

# **The Role of Religious Group in Online Political Communication During 2014 Indonesia Presidential Election**

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## **Abstract**

Indonesia is one of the world's largest democratic countries. It has 6 religions, in which Moslem is the majority religious group that usually has significant role in political process in Indonesia. The arrival of social media, Twitter, in 2006, has brought great impact in the way Indonesian people express it political opinion and expression. This study has aims to identify internet role in supporting the process of political democracy in Indonesia by focusing on the role of Internet in providing new space for religious groups for conducting political communication democratically. This study use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to interpret texts of twitter (conversation, memes, figure, picture, graph, video, etc) produced for 2.5 months before the Indonesian presidential election 2014. The result of the study show that; 1) Muslims dominate the production of political discourse on Twitter. The domination was done in some mechanisms including; a) the exploitation of Muslim identity as a means of legitimacy for constructing ideal presidential candidates; b) the exploitation of religious leader (Ulama/ Kyai) and Islamic values to gain support; 2) On the other hand, the study also uncover marginalization over minority religion particularly Catholic, Shi'a, Ahmadiyah. The marginalization operates under some mechanisms, including; a) the labeling of the minority religious group by using term 'non-Muslim'; b) the excluding of the minority religious group in the political debate. Buddhist and Hindu were not included in the political communication conversation. From perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, I argue that the radical Islamic discourse reflect political power that might dominantly used in every political contestation and mobilization in Indonesian future political event particularly during general election.

## **I. Background**

Indonesia is one of the world's largest democratic countries, with the world's largest Muslim population. Indonesia has 6 official religions including Moslem, Protestant, Catholic, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. More than 80 percent of Indonesia's population professes Moslem. The international community often describe Indonesia's version of Islam as peaceful, tolerant and moderate. Those characters are bought by two dominan Moslem ideology in Indonesia; modern Moslem represent by Muhammadiyah and traditional Moslem represent by Nahdlatul Ulama. Although Moslem became dominant in social and political aspect, the constitution allows for religious freedom, that guarantee freedom of all religion group in Indonesia to have freedom of expression and live peacefully in Indonesia.

While Indonesia has long been recognized as a tolerant moderate Muslim country, available data point to a far darker picture of religious tolerance. According to a cross-

national study on religious restrictions (2007-2010) published by Pew in September 2012, Indonesia was one of the world's most religiously restrictive states. Specifically, Indonesia was one of only five out of the 49 Muslim-majority countries in the world to register "very high" ratings in both metrics used in the study – government restrictions on religion and social hostilities involving religion. The other four countries were Afghanistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen – hardly good company in this respect. After 2010, across Indonesia, religious minorities, including Christians and Shi'a Muslims, Ahmadiyah, have increasingly been harassed particularly by Sunni Islamist militant such as Islamic Defenders Front. Indonesia's Setara Institute, which monitors religious freedom in the country, recorded 220 cases of violent attacks on religious minorities in 2013, an increase from 91 such cases in 2007. Based on those data, government and mainstream Muslim organizations have either failed to adequately respond to these religion conflict.

Rather than trying to explore how minority religion group in Indonesia were violated physically in the real life, this study will identify how minority religion group were violeted verbally through language (Twitter conversation, memes, picture, etc). This study refer to Fairclough's (1989) definition of that define language as mode of 'social action'. Language is not simply a system of sentences, but language reflect 'action' that also define as power (Foucault). Based on the definition, discourse producing during political debate on Twitter is define as social action that deliver religion power.

The arrival of social media, Twitter, in 2006, has brought great impact in the way Indonesian people express it political opinion and expression. With its new characters such us interactive, networked and democratizing, Twitter is expected play significant roles in fostering democratization by providing egaliter space for all religions to be involved in the political communication process. This study use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to interpret Twit (conversation, memes, figure, picture, graph, video, etc) produced for 2.5 months before the Indonesian presidential election 2014. CDA will identify this question: 1) what is the main religion discourse discussing on Twitter; 2) what is the role of religion group in political communication during 2014 Indonesian general election? 3) how power relation of each religion group were identified?

## II. Findings and Discussion

The table show that there were three main discourses discussed in the political debate on Twitter during 2014 Indonesian General Election. Firtsly, *religious affiliations of candidates*. This discourse construct ideal president for Indonesian people as Moslem; and in the same time there was a construction of unideal presiden for indonesian people as non-Moslem. Them who labelled as non-Moslem were including two groubs; a) minority religion in Indonesia; b) minority Moslem including Ahmadiyah and Shi'a. The construction of ideal president for Indonesian people as moslem presiden was legitimate particularly by using construction of Islamic party support for both candidates. Ideal president was represented as presiden that gain support from dominan Islamic party in Indonesia. In this discourse Prabowo was win the contestation as He was gaining support from 4 Islam parties; PKS (Prosperous Justice Party), PAN (National Mandate Party), PPP (United Development Party) and PBB (Crescent Star Party). The data reflect the practice of politic of religion. In this

phenomena, power of Moslem ideology was used for political mobilization targeting moslem voter by marginalizing and excluding minority religion.

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	3 Main Discourses	Ideal President for Indonesian People	Unideal President for Indonesian People		
I	Religious affiliations of candidate	Moslem	Non-Moslem <u>Minority religion:</u> Protestant, Catholic, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism <u>Minority Moslem:</u> Ahmadiyah, Shi'a	Politic of Religion	
II	President Religiosity	<u>Religious presiden (Islami)</u> Does prayer, hajj, read Quran, fasting ( <i>rukun Islam</i> )	<u>Sekuler president :</u> Does not do rukun Islam: (prayer, hajj, umroh, fasting, read Quran) Has close relation minority religion symbol (church, pastor)	Politic of Personal Piety	
II	Candidate support from Moslem Organization	Support by <u>Moderat Moslem</u> : Modern Moslem (Muhammadiyah) and Traditional Moslem (Nahdlatul Ulama)	<u>Moslem Fundamentalist</u> (FPI, HTI, PKS)  <u>Minority Moslem Group:</u> Syi'a, Ahmadiyah, Jamaah Islam Liberal,	Politic of sectarianism	Political Mobilization
I		Support by <u>Semi-Fundamentalis Moslems</u> : Moslem that represent by PKS (Prosperous Justice Party)	<u>Minority Religion:</u> Chatolic, Confucianism		

Secondly, discourse of President religiosity. The discourse was construct ideal president of Indonesia people as a person who religious from the perspective of Islam. Presiden should be a figure who do The Five Pillars of Islam ot five basic rules in Islam that all Muslims should follow including prayer, fasting, charity and hajj. Contrary, 'bad president' for Indonesian people was define as person who do not do The Five Pillars of Islam and close with monirity religion symbol such us church and pastor. The discours reflect the practice of politic of personal piety done by using Moslem values and ideology. The politic of personal piety has did symbolic coercion by using Moslem ideology for marginalizing minority religion groups. The discourse has exclude minority religion group from the political discussion particularly in defining ideal presiden for Indonesian people.

Thirdly, the last dominant discourse discussed on Twitter was *candidates's support from Moslem organization*. In the discourse, ideal president was represent as president that gain support from moderat Moslem (NU and Muhammadiyah) and semi fundamentalis moslem that represent by PKS. Contrary, unideal president was define as president that got support from fundamentalis moslem and minority moslem such us Ahmadiyah, Shi'a and Liberal Islam Network (JIL). The data uncover practise of sectarian-based conflict in the level discourse. It also reflect a new patern of power relation between moslem organization in Indonesia as fundamentalis moslem organisation such us FPI (Islamic Defender Front) was taking part in the political contestation. Political participation of Fundamentalist Moslem clearly changes patern of 'politic of sectarian' in Indonesia as described by Geertz (1960s). The political debate show that Indonesian moslem organization todays are not only categorized as *Santri, Abangan and Priyayi*, but also Islam Fundamentalist.

The findings supported by study done by Polgov Research Center, Gadjah Mada University (2017) that identify transformation of Islam Fundamentalis to Islam post-fundamentalist. Islam post-fundamentalist use to describe Islam Fundamentalis that involve in the political process. They are devided into 3 groups including: a) antitesis group that resist formal government. For example, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI); prothesis group that is labelled as fundamentalist group but involved in formal political process including general election. For example, PKS (Prosperous Justice Party); sintesis group that does not include in the group mention earlier. The position is in between. For example, FPI (Islamic Defender Front).

The discourse of candidate support from moslem organization uncover that Islam moderat represent by Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah remain strong politically. However, there was a new comer, Islam fundamentalist particularly represent by FPI that actively involved in the political debate. This fundamentalis moslem affiliated with PKS, one of the biggest moslem partie in Indonesia, that also lebelled as fundamentalis group. The contestation between moslem organization reflect political power nammed politic of sectarianism. Politic of sectarianism show that moslem organization was used as political mobilization tool for gaining moslem voter, the biggest population in Indonesia. The politic of sectarianism has also disclosed practice of marginalization of minority religion group that were used as instrument to represent bad president for Indonesian people.

### III. Conclusion

Religion group in Indonesian political process has dominant role particularly in defining ideal president for Indonesian people by producing political discourse from the perspective of Moslem. It is done at least by using 3 mechanisms including politic of religion, politic of personal piety and politic of sectarianism. The mechanisms reflect that religion group in Indonesia has become influential tools for political mobilization of moslem voter in the process of political contestation between both candidates. On the other hand, the process has produce marginalization over minority religioun groups in Indonesia, that might endangering Indonesia principal Bhineka Tunggal Ika that guarantee religion pluralism. Meanwhile the agresive participation of fundamentalist religion group particularly FPI in polical process might become challenge for Indonesian future democraticasion process. Based on these data, this article conclude that political discution on Twitter does not represent Indonesian Moslem know as moderate and tolerant. Contrary, the political discussion reflect radical moslem discourse dominantly taken part in the political discussion. From perspective of Critical

Discourse Analysis, I argue that the radical Islamic discourse reflect political power that might dominantly used in every political contestation and mobilization in Indonesian future political event particularly during general election.

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