Hoaxes in the 2019 General Election: Patterns, Motives, and Impacts on Democracy in Indonesia

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Abstract

In the last decade, electoral democracy in Indonesia has been marked by the massive spread of hoax news (fake news). The escalation of the spread of hoax news occurred in the 2019 general elections which were held simultaneously to elect the president-vice president and members of the legislative assembly at the central and regional levels. The hoax news was spread massively through social media networks aimed at attacking presidential candidates, supporting parties, and election organizers (KPU). By using qualitative research methods, this study focuses on the following two areas. First, it examines the patterns and motives of the spread of hoax information in general that were spread through social media in the 2019 general elections in Indonesia. Second, it scrutinizes the impacts caused by the massive spread of hoax information on the quality of electoral democracy in Indonesia. This study found that the pattern of issues that became massive hoax narratives spread on social media were aimed at the presidential candidates. The frequency of hoax narratives aimed at Prabowo Subianto was greater than that directed at Joko Widodo in the 2019 presidential election. However, in terms of the variation of hoax issue patterns used to attack Joko Widodo, there were more than those used to attack Prabowo Subianto in the 2019 presidential election. Second, the various patterns of hoax issues and narratives circulating on social media aimed at discrediting presidential candidates have four major impacts on the building of democracy and nationality in Indonesia. First, hoax news attempts to marginalize substantial ideas in electoral political contests. Second, hoax news influences and misleads public perceptions and opinions. Third, hoax news tries to weaken public trust in democratic institutions in Indonesia. Fourth, hoax news impacts the occurrence of social segregation and sharp polarization in society.

Keywords: *Social Media; Hoaxes; Presidential Candidates; Election Organizers; Decline in the Quality of Democracy; Indonesia*

Introduction

In recent years, electoral democracy (general elections and regional elections) in Indonesia has been marked by massive fake news, including during the 2019 simultaneous elections. News containing hoax content is deliberately produced with various tendencies and interests. News comprised of hoaxes is

intended to attack candidates, discredit election organizers, or influence public opinion and preferences. The massive use of social media that utilizes advances in Internet technology is an important part of the massive proliferation of news containing hoax content. Through social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram, the exchange and dissemination of information takes place quite quickly across distant time and space. In addition, various information, especially that with hoax content, is more easily viral and becomes public consumption, although the accuracy of the truth is still questionable and may contain hoax news. According to Salam (2018, p. 315), this condition can be called the post-truth era, namely a time when the boundaries between dishonesty and honesty, lies and truth, as well as fictional and non-fictional news are difficult to distinguish because the disparity between them is no longer clear.

The spread of news containing hoax content to discredit candidates, disrepute election organizers, or influence public opinion occurred more massively nationally during the simultaneous elections in 2019. Based on the information the author collected, it was found that around nine million Indonesian citizens were exposed to hoax content, and many of them were deceived so that it affected the way they perceived candidates and election organizers, and it influenced their political preferences. The practice of spreading hoaxes like this became more massive as the voting day on April 17, 2019 (Ramadan 2019) got closer. Data collected by the Indonesian Telematics Society (MASTEL) revealed that the social media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp are the most dominant digital information channels used to spread information containing hoax content. This data is based on the results of a survey of 941 respondents which clarified that 87.50 percent of information containing hoax content was spread through social media platforms, while the rest was spread through WhatsApp as the most widely used chat application by Indonesian youths today. In fact, the results of the MASTEL survey also explained that 34.60 percent of the citizens interviewed admitted to receiving information containing hoaxes every day, and as many as 14.70 percent received more than one piece of information containing hoax content every day during the simultaneous elections in 2019 (MASTEL 2019).

In the above context, this study scrutinizes the massive proliferation of hoaxes in the 2019 simultaneous elections in Indonesia. More specifically, this study focuses its analysis on the following two areas. First, it delves into the patterns and motives of the spread of hoax information in general that were spread through social media in the 2019 elections in Indonesia. Second, it examines the impact of the massive spread of hoax information on the quality of electoral democracy in Indonesia. By emphasizing these two focuses of study, this paper intends to contribute ideas that can be used as a theoretical basis in finding the best solutions in solving one of the serious problems in the implementation of elections in contemporary Indonesia. Thus, the implementation of elections and voter participation in future Indonesian elections are expected to run according to the ideals imagined in a healthy democratic country. Among the indicators of a healthy democracy in a country is the implementation of clean, fair, and honest elections, while distancing itself from non-democratic behavioral practices and the spread of hoax information that can distort the goals of democracy itself. In this perspective, the results of this study are significant in developing the Political Science Study Program at UIN Walisongo, namely by contributing ideas through research and publications related to resolving the proliferation of hoax news which is a national problem that can not only damage the course of democratization but also tear apart the unity of the nation's youths who are woven by the threads of diversity by the founding fathers of the Indonesian nation.

Results and Discussion

Hoax Patterns Target Presidential Candidates in 2019 General Election

News or narratives containing false information or hoaxes circulating through social media networks during the 2019 General Election were very large in number. This study found that there were at

least 1.07 million (1,078,938 to be exact) fake news or hoaxes circulating on social media. Of the three mainstream social media platforms or those most widely used by the public, Twitter was the social media platform that had the highest frequency of use to distribute narratives containing hoax narratives, which was about 905,495 narratives (91.45 percent). Then it was followed by Facebook, which had 155,476 narratives (7.97 percent), and then it was followed by Instagram, which was around 17,967 narratives (0.58 percent). The hoax narratives circulating or becoming the subject of public discussion in the virtual spaces were generally uncivilized, disrespectful, lacked empathy, and contained negative sentiments (Rumata & Nugraha 2020, p. 357). The narratives circulating on the three mainstream social media were generally aimed at attacking presidential candidates Joko Widodo, Prabowo Subianto, and the two supporting parties (Aminulloh et al., 2021).

From the 1.07 million hoax narrative posts that tended to attack the three groups above, the authors will only explore hoax news that tried to discredit the two presidential candidates who were competing to win the Indonesian presidential position in the 2019 General Election. Based on the authors' examination of a number of literature studies, this research found that there were at least 61 issues that reflected the pattern of hoax narratives that were quite popular and primarily consumed by the public at large. Of the 61 issues spread on social media networks as hoax narratives circulating during the 2019 General Election, they can be classified into three periods, namely the presidential election campaign period, the presidential election period, and the period of announcing the winner of the presidential election (Rumata & Nugraha 2020, p. 358). The following section explains in more detail the pattern of hoax narratives circulating on social media to attack the presidential candidates in the 2019 General Election in the three periods.

Hoaxes in the Presidential Election Campaign Period

During the 2019 presidential campaign period, 43 issues were found posted on three social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram). Based on the authors' search from existing literature, it was found that there were at least around 555,446 (56.7 percent) hoax narrative posts aimed at discrediting presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto. Meanwhile, hoax narrative posts aimed at doubting incumbent presidential candidate Joko Widodo were around 427,215 (43.3 percent). However, the variation of hoax issues aimed at disbelieving Joko Widodo was greater, namely around 65.1 percent, while those aimed at attacking Prabowo Subianto only reached 34.9 percent (Rumata & Nugraha 2020, p. 358).

Of the various hoax issues that existed, there were four issues that were most frequently posted on social media to discredit presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto during the presidential campaign, namely: radical Islamic groups supported presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto with 156,682 posts, false claims of violence against Ratna Sarumpaet with 102,235 posts, Prabowo Subianto used political consultants from Russia with 70,841 posts, and Prabowo violated human rights with 61,057 posts. Meanwhile, the four issues that were most frequently posted on social media to attack the incumbent presidential candidate Joko Widodo during the presidential campaign were: accusations of Jokowi being a Communist with 161,809 posts, Jokowi as a political figure who was pro-foreigners with 105,343 posts, Jokowi used hidden advisors through votes during the presidential debate with 15,335 posts, and the Jokowi regime criminalized clerics with 19,327 posts (Rumata & Nugraha 2020, p. 359). In essence, of the various hoax narratives circulating on social media, the issues of radicalism and communism were the most popular issues during the presidential campaign in the 2019 General Election. The issue of radicalism was the hoax narrative that was most frequently accused of presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto, while the issue of Communism was the hoax narrative that was most frequently spread of incumbent presidential candidate Joko Widodo.

Hoaxes in the Presidential Election Period

During the 2019 presidential election period, between April 14-17, 2019, 12 issues were found posted on three social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram). Unlike during the presidential election campaign period, the frequency or number of hoax narratives posted on social media to discredit presidential candidate Joko Widodo was much greater than those aimed at presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto. There were around 74,677 (86.8 percent) hoax narratives posted on social media to attack Joko Widodo, while there were only 11,316 (13.2 percent) hoax narrative posts on social media aimed at disproving Prabowo Subianto (Rumata & Nugraha, 2020). During this period, the variation of hoax issues aimed at attacking presidential candidate Joko Widodo was also greater, compared to the variation of hoax topics aimed at attacking presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto. This can be seen further in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Pattern of Hoax Issues during the 2019 Presidential Election Period

No.	Hoax Narration Pattern	Number of Postings	Target
1	There were hackings of Prabowo's supporters' social media accounts.	34,327	Joko Widodo
2	There was chaos in the quick count.	21,124	Joko Widodo
3	There was an attack on the religious affiliation of Jokowi.	6,799	Joko Widodo
4	There was the sexy killers documentary film.	4,640	Joko Widodo
5	There was the hijacking of the Prabowo-Sandi website.	3,172	Joko Widodo
6	There was the accusation of Jokowi being a Communist.	2,473	Joko Widodo
7	There was election chaos overseas.	1,462	Joko Widodo
8	There was religious blasphemy by Jokowi supporters.	488	Joko Widodo
9	The LGBT community supported Jokowi-Amin.	192	Joko Widodo
10	There was an attack on Prabowo's religious affiliation.	6,171	Prabowo Subianto
11	Prabowo supported the Khilafah system.	3,045	Prabowo Subianto
12	There were journalist documents owned by Allan Naim.	2,100	Prabowo Subianto

Source: Processed from Rumata & Nugraha (2020)

Based on the data presented in the table above, it revealed that there were three issues that were the most popular hoax narratives attacking presidential candidate Joko Widodo circulating on social media networks, especially Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, during the presidential election period of the 2019 General Election. The narrative of the hacking of Prabowo-Sandi's supporters' social media accounts was the most popular, with 34,327 posts. Then it was followed by the narrative of chaos during the quick count which led to the win of the Jokowi-Amin pair, with 21,124 posts. Furthermore, in third place, the most popular hoax issue discrediting Jokowi was the narrative about attacks on Jokowi's personal religious identity, with 6,799 posts. This last narrative was more related to the hoax issue that Jokowi was not a Muslim but rather a Christian.

Meanwhile, the issues that became hoax narratives attacking Prabowo that circulated on social media networks, especially Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, during the presidential election period in

the 2019 General Election were only three main themes. Of the three issues, the most popular hoax narrative invalidating presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto was related to attacks on Prabowo's personal religious identity, namely that he was not a Muslim but a Christian because most of his extended family members were Christian. What needs to be emphasized here is that during the election period that occurred in April 2019, hoax issues related to attacks on the religious identities of the two candidates were quite popularly spread through social media networks. This means that the supporters of the two presidential candidates who competed in the 2019 Presidential Election considered it important to disrepute the candidates from the perspective of religious identity amid the strengthening of public religious fervor and the strengthening of the Islamic populist movement in Indonesia over the past decade.

Hoaxes During the Announcement Period of the Winner as the President of Indonesia

During the announcement period of the winner as president of Indonesia (presidential announcement, namely between May 21-22, 2019, 6 issues were found posted on three social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram). During this period, the pattern of hoax narratives aimed at discrediting presidential candidate Joko Widodo was also higher than that aimed at attacking presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto. Where there were 4,297 posts (68.4 percent) of hoax narratives on social media aimed at attacking Joko Widodo, while those aimed at disbelieving Prabowo were around 1,987 posts (31.6 percent) of hoax narratives on social media during the announcement period of the winner of the 2019 Presidential Election. It is more clearly presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Hoax Issues during the 2019 General Election Winner Announcement Period

No.	Hoax Narration Pattern	Number of Postings	Target
1	Jokowi death threats	2,414	Joko Widodo
2	Jokowi accusations of being a Communist	1,101	Joko Widodo
3	Shooting rumors	521	Joko Widodo
4	Chinese police shoot protesters	261	Joko Widodo
5	Prabowo did not take any responsibility for the chaos of student-led protests in 1998.	1,786	Prabowo
6	Radical Islamic groups supported Prabowo's nomination as a presidential candidate.	201	Prabowo

Source: Processed from Rumata & Nugraha (2020)

From the data presented in Table 2 above, it is explained that there was the same pattern of hoax narratives aimed at suspecting presidential candidate Joko Widodo in every period of the 2019 Presidential Election. A hoax narrative was related to the allegation of Jokowi being a Communist. However, in this period the hoax issue that became the main and most popular narrative spread on social media and most widely consumed by the public was the issue related to the threat of Jokowi's death. What is interesting about the data above is that in this period a hoax issue emerged that should have benefited presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto, where he was not the actor behind the chaos of the 1998 student protests or what is known as the "Semanggi Tragedy". This finding may contradict research conducted by previous scholars, such as Santoso and Nugroho (2019) who analyzed sentiment tendencies on Facebook from April 17 to May 22, 2019. This study found that both presidential candidates running in the 2019 General Election received positive sentiment from the public, namely around 85 percent positive sentiment towards Joko Widodo and 76 percent towards Prabowo.

Of the three classifications of hoax narratives or news circulating on the social media platforms of Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram above, the number of posts targeting Prabowo Subianto was greater, namely 53.1 percent, compared to the number of hoax narrative posts attacking Joko Widodo, namely 46.9 percent. However, in terms of issue variation, the number of hoax narratives or news attacking Joko Widodo was greater, namely 67.2 percent, compared to the number of narratives or hoax news attacking Prabowo Subianto, namely 32.8 percent (Rumata & Nugraha, 2020, p. 358).

So, from the discussion above, it is clear that hoax narratives or news were not only aimed at the incumbent presidential candidate, namely Joko Widodo, during the 2019 General Election. However, quantitatively, the number of hoax narratives or news posts targeting presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto was greater. However, the variation of hoax narratives or news issues attacking Joko Widodo was greater, compared to those discrediting Prabowo Subianto in the 2019 General Election. It should be noted that the hoax narratives circulating on social media aimed at Joko Widodo - or the government regime led by Joko Widodo since his decisive victory against Prabowo Subianto in the 2014 presidential election resonated more among the Indonesian people, compared to the hoax narratives aimed at presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto in the 2019 General Election.

Academic studies also found that the Indonesian public consumed more social media and was greatly influenced by various hoax narratives aimed at disproving the incumbent presidential candidate Joko Widodo. Among the studies were those conducted by political researchers from LIPI in nine provinces during the 2019 General Election in the Religious Freedom Survey project. The nine provinces included Aceh, North Sumatra, Banten, DKI Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, DI Yogyakarta, East Java, and South Sulawesi.
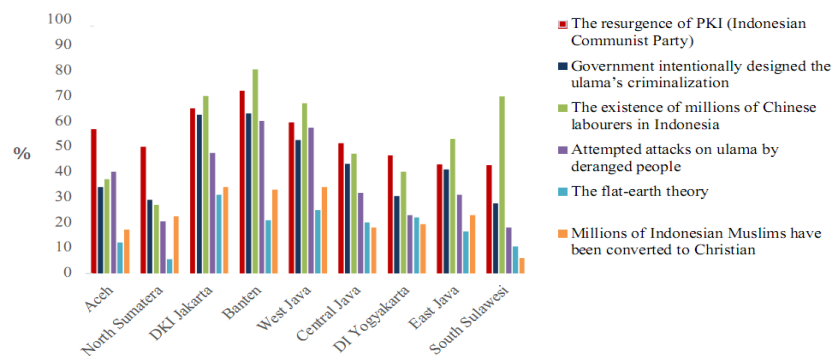

Figure 1. Hoax Information in 9 Provinces
Source: Nadzir, Seftiani, & Permana (2019)

As presented in Figure 1 above, the studies in the nine provinces found that there were three provinces, namely Banten, DKI Jakarta, and West Java, whose citizens were most receptive and influenced by hoax news or narratives aimed at disproving presidential candidate Joko Widodo. Among the hoax narratives included: the rise of PKI, the government's deliberate criminalization of clerics, the presence of millions of workers coming from China to Indonesia, attempted attacks on clerics by madmen, the flat Earth theory, and there were millions of Muslims in Indonesia who had become Christians. These hoax narratives were deliberately created to erode the public legitimacy of the Indonesian government regime led by President Joko Widodo. However, what was interesting was that although the flat Earth theory had no effect on the public legitimacy of the Joko Widodo regime, it was categorized as a hoax because it was considered as information that rejected the established scientific truth that the Earth is round (Nadzir, Seftiani, & Permana 2019).
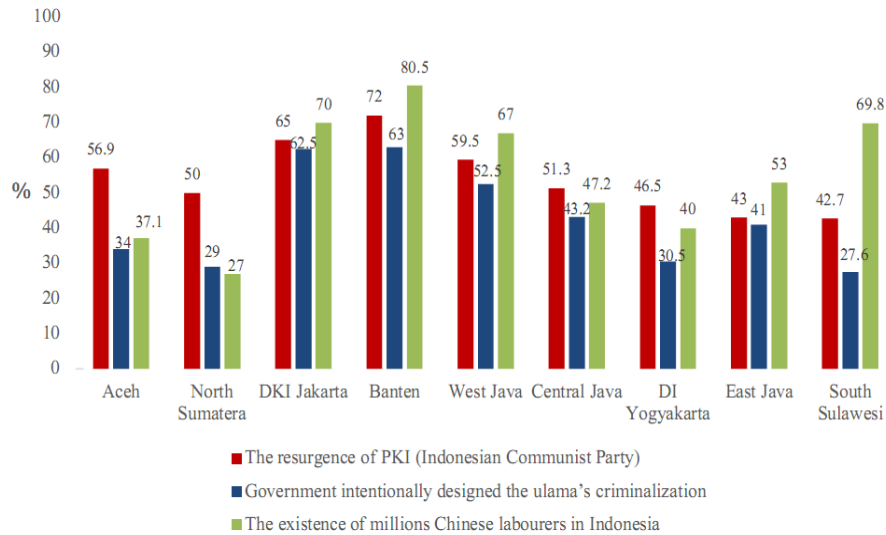
Figure 2. Three Hoax Issues Most Known to the Public
Source: Nadzir, Seftiani, & Permana (2019)

However, the survey results of the LIPI researchers found interesting facts that were consistent with the data that the authors presented above regarding the variation of hoax issues that were most widely posted on social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, which were aimed at disproving the incumbent presidential candidate Joko Widodo. As presented in Figure 2 above, the survey results conducted by LIPI researchers in the nine provinces found that there were three hoax issues that were most popular and widely consumed by the public, namely the issue of the revival of the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party), the deliberate plan of the Jokowi government to criminalize clerics, and the presence of millions of workers from China in Indonesia.

According to the authors, the above phenomenon was possible because there were not many hoax narratives aimed at discrediting presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto that became issues that were widely debated and consumed by the public through mainstream (conventional) media such as television and newspapers, as well as social media. In addition, this condition was also influenced by scholars who studied Indonesian politics and paid more attention to various issues or hoax narratives targeted at Joko Widodo. This means that the issues that became hoax narratives aimed at Jokowi were increasingly studied by researchers or social scholars, and debated in the public sphere by observers and politicians in the mass media such as television and print media newspapers or social media. Then they would increasingly penetrate and influence society at large. This means that public figures and conventional mass media as well as new mass media had a role in the spread of hoax narratives aimed at the Jokowi government to the public at large.

The authors' opinions above are in line with a study conducted by Nadzir, Seftiani, and Permana (2019) that the spread of hoax narratives to the wider society, apart from through social media, is also actively disseminated by national political figures who have great influence on certain community groups. For example, the rise of PKI as a threat to the nation was very prominent at the peak of the New Order. However, the prominence of hoax narratives about this issue in the 2019 election cannot be separated from the way figures such as Gatot Nurmantyo, former TNI Commander, raised the issue in the national media. Even Amien Rais, a senior politician from PAN (National Mandate Party) and a former MPR chairman, even went so far as to accuse the government of supporting the rise of PKI. Similar framing was also found in the case of Fadli Zon, a Gerindra politician, who defended Bahar Bin Smith by saying that clerics were discriminated against by the government.

Effects of Hoaxes on Democracy in Indonesia

In various literature, there is a debate regarding the clarity of the impact caused by hoax news on democracy in a country. However, here the authors take the position that the massive spread of hoax news through the Internet, especially social media, has a significant impact on the process of consolidating democracy and building the nation in Indonesia as a country with a very plural society and a long history of identity politics struggles within it.

From the results of this study, the authors found that the massive spread of hoax news in the 2019 General Election had four serious impacts on the building of democracy and Indonesian nationhood. First, hoaxes marginalize substantive ideas in electoral politics. The simplest impact of hoax news in the electoral political process is that it can marginalize and distort substantive ideas and programmatic politics from what should be carried by the candidates running in the election. This condition is influenced by a condition created by the rapid flow of hoax information that is spread massively through online news portals and various social media platforms due to the advancement of the Internet.

Substantive ideas and programmatic political agendas can be marginalized from public discourse, because the candidates and the public who support them are likely to be busy discussing hoax news. This discussion can take place in conventional public spaces or virtual public spaces in the form of various social media, especially Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp groups. In conditions like this, public issues, programmatic political agendas, and the visions and missions of the candidates who are running during the election period can be drowned out in public discussions, because public discussions are largely focused on hoax news. Discussions between candidates and the public who support them start from finding out the source of the hoax news, who the actors are that are involved in revitalizing it, finding out the validity or falsity of hoax news that seems real, and even efforts to produce counter hoax news to attack political opponents.

Second, hoaxes have the effect of misleading public perceptions and opinions. The influence of hoax news on public perceptions and opinions is a matter of debate among scholars. Some scholars argue that hoax news that is widely spread through the Internet, especially social media, has an impact on people's political views, because in general Indonesian people are unable to interpret political substance and dynamics in depth. This condition can then lead public opinions to have a positive view of candidates who do not have a programmatic political mission and agenda. This is due to the large amount of hoax production and dissemination during the election period which has the aim of political propaganda. This political propaganda is carried out by changing the negative image of a candidate into a positive one in order to increase the electability and popularity of the supported candidate (Tahir, Kusmanto, & Amin, 2020).

In the above conditions, the massive spread of hoax news on social media can influence voters' political preferences. Therefore, hoax news is considered by scholars to be a threat to democracy. Voter preferences that are led by hoax news can influence people's political choices in choosing the wrong candidate in the General Election. This can then have an impact on the election of a candidate for head of state who does not have good competence and good capacity in building the country. It is even more dangerous if hoax news has an impact on public officials who have the power to make public policies, as they can make policies that are of poor quality and detrimental to the wider society.

The above viewpoint is in line with a study conducted by Hui and Prakash (2019) in India and Indonesia in the 2019 General Election. This study found that hoax news that was widely spread on social media networks impacted voter behavior. However, this impact was not always direct, because there was still a need for studies related to how information distorted by hoaxes was cognitively processed. The study, which was based on a survey of a number of survey institutions in Indonesia, found that hoax information in the 2019 General Election had affected the electability of targeted candidates. In addition,

hoax news could also erode the interest of the Indonesian people in candidates and the election process. For example, the rampant spread of hoaxes could increase voter participation in the election.

Another study also found that hoax news has an impact on increasing voter participation, especially among groups of voters who are still undecided or hesitant in making their choices. The massive effects of hoaxes were also evidenced by the relatively high level of voter participation in the 2019 General Election, reaching 80 percent, when compared to the General Election in the last 15 years. This phenomenon shows that hoax news has a relative impact on increasing voter participation (Wisnu 2019).

However, although hoax news can influence public perceptions and opinions about politics, it cannot be ascertained with certainty the relationship between hoax news and voter preferences in the 2019 General Election. Until today, there has been no survey analysis that sufficiently explains the relationship between the growth of hoax information and the psychology of the information process within individuals that ensures that there is a significant influence of hoaxes on changes in people's choices. Based on a study conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), it was found that hoax news had little influence on changing the minds and preferences of supporters of both candidates (Jokowi and Prabowo) in the 2019 General Election. In essence, the influence of hoaxes on voter preferences is still biased in determining their choice of a candidate (Hui, 2020, p. 163). The findings confirm the facts as explained in the previous discussion that the number of hoax narratives aimed at Jokowi was greater than that aimed at Prabowo Subianto, but the Jokowi-Amin candidate pair still won the 2019 Presidential Election. This confirms that hoax news only had an effect on changing the preferences of voters who were still undecided in the 2019 General Election, but it did not have a significant effect on voters who were loyal or already had a candidate they wanted to choose. However, even so, hoax news is still dangerous for the development of democracy because it can change public perceptions and opinions, and it can even mislead the perceptions and opinions of the public who do not yet have a clear political choice.

Third, hoaxes have an impact on weakening public trust in democratic institutions. Hoax news circulating through social media in the 2019 Presidential Election not only had an impact on marginalizing substantive ideas or programmatic political agendas and leading public opinions, but it also had a major impact on the level of public trust that had decreased in government institutions, political candidates, elections, and election organizers.

The above phenomenon actually not only occurs in Indonesia, but it also happens in many democratic countries that are currently facing the massive spread of hoax news or fake news. For example, a quantitative study based on a survey method conducted by Colomina, Margalef, and Youngs (2021) in European countries found that hoax news has given rise to public distrust of various pillars of democracy, ranging from public institutions such as the executive government, parliament, courts, public figures (public officials), journalists, and independent media. The results of the survey by these scholars found that many citizens in a number of European countries have low trust in the mass media (40 percent) and government institutions (22 percent).

In the context of Indonesia, a study conducted by Hui (2020) discovered that public trust in the election organizing institution (KPU) during the 2019 General Election period also decreased. This opinion is based on the findings of a national survey conducted by a renowned research institution from Singapore, namely the ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute in 2017 where the level of public trust nationally in KPU was at 79.3 percent. Then in January 2019, the results of a survey conducted by the Saiful Mujani Research Center (SMRC) found a drastic decline in public trust in the professionalism of KPU's performance in organizing simultaneous elections that elect members of parliament (national and local) and the president-vice president, which was at 13 percent. The results of this survey revealed that the public questioned or did not believe that KPU could position itself as an election organizer that was

neutral or impartial to any candidate running for the position of president and vice president of the Republic of Indonesia.

It should be understood that public distrust in democratic institutions such as KPU in Indonesia has occurred since the 2014 General Election where Jokowi and Prabowo ran for the position of president of Indonesia. The competition between these two political figures had an impact on the polarization of Indonesian society into two camps that had different support and both groups were generally equally fanatical supporters. The 2019 General Election which was followed by two strong competitors, Jokowi vs Prabowo, happened again. This condition then also had an impact on the massive spread of hoaxes and had an increasingly significant effect on the decline in public trust in Indonesia in democratic institutions. This condition also impacted social segregation which had an effect on the polarization of Indonesian society into two large groups that were hostile to each other. This will be explained in the section below.

Fourth, hoaxes can impact social segregation and societal polarization. The influence of information containing hoaxes on social segregation and societal polarization did not only occur during the 2019 General Election in Indonesia. The authors' search of various literature also found the same situation in many democratic countries in Europe. For example, a quantitative study based on a survey method conducted by Colomina, Margalef, and Youngs (2021) in European countries found that around 80 percent of people believe that hoax news has an impact on the political conditions in their countries. Hoaxes even have a negative effect on political discussions that occur between family and friends, thus increasing polarization which has a negative impact on the development of democracy.

In the context of Indonesia, social segregation and polarization of society due to the massive spread of hoaxes in the 2019 General Election are even worse. Hoaxes that have an impact on social segregation have damaged solidarity and the ethos of mutual cooperation as social capital to build democracy in Indonesia. The massive spread of hoaxes in the 2019 General Election has had a major impact on society which is polarized into opposing political views, especially when political events are taking place. Hoaxes with political issues have created fanaticism in an individual's mind towards the candidate or party they support, due to the availability of information that seems as if one party has no flaws, while the other party (the opposition) deserves to be criticized (Savanti, 2019).

The polarization of society due to hoax news circulating rapidly on social media networks has also created chaos and panic among citizens in facing the 2019 simultaneous elections. Even vertical conflicts between the masses and security forces occurred in Jakarta and in many regions, such as Makassar and Sumatra, after the recapitulation process was completed in May 2019, which were also greatly influenced by hoaxes. In addition, the spread of hoaxes also influenced the emergence of persecution practices and horizontal conflicts between community groups. This means that hoaxes disrupt social harmony. Based on a Masetel survey in 2019, 81.90 percent of the public agreed that hoaxes during the 2019 General Election had disrupted social harmony in Indonesia, even among Muslims (Mastel, 2019).

Conclusion

This study on the proliferation of hoaxes in the 2019 Presidential Election can be summarized into the following points. First, the pattern of issues that became massive hoax narratives spread on social media in the 2019 Presidential Election was more directed at the presidential candidates (Jokowi and Prabowo) and election organizers. The frequency of hoax narratives aimed at Prabowo Subianto was greater than that aimed at Joko Widodo in the 2019 Presidential Election. However, in terms of variation in hoax issues used to discredit Joko Widodo, there were more than those used to disrepute Prabowo Subianto in the 2019 Presidential Election. Radicalism hoax issues were more popularly directed towards Prabowo and Communism hoax issues were aimed more at Joko Widodo. The motives behind the spread of hoax news on social media networks during the 2019 Presidential Election were financial or business-

oriented motives, political power issues, ideological motives, hatred motives towards a figure, social motives, and motives of pleasure or jest from the hoax spreader.

Second, various patterns of hoax issues and narratives circulating on social media, both aimed at attacking presidential candidates and election organizers, have four major impacts on the building of democracy and nationality in Indonesia. First, hoax news has an impact on the marginalization of substantial ideas in electoral political contests. Second, hoax news influences and misleads public perceptions and opinions. Third, hoax news has an impact on weakening public trust in democratic institutions in Indonesia. Fourth, hoax news affects the occurrence of social segregation and sharp polarization in society.

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