Tales of conflict: narrative immersion and political aggression in the United States," *Media Psychology* 23, no. 4 (2020).

⁹³⁵ Bryan McLaughlin and John A. Velez, "Imagined Politics: How Different Media Platforms Transport Citizens Into Political Narratives," *Social Science Computer Review* 37, no. 1 (2019).

““grand” stories that political leaders tell directly to the public and the electorate.”⁹³⁶ The political narratives are crafted to unify fragmented attack messages so as to prime voters’ perceptions of the opponents on the justifying narratives. This thesis found that the overarching narratives of negative campaigning in Indonesian elections in the digital era focused on defining opponents as “enemy of and breaking the law of Islam,” “corrupt and incompetent leader,” and “trespasser of principles of democracy.” The negative narratives did not seem to be significantly different between those imposed on incumbent and those on challenger candidates. In the 2019 presidential election, the compelling narratives of negative campaigning could be identified as disobedient to Islam, they are opponent of Islam, they are subservient to foreign interest and power, they lack integrity, they are proponents of the denounced communist party (PKI), and they are unfaithful man. In the 2020 local elections, the key narratives of negative campaigns framed opponent candidates as incompetent and irresponsible or failed leaders, an affiliate of political dynasty, which is corrupt and bad for democracy, women being primarily sexual objects, authoritarian leaders, and enemies of Muslims.

The attack messages disseminated by computational propaganda in multimodal contents through multiplatform media used hashtags, keywords, slogans, photos, videos, and links, which made dissemination faster and more massive following the network-based social media logic to strengthen the popularity of negative narratives. The negative narratives were disseminated using emotion-evoking issues, such as religious piety, communism, nationalism sentiment, and sex scandals, thanks to the enabling affordances of the social media. The key narratives of negative campaigning used against candidates during the 2019 election revolved around disobedience to Islam, opponent of Islam, proponent of communist/PKI, lack integrity, and unfaithful man, which mainly indicated narrative continuity in Indonesia electoral politics. Negative campaigning in the 2019 election was mainly driven by the standard of adherence to Islam, nationalism sentiment, and traditional values.

These key negative narratives, (disobedience to Islam, opponent of Islam, subservient to foreign interest and power, lack of integrity, proponent of communist (PKI), and unfaithful man), adopted a strongly emotional, moralized style of language. Previous studies found that moral-emotional language in political messages substantially increased their diffusion within (and less so between) ideological group boundaries on social network sites⁹³⁷ and proliferated hate speech

⁹³⁶ Giliberto Capano, Maria Tullia Galanti, and Giovanni Barbato, “When the political leader is the narrator: the political and policy dimensions of narratives,” *Policy Sciences* 56, no. 2 (2023).

⁹³⁷ William J. Brady et al., “Emotion shapes the diffusion of moralized content in social networks,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114, no. 28 (2017).

on social media.⁹³⁸ Hence, negative campaigning in Indonesia can potentially strengthen political division. Scholars found that morality language in politics, such as purity-related and loyalty-related languages, were concomitant with hateful and exclusionary language.⁹³⁹ This finding showed that the power of negative campaign lies in its strong moral and identity meaning with voters. Therefore, the finding of this thesis disagrees with the argument of Geer⁹⁴⁰ on the power of negative campaigning. He argued that candidates used negative campaigns because they were powerful, which was driven by the argument that negative campaigning relied on past information about the target candidates.

The use of anti-PKI and its subsidiary negative narratives against a candidate has different meaning from pre-digital era with the digital era today. From the 1955 legislative election until its ban by the New Order government, attacking the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) was a legitimate and factual based criticism—the PKI was an existing target. However, in the reform era elections, like in 2014 and 2019, anti-PKI negative narratives were more of a disinformation or black campaign where campaign actors mischievously accused a candidate or party as being a member or follower of a non-existent party. The target was not membership of PKI or the party itself anymore, but rather a candidate intentionally framed as associated with the denounced organization. This was a form of propaganda to evoke fear rather than a criticism—a manufactured fear to sway voters in a certain way that would benefit the campaign actors. Thanks to the New Order Regime propaganda, Indonesians seemed to be fearful of the ‘specter’ of PKI as a brutal and violent organization, and fearful of being labelled as members or sympathizers of PKI with its unthinkable political and social exclusion, and discriminatory stigma.

This trend occurred because of the lack of issues associated with parties (issue ownership) in Indonesia as potential targets to attack during the campaign. In terms of stances on issues, the political parties and their nominated candidates were difficult to distinguish between. The significant ideological differences between parties in Indonesia are more along the lines of Islamic versus nationalist,⁹⁴¹ and this often does not translate into differences in policy as expressed during parliamentary debates. Consequently, rather than candidates’ campaign messages and narratives relying on issue ownership, they focused on popular issues as

⁹³⁸ Kirill Solovev and Nicolas Pröllochs, "Moralized language predicts hate speech on social media," *PNAS Nexus* 2, no. 1 (2022).

⁹³⁹ Kennedy et al., "The (moral) language of hate."

⁹⁴⁰ Geer, *In defense of negativity: Attack ads in presidential campaigns*.

⁹⁴¹ Aspinall et al. Mapping the Indonesian political spectrum.

reported by the media (“riding the wave”) as the campaign progressed.⁹⁴² A candidate therefore attacked based on the surface and short-term issues of their opponents.

There is a tendency of a narrative continuity in the election campaigns. The narratives were used by state to stipple opposition, now it was used by the people involving in the campaign to defeat other fellow citizens politically. State/elite narratives for control and domination including related to Islamic narratives and colonialism narrative are used in the reform era as a rhetorical devices to denounce opponents. The narratives continuity could be explained by the changing of political system and regime in Indonesia from colonialism to liberal to authoritarian to reform era but did not change in the form of replacement but rather in the form of transition allowing previous regime actors to make their ways to enter the succeeding regimes. The weak institutionalization of democracy leads into low trust on political institution which bring a personalistic turn in our electoral competition boosted by profesionalisation of electioneering. Policy-based politics and campaign is nearly visible because of the lack of ideological competition between political parties. Ideological pluralism was banned and suppressed leaving into single ideology of the state which later become a tool of state hegemony.

At local elections specific narratives also emerged, such as incompetent and irresponsible or failed leader, part of corrupt political dynasty, polygamist, and money politics. Amplification of the narratives were often supported by or even led by national political influencers on social media.

Overall, there is a tendency of a narrative continuity in employing negative campaigns. The narratives were once used by state to stipple opposition, now it is used by candidates and ordinary people involving in the campaign to defeat political opponents. The narratives continuity could be explained by the nature of political changes and regimes in Indonesia from colonialism to liberal to authoritarian to reform era in the form of negotiated change or transition⁹⁴³ allowing previous regime actors to make their ways to enter the succeeding regimes rather than replacement. Furthermore, weak institutionalization of democracy during reform era leads into low trust on political institutions such as political parties, parliament, and judiciary which bring about personalistic turn in Indonesia's electoral competitions which is also enhanced by professionalisation of electioneering. Policy-based politics and campaign is weak because of

⁹⁴² Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar, "Riding the Wave and Claiming Ownership Over Issues: The Joint Effects of Advertising and News Coverage in Campaigns," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (1994).

⁹⁴³ Andreas Langenohl, "Memory in Post-Authoritarian Societies," in *Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Erll Astrid and Nünning Ansgar (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2010).

the lack of ideological competition between political parties since ideological pluralism was banned and suppressed leaving into single ideology of state which became a tool of state hegemony. The lack of democratic institutionalization, weak ideological influence, and in absence of political alternatives lead into contestation driven by old narratives as some Indonesians are still moved by historical narratives.

As a post-Authoritarian nation, fear, violence, and distrust still overshadow collective memory of some Indonesians which becomes an effective tool for political persuasion and mobilization by recent political actors. The imposed ideas of uniformity and ideals about what is "normal," "pure," or "authentic" by the state through single narrative strategy continue to exert a strong influence over Indonesians' perceptions and behaviours. In addition, the rise of political Islam in the reformation era has empowered Islamic organizations and communities to pursue their rights and interests through the mobilization of Islamic narratives which was later also, among others, used as a standard to evaluate and define ideal and suitable leaders for the majority of Indonesians. Related to that, the last explanation for the narrative continuity centres around to the emerging Islamic populism in Indonesia. Scholars argue that the absence of liberal and Leftist challenges like communism and socialism to the entrenched oligarchy, politics is becoming characterised by competition between different populisms harnessed to the maintenance of oligarchic domination.⁹⁴⁴ Populist politicians take advantage of the above historic narratives to create a strong division between "the people" and perceived threats or "enemies," which can be internal (communists), external (foreign interests/actors), or wealthy elites (e.g. certain groups).

7.1.3. Voter impact

The third key finding was the effect of negative campaigning on voters. My analysis showed that certain messages of negative campaigning decreased the probability of voters voting for the targeted candidates. These impactful attack messages were mainly about identity-based issues and directed towards the candidate through hybrid media campaigning rather than just on social media. Analysis of effect size of the regression showed that exposure to and acceptance of negative campaign messages significantly negatively correlated with the electability of both Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto. But there was a stronger negative effect of negative campaigns on the electability of Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin than on Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno.

⁹⁴⁴ Vedi R Hadiz and Richard Robison, "Competing populisms in post-authoritarian Indonesia," *International Political Science Review* 38, no. 4 (2017).

Chapter 6 showed that certain forms of negative campaigning, such as identity-based attacks, were discouraging some voters from voting for the candidate. Mobilizing identity-based negative narratives could decrease vote choice for the target candidate, and this was ultimately why campaign managers employed these kinds of tactics. In Indonesia in particular, the central role of identity-based attack messages in a highly religious society was even more pertinent.

The conventional perspective on measuring the effectiveness of negative campaigning on winning an election for its users was measured with a causality research design, looking at frequency of negative campaign messages and net vote gain for the attacker during an election. One measure of high effectiveness was when an attacker won the election. In addition, a positive change in the vote margin of the attacker (getting more votes) was also an explicit indication of effectiveness with a relative effect size regardless of who won the election. Similarly, despite the findings of this research showing that negative campaigning was able to lower electability of the target candidate, it had some limitations. For one, the effect size found by this research was very small. However, as discussed, although the effect sizes were very small, in a competitive election where candidates often win on close margins (as is the case in Indonesia), a tiny decrease in the opponent's electability is more than enough reason to attack opponent via negative campaigning. Also, the very small effect size might not be the true total effect of all negative campaigning a candidate stages against his opponent because there is a potential cancelation effect caused when two candidates attack each other at the same time, and this was difficult to measure through a regular survey study. The design of this research did not take the factor into the model of analysis.

The next notable effect of negative campaigning but less examined here were the unintended consequences of negative campaign on turnout and trust in democracy. In Indonesia, negative campaigning did not seem to lower electoral participation, contrary to the literature focused on the US democracy context. The demobilization hypothesis argues that negative campaigning makes voters feel bad about politics, then decide to stay at home rather than vote on election day. However, electoral participation in presidential elections showed that voter turnout tended to be increasing rather than decreasing between the two most competitive elections, from 2014 to 2019, despite the unprecedented use of negative campaigns. One possible explanation for this might be that negative campaigns against popular candidates motivated voters to participate in the election because of the risk of their candidate/party's failure they felt by staying at home. Therefore, it can be seen that negative campaigning in certain conditions mobilizes voters. Similarly, trust in democracy and the electoral processes did not go down after the polarized presidential elections in 2014 and 2019. The Indonesian people put high hopes on democracy, but reality is defying them given the constant declining democracy in the country.

The influence of negative campaigning on voters' electoral decisions did not only rely on its attack messages (i.e., arousing fear, labelling, etc.) but also on the relationship between the attack messages and the pre-existing negative narratives held by the voters. The production of attack messages and negative narratives was based on the perception and knowledge of the target audience about issues in their daily lives rather than being part of the authentic political brand of the candidate. Strongly held perceptions by voters about certain issues were tactically activated to form certain attitude towards the candidate being attacked. This strategy echoed the typical design of political marketing in building one's own candidate's recognition or denigrating the opponent. The use of surveys to understand the diverse perceptions of voters on certain issues and to test their attitude towards certain narratives equipped negative campaigns to attack opponents.

Computational propaganda imposed its influence not only on social media users but also on the larger public who followed election information through mainstream media through the hybridizations of media campaigning in Indonesia. Conventional media covered and reported on messages and activities of computational propaganda based on their self-interested perspectives on what was newsworthy. This thesis found that during the 2019 presidential election and 2020 local elections, conventional media (TV, newspaper, etc.), online news media, and social media shared some of the responsibility for producing negative campaigning via its contribution as part of the hybrid media.

7.2. Implications of the findings and contributions of the thesis

This thesis showed how digital media was used by authentic and anonymous malicious campaign actors to attack political components using misleading and false information through social media platforms to manipulate public opinion so as to dissuade voters from voting for the targeted political candidates. The findings suggested that voters could be misinformed by a candidate's campaign communications, leading to bad electoral decisions. In this sense, negative campaigning in the digital era in Indonesia reflected manipulation rather than civic education for voters. Negative campaigning can be necessary for democracy by supplying rarely exposed facts and information about weakness, failures, and mistakes of the candidates in the past that are relevant and useful for voters' electoral decisions. However, negative campaigning through computational propaganda created distorted political decisions and disrupted the legitimate campaigns necessary for electoral integrity. The findings could be used to inform the election management bodies (KPU, Bawaslu, DKPP) about actors and mechanics of computational propaganda as well as its harmful discourse to effectively mitigate its operation and to counter its effects by offering voters civic education.

The result of this thesis indicated that the quality of the election campaigning in Indonesia was low. Campaign quality, either of positive or negative, can be evaluated based on to what extent it related to public issues or policy, if it informed rather than persuaded or manipulated, to what extent it shaped public opinion during the campaign and the effect of that public opinion on voting, and how wide it was carried out in a deliberative way rather than being piecemeal.⁹⁴⁵ Negative campaigning in Indonesia did not show a high quality of conduct in the digital era, instead it manipulatively focused on character using computational propaganda delivered in a piecemeal fashion designed to achieve popularity. Voters were unable to learn the campaign issues and differences among the candidates in a useful way.

The findings also had significant implications for the understanding of candidates' campaign messages. Candidates' campaign messages when attacking opponents were not only insufficient but also misleading, putting a huge pressure on the political information ecosystem. As hybrid media campaigning was ubiquitous, news media should have provided sufficient context in covering and reporting candidate campaigns and their messages on social media so as to avoid the amplification of misleading information to wider audience, as intended by the campaign actors. Negative campaign messages in computational propaganda were far from legitimate criticisms or policy evaluation of the target candidates. Data-based investigative journalism was needed to unveil the anonymous actors and their damaging intentions as well as whose interest they served. Transparency in campaign actors and organization would have helped voters understand the meaning behind the messages and the intentions of the campaign actors. Campaigning in the digital era requires more concrete transparency and legitimacy of actors and contents, particularly when attacking political opponents.

When campaign discourse is dominated by misleading information to manipulate voters, political changes are unlikely to happen to improve the lives of the people. Campaign messages and narratives ideally should be relevant and helpful for voters in making their best electoral decisions to the fulfilment of their aspirations. When campaign narratives are filled with identity attacks and misleading information, voters do not know which candidate and policy issues are legitimate and in line with their interests for a better future. The findings suggested that computational propaganda tended to maintain the power relations among the political elites. There was a gap between real politics with its discontents and the expectations of the general public about the political system.

⁹⁴⁵ James A. Gardner, *What are Campaigns For?: The Role of Persuasion in Electoral Law and Politics* (Oxford University Press, 01 Sep 2009, 2009). <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195392616.001.0001>.

The findings have contributed to the literature on negative campaigning, with the employment of computational propaganda as its most advanced mechanism in the digital era. To my best knowledge and based on examination of the existing literature, my research has been the first to systematically investigate negative campaigning in Indonesia with extensive case details, enhancing understanding of the new mechanics of negative campaigning and the need to address their negative impacts. In this thesis, I followed the definition of computational propaganda set out by Woolley and Howard (2016): “The assemblage of social media platforms, autonomous agents, and big data tasked with the manipulation of public opinion.”⁹⁴⁶ In the context of negative campaigning, this was the computational enhancement of attack campaigning against political opponents during election campaigns. The Indonesian case met the constitutive elements of computational propaganda, particularly through Twitter, with the use of either real or fake accounts, bots and automation, human operators (buzzers), and the exploitation of algorithms to create the pseudo-popularity of attack messages and negative narratives against opponents.

Previous studies on Indonesian context of the phenomenon have talked about the employment of negative campaigning but they approached it more from the perspective of political economy,⁹⁴⁷ and also without delving into empirical mechanic and narrative of the computational propaganda itself in times of electoral competition in Indonesia. Further, the latest work published by Jalli and Idris⁹⁴⁸ focuses on government propaganda particularly by Jokowi government since 2016 instead of electoral events, and it did not provide empirical evidence of the online mechanics of digital propaganda itself. Previous studies on Indonesian context still lacked evidence on how the computational propaganda worked in producing and disseminating negative information about opponent candidates during electoral seasons at national and local elections.

This thesis expanded the literature on the employment of digital media for digital political communication during electoral competitions by examining the perspective of the largest Southeast Asian democracy, Indonesia. Systematic studies on computational propaganda are dominated by cases from advanced democracies, such as the US and Europe. This thesis offered a compelling example from Southeast Asia, in the context of the third world, that showed that understanding democracy in Indonesia was insufficient without taking into account the

⁹⁴⁶ Woolley and Howard, “Political Communication, Computational Propaganda, and Autonomous Agents: Introduction.”

⁹⁴⁷ For examples Rakhmani and Saraswati, “Authoritarian Populism in Indonesia: The Role of the Political Campaign Industry in Engineering Consent and Coercion.”; Saraswati, “The Political Campaign Industry and the Rise of Disinformation in Indonesia.”

⁹⁴⁸ Nuurrianti Jalli and Ika Idris, *Misguided Democracy in Malaysia and Indonesia* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2024).

employment of the new techniques of computational propaganda by candidates to win elections. Campaign actors used new forms of digital media to attack political opponents through negative campaigns in ways previously unexplored and uncovered that I have tried to shed light on with this research. Some of this scholarly research was new and developing, such as of loosely connected networks of cybertroopers, buzzers and influencers, which a new generation of scholars are now beginning to write about. My thesis contributes to this growing body of literature. I showed how political candidates and their official campaigns teams publicly denied that they ran operations as such when criticism arose from the media and the general public. The actors who acted as humans or operated political bots were mostly anonymous.

Like any PhD thesis, this research has some limitations. First, when assessing the effectiveness of negative campaigning on voter choice, the size or amount of people it was found to influence was generally quite small.⁹⁴⁹ However, in the context of highly competitive elections (as Indonesia's elections in 2014, 2019 and in some cases in 2020 were) small electoral gain can be essential to victory. On the other hand, the effect should be interpreted cautiously so as not to confuse correlation and causation, which could risk generalizing the finding inaccurately. To conduct a more robust causality, further study is needed, approaching the problem through larger surveys and an experimental research design. Second, the qualitative nature of the investigation of negative campaigning has some limitations. The limitations lie in the nature of the fragmentation that occurs on social media. Further studies are needed to expand emerging computational communication research methods, or in short, using big data from social media beyond that of Twitter and publicly available Facebook pages.

7.3. A call for election campaign reform

A key outcome of this PhD research is a call for electoral campaign reform in Indonesia. A key policy priority should be reforming the way we think about electoral campaigns in terms of mechanics, transparency, and narratives and how they are regulated or under what model of 'watchdog' would be helpful.

This study found that in Indonesia throughout the last 10 years, the problematic practice of computational propaganda organized by unofficial campaign actors, such as buzzers, influencers, and volunteers, amplifying malicious information about candidates through social

⁹⁴⁹ Chen, Cohen, and Chen, "How Big is a Big Odds Ratio? Interpreting the Magnitudes of Odds Ratios in Epidemiological Studies."

media platforms has occurred. Rather than legitimate criticisms of opponents, target candidates were more often bombarded with slander, fake news, and disinformation, or black campaigns. The problem could grow even worse in the future with the development of artificial intelligence (AI) and its application to electoral campaigning, such as use of generative AI (Chat GPT) for generation of text, image, video, audio content, and predicting reactions and attitudes of voters for campaign interventions,⁹⁵⁰ the emergence of deepfakes, and other ethical issues in its applications unless government and technology companies agree to establish a binding law in guaranteeing public interest in its adoption and application. I now explain five specific recommendations for election campaign reforms in Indonesia.

7.3.1. Electoral regulation revision

The conduct of election campaigns in Indonesia is stipulated by the 2017 election law, which was in force during the 2019 and 2024 elections, and its operational regulation issued by KPU, called PKPU (General Election Commission Regulations) No. 23/2018 on General Election Campaign for the 2019 election and No. 15/2023 for 2024 election. The regulations define campaigning merely as “the activities of election contestants or other parties who are appointed by election contestants to convince voters by offering their visions, missions, programs, and/or their electoral images”.⁹⁵¹ This definition is problematic because in practice, although campaigning is driven by formally appointed actors, negative campaigning is dominated by underground actors or a confidentially organized network of actors such as buzzers, influencers, and volunteers. This definition also assumes that positive campaigning is the only strategy employed. In reality, negative campaigning tended to be more distributed and was becoming more popular, used not only to convince one’s own voters but primarily to demobilize opponents’ voters. In other words, electoral campaigning was not only to convince voters to vote for an intended candidate, but also to dissuade different voters. The phrase “campaign messages such visions, missions, programs, and images of candidates” indicates a positive campaign-oriented understanding and ignores the commonly used negative campaigning, which has long been a hallmark of Indonesian elections. Therefore, the conceptual understanding of election campaigning should cover both functions of campaigning, namely promoting a candidate and opposing other candidates,⁹⁵² responding to the diverse campaign messages, current state of the campaign mechanisms, and the actors who employ them. The main reason for this argument

⁹⁵⁰ Andreas Jungherr, “Artificial Intelligence and Democracy: A Conceptual Framework,” *Social Media + Society* 9, no. 3 (2023).

⁹⁵¹ PKPU No. 15/2023 *Tentang Kampanye Pemilihan Umum*.; PKPU No. 23/2018 *Tentang Kampanye Pemilihan Umum*.

⁹⁵² Benoit, *Communication in political campaigns*.

is that voting is a comparative act where candidates should work hard to differentiate themselves from other candidates to make themselves more favourable. They can achieve this through two functions of communication: to advocate through positive campaigning and to attack through negative campaigning. This argument emboldens the nature of election as popular power control mechanism in democracy which calls for more or less complete information about policies and characters of candidates contesting the elections made available to the voters.

Furthermore, the description of campaign actors is one of the key sections of existing campaign regulations. However, the limitation of current regulations on this issue is that key actors of negative campaigning in today's Indonesia's elections are not recognized and hence not regulated. The main actors of negative campaigning in Indonesia are not the candidates or their officially registered campaign team. This sets Indonesia apart from Western democracies, such as the US, European countries, and Australia. The candidates in these countries did occasionally attack their opponent, but with vague references. Their campaign teams also attacked opponent candidates, but tended to do so more softly and through public gatherings and talk shows on TV.

The key actors of negative campaigning in Indonesia's election in the digital era are buzzers, influencers, and volunteers which tend to operate underground and are motivated by money, recognition, and somewhat by ideology. This deviation from conventional Western negative campaigning was driven by at least two factors. On one hand, the use of outsourced actors was intentionally meant to avoid legal penalties from the electoral supervisory agency. On the other, it was rationally decided to satisfy the cultural expectation of politeness and harmony in public spaces, which urges candidates not to attack each other directly and publicly. The US-based negative campaigning, where key negative campaign messages revolved around questioning the ideology of state and unity of the diverse nation, was not equivalent to that in the Indonesian context. Therefore, election regulations in Indonesia should regulate at least two functions of election communication during election campaigns and legally acknowledge the emerging campaign actors as part of candidates' campaign teams. And it should be explicitly stated and supported that candidates and their official campaign teams criticize each other openly and transparently over crucial issues to the life of the people, following democratic deliberation and ethics.

The lack of policy-based negative campaign messages by candidates led to identity attacks. Strangely, from various interviews the need for more substantive campaigns was observed by many politicians and campaign officials, but they did not proceed with it for two reasons during the campaign. First, poorly educated voters. Politicians assumed that Indonesia voters lacked knowledge and understanding about various public issues and policies. Second, inability and

incapability of candidates to design legitimate programs and policies that touched upon people's needs and that were executable. Negative campaign messages in Indonesia in the digital era have been focused on a character attack of the candidates, particularly identity attributes, such as ethnicity, gender, and religion. Selection of the messages was mostly driven by the goal of evoking fear and anger among voters towards the designated target candidate. Even worse, key attack messages used false information in the form of fake news and slander. The demise of ideology and the unclear issue ownership of political parties had worsened the negative campaign messages. For a long time, political parties had enjoyed the vagueness of issue ownership, meaning that they could be eligible to join the winning party in a coalition government. Therefore, election regulations need to stipulate a wide range of fundamental issues to campaign on and to criticize opponents on, the framework of national interests based on the constitution, and to outline electoral incentives for candidates who abide by the guideline during a campaign. Also, there should be a clear electoral legal foundation describing what campaigns on social media are or digital media at large and who has direct responsibility to monitor, examine, and prosecute when campaign actors cross the line. The adoption of AI into designing negative campaigning is looming, but our electoral regulations seem mostly based on the mass media era. The use of AI either for predictive capacity on voting behavior, generative capacity on message production, or others could lead into inauthenticity issues or event manipulation. Election regulation should stipulate the limit and qualifications of adopting AI into election campaigning in Indonesia and a renewed new regulation of digital campaigning is needed for that.

7.3.2. Campaign transparency

The lack of transparency in funding and campaign actors were two key factors in the worsening campaign quality in Indonesia in the digital era. Electoral campaigning in general has had a funding transparency issue in Indonesia, raising concerns about the use of illicit money for political goals. With negative campaigning, funding transparency was even more crucial because of the new computational mechanics of negative campaigning—using political bots, algorithms, and anonymity—amplifying dirty attack messages against political opponents. As negative campaigning correlated negatively with electability, using money to flood online and offline conversations with insidious information about opponents may have made the election unfair and affected voters' decisions. Transparency in identity and funding of every campaign communication that candidate utilized would help voters to make sense of the meaning and motivation of the messages. The current transparency system enforced by the KPU was insufficient to uphold a fair election. The sources, amounts, and spending of campaign funding between what was reported and what was actually spent were also questionable. For instance,

it was not known how much money was spent on online campaigning by the candidates. Electoral commissions should be given legal authority to penalize candidates who do not satisfy standards of transparency in campaign funding during the campaign. Transparency is also required for campaign actors, where the authorship should be evident for all forms of campaign media publications advocating for, and attacking, a candidate. As a matter of fact, making the sponsors and actors behind a campaign or even negative campaign publicly known or transparent seems much easier than determining the accuracy or ethicality of the campaign messages themselves in our culturally plural society.

7.3.3. Social media regulation

Campaigning in the digital era shifted the focus of the electoral battle from mainstream media to social media. Social media contains strengths and weaknesses in ensuring quality information production and distribution, and campaign actors have exploited its weaknesses to use manipulative tactics to influence elections. Therefore, Indonesia needs to regulate the use of social media in the public interest of achieving quality election information. Digital campaigning, which established direct communication, hindered the gate-keeping roles of the mainstream media from monitoring potentially amoral campaign actors. The anonymous actors who disseminated malicious information about opponents on social media went unchecked by platforms and electoral agencies due to their complicated operation. The dissemination of manipulative information about candidates needs to be controlled by discouraging campaign actors to continue their malicious acts. This could happen by either regulating social media to ensure truthful electoral information or through voters punishing candidates who choose to disseminate false information for electoral gain. Unlike the current situation, there should be a clear electoral legal foundation and institutional mechanism that has the responsibility to monitor, examine, and prosecute these malicious acts. Content moderation and transparent algorithms are two key requirements to fulfil the democratic function of social media platforms during elections. In addition, digital media platforms could provide features that would allow users to criticize candidates and debunk their false statements with the support of data available online through attachments and hyperlink. Related to that, the employment of AI in electoral campaigning needs to be regulated. As scholars have pointed out, generative AI threatens three related pillars of democracy: representation, accountability, and trust in the political system and electoral processes.⁹⁵³ Looking at the case of the US, we must be aware that generative AI

⁹⁵³ Sarah Kreps and Doug Kriner, "How AI Threatens Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 34, no. 4 (2023).

could amplify cybersecurity risks with its unprecedented ease, speed, and efficiency to flood the online public sphere with fake content by actors from home and abroad.⁹⁵⁴ If it goes unregulated, the combination of AI and social media platforms for campaigning risks will bring serious legitimacy and credibility issues for Indonesia's elections and newly elected candidates.

7.3.4. Deliberative electoral campaign communications

Deliberative electoral campaigning is the future for overcoming manipulative online negative campaigning in the digital era. True to its name, deliberative campaigning requires candidates to meet and have dialogue with potential voters at representative regions across the countries. As this thesis has shown, above all else the method of negative campaigning is the key factor influencing a negative campaign. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 have demonstrated that campaign actors employed methods of negative campaigning that were aimed at suppressing logical thinking and legitimate decision making through arousing fear, ridicule, labelling, and apposition. The methods of attack followed insights from political marketing strategy to use certain issues that voters already feared and were angered about and to direct responsibility for these towards the target candidate. In the digital era, the use of computational propaganda by anonymous campaign actors exacerbates the severity of the manipulation, which makes it difficult to mitigate. Regardless of the positive side of modern campaign technology today, social media, at least as shown by this thesis, was used not to facilitate fruitful debate and criticism during electoral campaigning, suggesting that arguments about policy issues might be best upheld through traditional means of campaigning, such as open public debates and townhall meetings, with no interruptions from commercial ads, and that are organized by independent committees, such as university and community organizations. For that purpose, this thesis recommends conducting deliberative electoral campaigns at least in the key provinces of the country. We need face-to-face deliberative campaigns in open and authentic manner where candidates visit and talk with citizens on a prepared forum for public deliberations about issues, aspirations, problems, and how candidates would address these.

7.3.5. Protection of privacy within the data-driven campaigning

Computational propaganda relies heavily on computer programming, data, and algorithms. Tasked with political marketing strategy, candidates use different sorts of data to make

⁹⁵⁴ Jen Easterly, Scott Schwab, and Cait Conley, "Artificial Intelligence's Threat to Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, 3 January, 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/artificial-intelligences-threat-democracy>.

themselves more appealing to voters and to derail their political opponents. Candidates anticipate the backlash of using negative campaigning by understanding the preferences and psychological characteristics of their target audience. This is an example of a microtargeting campaign. The main goal of campaigning is “to form predictions about which members of the public are supporters, which are likely to show up to vote, and which are persuadable,”⁹⁵⁵ which makes strategic decisions easier and faster for the candidates. Microtargeting techniques can also be used by campaigner actors to more accurately target demobilizing messages towards opposition supporters to dissuade them from turning out on election day.⁹⁵⁶ As political marketing is adopting AI in Indonesia today, the potential of predictive preferences of big data trained on AI are of high interest. Combined with traditionally obtained data, like surveys, candidates could understand the political market in depth. Market intelligence is a process of political marketing to get the needed information about voters and competitors during elections. Social media provides much data about voters, and other sources of data, such as surveys and media reports, are often combined to come up with powerful campaign messages and a specific target audience demography. This is the era of data-driven campaigning (DDC), which coincides with the advancement of digital media technology. Scholar argues that

DDC relies on accessing and analyzing voter and/or campaign data to generate insights into the campaign’s target audience(s) and/or to optimize campaign interventions. Data is used to inform decision-making in either a formative and/or evaluative capacity, and is employed to engage in campaigning efforts around either voter communication, resource generation and/or internal organization.⁹⁵⁷

Without firm enforcement of electoral regulations and public ethics in applying this type of campaign, it is highly likely that breaches of privacy and human rights will occur. Therefore, there should be explicit regulations on how personal data is legally obtained and used so that privacy is protected, and campaigning is transparent and legitimate.

Finally, how this trend of computational propaganda in negative campaigning could shape the future of Indonesia’s democracy is still not clearly identified. Computational propaganda is still understudied in the Indonesian context even though the implication to Indonesian democracy is real. The application of computational propaganda, particularly by elite actors, may not only happen during electoral campaigns, but also outside elections, when struggles over power and

⁹⁵⁵ Eitan D Hersh, *Hacking the electorate: How campaigns perceive voters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁹⁵⁶ Rachel Gibson, “Data-Driven Campaigning as a Disruptive Force,” *Political Communication* 40, no. 3 (2023).

⁹⁵⁷ Katharine Dommett, Andrew Barclay, and Rachel Gibson, “Just what is data-driven campaigning? A systematic review,” *Information, Communication & Society* 27, no. 1 (2024).

control are managed through public opinion manipulation. The prospect of computational propaganda for Indonesia's democracy could be detrimental given the combination of AI and the declining trend of democracy in Indonesia. Because trust in political information online is dire, trust in journalism is also questioned. Beyond structural reform of democracy, civic education and digital literacy have become essential to keeping citizens alert and well-informed. In the digital era, propaganda is not carried out hierarchically by a few elites, but rather by the computational propagandists through their participation on various digital media platforms.

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 2. Kalo Pemikirannya Terbuka, Kok Bisa Dia Tidak Terima Perbedaan? Ada Warga Berpendapat Beda Soal Kesopanan Berbusana, Kok Malah Diancam Jeruji Besi? Katanya Punya Pikiran Terbuka?
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#Menantujokowibisadikalahkan

#Medanaman

@Nasution_Lokot

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Appendix A: Interview

Interview Guiding Questions

Negative Campaigning in Indonesia's Digital Era Elections

Date/Place:

Name:

Occupation:

Position at campaign team:

Consent: Yes/No

Reference: Full name/Confidential

Informant Type A: Official campaign team

1. Before an election started, a number of candidates in the elections in Indonesia already had a certain level of electability. So, in your opinion, how can the role of campaigns influence voters?
2. We are now familiar with three forms of campaigns in Indonesia through media reports, namely positive campaigns, negative campaigns and black campaigns. How do you differentiate between the three types of campaigns?
3. How often did your team attack opposing candidates in the elections (2019) Why attack other candidates? What goal do you want to achieve from this attack?
4. How was the preparation process for this negative campaign carried out? (selection of message, media, target audience, when, survey involvement, the use of a consultant, etc.)
5. How did your team study opposing candidates to prepare a campaign to attack opponents?
6. Why is your candidate being attacked by opposing candidate using issues of religion, ethnicity, race, gender and citizenship? Explain how it feels!
7. Why is attacking the opposing partner less visible in official campaigns (e.g. debates, meetings) than on social media?
8. To what extent do you think that negative campaigning could bring electoral victory?
9. How has the rise of hoaxes/fake news influenced you in running your campaign?
10. How big is the role of volunteer groups and campaign influencers play for your candidate pair? Give as many examples as you know?
11. Could you please explain the relationship between groups of volunteers and your candidate's official campaign team, its formation and funding?

Informant Type B: Influencer/Buzzer/Manager of buzzer/Coordinator of buzzer

1. Can you tell us what your role was and what tasks did you perform in the 2019 presidential election campaign?
2. How were you recruited and by whom?
3. What were your motivations to join the unofficial campaign team?
4. How much were you paid for your work for a month?

5. Did you recruited new members to join your team? If so, please explain how is the recruitment mechanism?
6. Explain the difference between influencers and buzzers, and what are their respective main characteristics?
7. Could you explain the relationships between influencers, buzzers, volunteers where you were involved?
8. Did your team hire consultants at various capacities during the period of the campaign?
9. Explain if your team made fake accounts, spread negative information, and use bot during the campaign!
10. How did your team create and disseminate campaign narratives during the 2019 presidential elections?
11. To what extent do you think that negative campaigning could bring electoral victory?
12. How would you reflect your roles as buzzer/manager/coordinator in the context holding free and fair democratic election?

Informant Type C: Political consultants

1. In your best opinion, how would you explain a quality election campaign?
2. Which one is more important for campaigning in Indonesia, is it policy or personality of the candidate ?
3. In your opinion, to what extent does the campaigns influence voters' political decisions?
4. What do these three types of campaigns mean to you: positive campaigns, negative campaigns, black campaigns?
5. What impact do you think negative campaigns have on democracy? Is it good, bad, or what?
6. How was the preparation process for negative campaign carried out? (selection of message, media, target audience, when, survey, use of consultant)
7. How do you learnt about opponent candidates?
8. To what extent was survey findings used in planning and staging negative campaign?
9. To what extent do you think that negative campaigning could bring electoral victory?
10. Why do you think the 2019 presidential election campaign did not debate much about policy issues?
11. What was that you were mostly afraid of to happen during the campaign period?

Informant Type D: Independent pollsters

1. Explain the main work of your organization?
2. In your opinion, during the election period, which one is more important, the candidate, policy, personality, or ideology? In Indonesia, which one is the most attractive to voters?
3. A candidate has electability before the election. What is the role of campaigns in influencing voter behaviour? How big is the impact?

4. What do these three types of campaigns mean to you: positive campaigns, negative campaigns, black campaigns?
5. In your opinion, can a campaign to attack opponents bring victory to its users? Why?
6. How is a survey used to formulate a campaign strategy?
7. Is the survey used to attack?
8. Have you ever did oppositional research in the past? If so, how?
9. What a candidate do you think could get from going negative against opponents?
10. Why is it that campaigns in televised debates are not as negative and harsh as on social media?

Informant Type E: Electoral Management Bodies (KPU, Bawaslu)

1. What are the duties and authorities of the KPU/Bawaslu regarding campaigns and campaign violations?
2. How does the KPU/Bawaslu evaluate the success of the election campaign?
3. How does the KPU/Bawaslu assess positive campaigns, negative campaigns and black campaigns? Are there any rules involved?
4. What needs to be done (KPU/Bawaslu/Government/Society/Platform) so that the campaign in the next presidential election is of higher quality?
5. What do these three types of campaigns mean to you: positive campaigns, negative campaigns, black campaigns?
6. Is negative campaigning important or not important in elections? Why so?
7. What is your general assessment of the quality of the campaign via social media in the 2019 presidential election?
8. Why does attacking the opponent did not occur in official campaigns (e.g. debates) compared to social media campaigns?

Informant Type F: Expert in election law

1. What does quality campaign mean to you?
2. Are the three forms of campaigning (positive, negative, black) clear to you?
3. Could you explain by law what are the boundaries of insulting in Indonesia?
4. How do you explain the phenomena that more unofficial campaigns carry out negative/black campaigns than unofficial campaigns?
5. What does the Indonesian law says about negative campaign?
6. Is negative campaigning important or not important in elections? Why so?
7. In your opinion, what efforts can be made by related stakeholders (e.g. KPU, government, NGOs, etc.) so that future presidential election candidates participate in in-depth policy debates?

Appendix B: Charta Politika Survey

Questionnaires

Negative Campaigning in Indonesia's Digital Era Elections

Respondent: National/Indonesian voters

1. Where is your domicile?
 - a. Sumatera
 - b. DKI Jakarta and Banten
 - c. West Java
 - d. Central Java and Yogyakarta
 - e. East Java
 - f. Bali, NTB and NTT
 - g. Kalimantan
 - h. Sulawesi
 - i. Maluku and Papua
2. What is the type of your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. What is your religious affiliation?
 - a. Islam
 - b. Protestantism
 - c. Catholicism
 - d. Hindu
 - e. Budish
 - f. Other
4. What is your ethnicity affiliation?
 - a. Java
 - b. Sundanese
 - c. Batak
 - d. Malay
 - e. Madura
 - f. Bugis
 - g. Minangkabau
 - h. Betawi
 - i. Other
 - j. Not answer
5. How old are you now?
 - a. 17 – 20 years old
 - b. 21 – 35 years old
 - c. 36 – 50 years old
 - d. 50 or older
6. What is your latest level of education?
 - a. Never went to school
 - b. Did not finish elementary
 - c. Elementary graduate
 - d. Did not finish junior
 - e. Junior high school graduate
 - f. Did not finish senior

- g. Senior high school graduate
- h. Did not finish undergraduate
- i. Diploma holder
- j. Completed undergraduate or higher
- k. Not answer

7. What do you think is the most prominent problem facing this country (Indonesia) today?

- a. Rising prices of basic needs
- b. Difficult to find jobs
- c. Expensive cost of basic education
- d. Expensive health services
- e. Inter-regions conflicts
- f. High corruption cases
- g. Insufficient of road infrastructure
- h. Terrorism
- i. Others

8. [SHOW CUE CARD] If the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Election were held today, which pair would you choose?

- a. Joko Widodo – Maruf Amin
- b. Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno
- c. Don't know/Not answer

9. How do you rate the performance of the government of Joko Widodo and M. Jusuf Kalla, are you very satisfied, quite satisfied, not satisfied, or not satisfied at all?

- a. Highly satisfied
- b. Quite satisfied
- c. Less satisfied
- d. Not satisfied at all
- e. Not answering

10. If, the legislative election to elect members of the DPR RI was held today and participated in by the political parties below, what party would you choose?

- a. PDIP
- b. Gerindra
- c. Golkar
- d. PKB
- e. Demokrat
- f. Nasdem
- g. PKS
- h. PPP
- i. PAN
- j. PSI
- k. Perindo
- l. Hanura
- m. PBB
- n. Berkarya
- o. PKPI
- p. Garuda
- q. Not answer

11. There are many opinions in society about President Joko Widodo, the following are: President Joko Widodo is a member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), at least related to the PKI or protecting communists. Do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

- a. Agree
- b. Disagree
- c. Not answered/Don't know

12. Do you know or have you ever heard news or reports that say Joko Widodo comes from a Christian family?
 - a. Yes, I know
 - b. No, I don't know
13. If "yes, you know," do you believe the news?
 - a. Believe
 - b. Do not believe
 - c. Don't know
14. Have you ever heard news or reports that say Joko Widodo is Chinese/Chinese?
 - a. Yes, I know
 - b. No, I don't know
15. If "yes, you know," do you believe the news?
 - a. Believe
 - b. Do not believe
 - c. Don't know
16. Do you know or have you ever heard news or reports that say that Prabowo Subianto comes from a Christian family?
 - a. Yes, I know
 - b. No, I don't know
17. If "yes, you know," do you believe the news?
 - a. Believe
 - b. Do not believe
 - c. Don't know
18. Do you know or have heard the news that Prabowo Subianto was involved in the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists in 1997-1998?
 - a. Yes, I know
 - b. No, I don't know
19. If "yes, you know," do you believe the news?
 - a. Believe
 - b. Do not believe
 - c. Don't know

Note: These are just selected items of questions relevant to my research questions and does not represent the whole Charta Politika survey.

Appendix C: Student Survey

Questionnaire

Negative Campaigning in Indonesia's Digital Era Elections

Respondent: University Students

1. What is the type of your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
2. What is your age?
 - a. 18 – 20 years old
 - b. 21 – 23
 - c. 24 – above
3. What is your religious affiliation?
 - a. Islam
 - b. Protestantism
 - c. Catholicism
 - d. Hindu
 - e. Budish
 - f. Konghucu
 - g. Other
4. What is your ethnicity affiliation?
 - a. Java
 - b. Sundanese
 - c. Batak
 - d. Bugis
 - e. Minangkabau
 - f. Betawi
 - g. Other
5. Where do you live?
 - a. Sumatera
 - b. Jakarta or Banten
 - c. Central Java or Yogyakarta
 - d. East Java
 - e. West Java
 - f. Bali, NTB, or NTT
 - g. Kalimantan
 - h. Sulawesi
 - i. Maluku or Papua
6. Do you think that you have a close relation with certain political party in Indonesia today?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. What are your main sources of information when looking for the information during the 2019 presidential election?
 - a. Newspaper
 - b. Magazine
 - c. Radio
 - d. Television
 - e. Online news
 - f. Social media
 - g. WhatsApp group

8. How would you describe about your interest in politics, strongly interested, a little, or not really interested?
 - a. Strongly interested
 - b. A little interested
 - c. Not really interested

9. Who did you vote in the 2019 presidential election?
 - a. Joko Widodo – Ma'ruf Amin
 - b. Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno
 - c. Not voted

10. During campaigning, some candidates may attack their political opponents by criticizing their characters, performances, policies, leadership, and integrity, which is called a negative campaign. Other candidates could campaign by promoting their success and achievements in the past called a positive campaign. With that understanding, do you agree or disagree with the use of negative campaigns in Indonesia's elections?
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly Agree
 - e. Don't know

11. Do you think these types of negative campaigning:
 - A candidate attacks the policies of his political opponent
 - A candidate criticizes the lifestyle of his political opponent's wife and family
 - A candidate questions the religion of his political opponent
 - A candidate questions the ethnicity of his political opponent
 - A candidate accuses his political opponent of having a bad temper
 - A candidate talks about corruption cases committed by his political opponents in the past
 - A candidate talks about the past mistakes of his political opponent's party
 - A candidate conveys false information about his political opponent
 - a. Strongly unacceptable?
 - b. Unacceptable?
 - c. Acceptable?
 - d. Strongly Acceptable? or
 - e. Don't know?

12. If a political candidate came to your area and gave a political speech in which he attacked his political opponent on their religious identity, would you like or dislike that candidate?
 - a. Strongly dislike
 - b. Dislike
 - c. Like
 - d. Strongly Like
 - e. Don't know

13. If a political candidate came to your area and gave a political speech in which he attacked his political opponent on their policies, programs and vision and mission, would you like or dislike this candidate?
 - a. Strongly dislike
 - b. Dislike
 - c. Like
 - d. Strongly Like
 - e. Don't know

14. Negative campaign messages during the 2019 presidential election helped me to learn about the two pairs of candidates
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
 - e. Don't know
15. Negative campaign messages during the 2019 presidential election helped me to distinguish the first pair of candidates from the second or vice versa
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
 - e. Don't know
16. There are people who think that negative campaigns are bad for democracy, but there are also those who think they are good. With the same understanding as above that negative campaign is a political attack on other candidates on the aspects of character, policy, performance, leadership and integrity of the opponent, how would you describe the effect of negative campaigning on democracy?
 - a. Strongly negative
 - b. Negative
 - c. Positive
 - d. Strongly positive
 - e. Don't know
17. Do you believe in the opinion that President Joko Widodo is a member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), at least related to the PKI?
 - a. Believe
 - b. Don't believe
 - c. Don't know/No answer
18. Do you believe the news/information that say Joko Widodo comes from a Christian family?
 - a. Believe
 - b. Don't believe
 - c. Don't know/No answer
19. Do you believe the news/information that Joko Widodo has Chinese ethnicity?
 - a. Believe
 - b. Don't believe
 - c. Don't know/No answer
20. Do you believe the news/information that Prabowo Subianto comes from a Christian family?
 - a. Believe
 - b. Don't believe
 - c. Don't know/No answer
21. Do you believe the news/information that say Prabowo Subianto was involved in the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists in 1997-1998?
 - a. Believe
 - b. Don't believe
 - c. Don't know/No answer
22. How negative or positive is the Joko Widodo – Maruf Amin's campaigns?
 - a. Highly negative
 - b. Negative
 - c. Balance

- d. Positive
- e. Highly positive

23. How negative or positive is the Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno's campaigns?

- a. Highly negative
- b. Negative
- c. Balance
- d. Positive
- e. Highly positive

24. To your best knowledge or experience, which actors would you say attacked the presidential/vice presidential candidate [names of candidate] more often during the 2019 presidential election? [Multiple answers are allowed]"

- a. Presidential and vice-presidential candidates
- b. Members of political parties
- c. Campaign teams of opponent
- d. Volunteer groups of opponents
- e. Independent figures
- f. Others

25. To your best knowledge or experience, in which media would you say the presidential/vice presidential candidate [names of candidate] receive more negative campaigns during the 2019 presidential election? [Multiple answers are allowed]"

- a. Newspaper
- b. Television
- c. Radio
- d. Online news website
- e. Social media
- f. WhatsApp group
- g. Others

26. Would you say that attack messages used by candidate [name of candidate]...?

- a. Make you scared (Yes/No)
- b. Make you angry (Yes/No)
- c. Make you sad (Yes/No)
- d. Make you feel offended (Yes/No)
- e. Make you hopeful (Yes/No)
- f. Make you proud (Yes/No)
- g. Make you enthusiastic (Yes/No)

Appendix D: Expert Survey

Questionnaire

Negative Campaigning in Indonesia's Digital Era Elections

Respondent: Experts

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Man
 - b. Woman
2. What is your main profession at the moment?
 - a. Academics
 - b. NGO activist
 - c. Journalist
 - d. Other
3. What is the most recent level of education you completed?
 - a. Undergraduate
 - b. Master
 - c. Doctoral program
4. Which of the following areas of expertise is your main expertise? (please select three maximum)
 - a. Political communication
 - b. Media and journalism studies
 - c. Political comparison
 - d. Political psychology
 - e. Party politics
 - f. Research methods and design
 - g. Politics in a particular country
 - h. Sociology and anthropology
 - i. Economy
 - j. Law and Human Rights
 - k. Other
5. Do you agree, disagree, or somewhere in between with the use of negative campaigning in Indonesia's elections?
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree
6. With the understanding that negative campaigns are attacks politics to other candidates on aspects of policy, performance, and opponent's integrity, how would you describe the impact negative campaign on democracy?
 - a. Very negative
 - b. Negative
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Positive
 - e. Very positive
7. In your best opinion, campaigns of which candidates would you believe attacked more often during the 2019 presidential election?
 - a. Joko Widodo – Maruf Amin
 - b. Prabowo Subianto – Sandiaga Uno

8. How would you evaluate the quality of the questionnaire?
 - a. Easy to understand
 - b. Difficult to understand

Appendix E

Qualitative Content Analysis Negative Campaigning in Indonesia's Digital Era Elections Unit of Analysis: Negative campaign Statement

1. Message of the negative campaign

Please copy the direct quotation of the negative campaign message here

2. The source/Attacker

Identify who are the producer of the negative campaign message, either the presidential candidate personally, member of their campaign team, member of supporting political parties, volunteer, buzzer, influencer, or other

3. Target (candidate)

Identify who are the target of the negative campaign message, either Opponent presidential candidate personally, their member of their campaign team, their member of supporting political parties, their volunteer and buzzer, influencer, or other related to the opponent candidate

4. Form of negative campaign

The original form of the negative campaign messages either legitimate criticism, hate speech, or fake news/disinformation

5. Content type

What are the content types of the attack message, whether it is character or policy

6. Identity element

Identify the presence of identity element in the attack message such as religion, race, ethnicity, gender, social class, or none

7. Method of attack

Identify the guiding principle or goal for the selection of the negative campaign message against the target candidate, either to generate fear arousal, to ridicule, to label, to associate (apposition), or other.

8. Media

Identify the media on which the negative campaign message was disseminated television, newspaper, online media, social media, public gathering

9. Date

Record the date, month, and year when the negative campaign message was disseminated or as first identified