

flows unimpeded and unchecked through the Internet, filling a multitude of websites, blogs, and tweets (Colón, 2017, para. 3-4).

In Indonesia, coinciding with the Jakarta gubernatorial election during late 2016 to April 2017, the emergence of hoaxes intensified, attacking the competing candidates. A survey of 1,116 respondents by Indonesian Telematics Society (*Masyarakat Telematika Indonesia/ MASTEL*) ten days before the first round of Jakarta elections, found that the distribution of hoax content was considerably high. As much as 44.3% of the respondents stated they received hoax content on a daily basis and 17.2% of them received them more than once per day (MASTEL, 2017, p. 18). The survey also showed that 91.8% of hoax content received by the users contain the topic of social-politics (related to gubernatorial election, governance) and 88.6% contained a racial theme or SARA.

This paper explores how hoaxes (false information) are playing out in Indonesian political campaigns in the age of social media. It investigates what hoax means in Indonesian politics, especially in the era of increasing partisanship and polarization. The paper investigates the characteristics and pattern of hoax information circulated on social media during the Jakarta's gubernatorial election in 2017 using three memetic dimensions: content, form, and stance. The paper begins with a literature review on previous studies about hoax in Indonesia, followed by the elaboration of hoax as memetic practice. The later section is an analysis of hoaxes' characteristics in Indonesia, particularly around the 2017 Jakarta election.

This research offers novelty as it discusses one of the latest political events in Indonesia. As the case study, the 2017 Jakarta election could arguably reflect the mainstream of political dynamics in Indonesia since Jakarta is the capital of the country and acts as the center of government and political activities in Indonesia. However, this research did

not intend to use the election to generalize the political conditions and the dynamics of democracy in Indonesia. In addition, to date, Indonesian scholarly works that specifically elaborate the relationship between social media and hoaxes with contemporary politics are still limited in number. This research, therefore, is aimed at filling this gap and contributes to the study of political and cultural implications of media and technology, especially in the Indonesian context. Furthermore, this research also discusses the importance and impact of users' intervention in their engagement with social media text in a unique Indonesian context.

Literature Review

Hoaxes have been around for many years. The term "hoax" was introduced for the first time by MacDougall in his classical book *Hoaxes* (1958). In the book, he used a range of hoaxes circulated in America in early 20th century as the case study. Hoaxes began to explode in Indonesia during the bitterly contested 2014 Presidential Election. Blatantly false stories were circulated within the social-media-loving populace by both supporters of the eventual winner Joko "Jokowi" Widodo and his opponent, Prabowo Subianto. Each side was guilty of spreading hoaxes to derail the campaign of the other candidates. However, most hoax attacks targeted Jokowi—and many were based on race and religion.

In the 2017 Jakarta election, the use of hoaxes escalated. The circulation of hoaxes intensified during the election period when sectarian tensions have been high because of the blasphemy trial for Basuki Tjahja Purnama or Ahok, the then Jakarta governor (Varagur, 2016). In one of his speeches prior to the election, Ahok, an incumbent candidate, criticized his political rivals for using Islam as a campaign tool. He stated that voters were deceived by those using verse 51 of Sura Al-Maida (hereafter Al-Maida 51) from

debunked the hoax and stopped it spreading. Meanwhile, using virtual ethnography, Anisa & Rachmaniar (2016) attempted to recognize the target of political hoax information that was uploaded on Instagram and users' responses to it. This study revealed that in responding to a hoax, Instagram users are divided into five types: i) users with negative comments; ii) users with positive comments; iii) users with neutral comments; iv) users with unrelated comments; and v) users with indifferent/apathetic comments.

Scholarly works about hoaxes in the context of Indonesian politics remain rare. Therefore, by investigating the characteristics of hoaxes and their patterns of information delivery in Indonesian electoral politics context, this paper contributes to the study of online hoaxes, especially the role of a hoax as memetic practice in Indonesia's contemporary democracy.

Hoax: the definition

First, it is essential to clarify what we mean by "hoax." Researchers have acknowledged the difficulty in defining what, exactly, qualifies as a hoax. MacDougall (1958) defines hoax as "deliberately concocted untruth made to masquerade truth" (p. vi). With this definition, MacDougall attempts to distinguish hoax from honest errors in observation or judgment to which everyone is subject. He conveyed that a hoax has no basis in fact; however, whether its author had a specific intention to make people accept a hoax as fact is immaterial to his definition (p. vi).

MacDougall's study on hoaxes indicates that these are nothing new, it is not a term or practice engendered by online era. Some scholars suggest that fake news can be traced back to the ancient Greek era when Octavian's use of false news in his political battle with Marc Antony enabled him to succeed Julius Caesar (Colón, 2017, para. 7). Now, however, social media and digital devices allow oral and

written falsehoods to be distributed amongst the broader community so quickly that the impact of a hoax has become more significant (Wardani, 2017, p. 3).

If MacDougall emphasized the untruth side of a hoax and gave few regards to the intention of the creator, this paper supports Kusman's view on a hoax as "false information designed to influence or provoke an audience into acting in accordance with the interests of the creator and circulated through social media" (2017, para. 6). Hoaxes in this study are identified as deceptive pieces of information intentionally created to outwit others by covering up or manipulating facts or even making-up false information. The creators of hoaxes intentionally fabricate content and edit videos or photos to make them look authentic and circulate them via social media with the aim to deceive public. It is identical to Chen et al.'s (2014) argument that hoaxes can mislead people's perception by conveying false information as truth. In the political realm, the hoax has been exploited to attack a political rival since it has the potential to disgrace one's brand and credibility.

Hoax as memetic practice

A further body of work about internet memes can also help us to understand hoaxes. The term "meme" was coined by biologist Richard Dawkins (1976) in his book *The Selfish Gene* to refer to small cultural units of transmission, analogous to genes, which are spread by copying or imitation. According to Dawkins, memes can also be "ideas, symbols or practices formed in diverse incarnations, such as melodies, catch-phrases, clothing fashion or architectural styles" (1976, p. 189-190). Although the term "meme" was coined long before the digital era, the Internet's features turned memes' diffusion into a ubiquitous and highly visible routine. The scale, scope, and the accuracy of memes—or what Dawkins called as longevity, fecundity, and copy fidelity (1976, p. 194)—are enhanced by the Internet, since

pp. 39-40), this paper attempts to examine the characteristics of hoaxes that emerged in Indonesia during the 2017 election. The dimension of *content* is a specific text that refers to ideas or ideologies delivered in a memetic hoax. This research analyzes what messages were conveyed in hoaxes' text through the caption in the image or personal comments added by social media user who uploaded the image to their account. The second dimension related to *form* of physical expressions or appearance of the message. In reading this dimension, the study analyzes "both visual/audible dimensions specific to certain texts and the more complex genre-related patterns organizing them (such as lip sync or animation)" (Shifman, 2014, p. 40). The third dimension, the *stance*, relates to the information that memetic message conveys about their own communication. Based on the reading of *content* and *form*, the research then analyzes the dimension of *stance* by studying who is entitled to participate in the message as well as the tone and style of communication (p. 41).

These three dimensions will assist in identifying ideas, textual practices or constructions, and communicative strategies in a hoax. Therefore, they can help in not only understanding the characteristics of the hoaxes being spread during the 2017 Jakarta election, but also identifying the role of users in the circulation of hoaxes on social media.

Result and Discussion

In the discussion about memetic content, it is essential to highlight the users' treatments of the original items spread online in the network. The hoax content being analyzed in this paper were derivative versions of an original item as a result of the user's treatment on it. Most of the treatments involve the activities of image editing, caption adding, and subsequent sharing to the network. These processes are engendering the alteration of

meaning as users are reframing the original information.

During the Jakarta electoral campaign week (January to March 2017), this research found 15 hoaxes that correspond to the sampling category. The details of the 15 hoaxes obtained can be seen in Table 1.

Table 2 below shows the memetic dimensions in 7 examples out of all 15 hoaxes that this research has analyzed.

The content analysis of memetic dimensions demonstrates that a hoax is a complex arrangement of ideas, textual practices, and communicative strategies. They are intertwined and feed off each other in forming a new meaning to deliver to the public through sharing activities. Based on the analysis of *content* in the table, hoaxes that circulate during the 2017 Jakarta election contain information discrediting the election candidates. The slandering information can be allegations that the candidate has engaged in fraudulent activity in order to win the election, that the candidate has died, is involved in legal cases or has previous policies that were harmful to public. The idea being presented is that the candidate is not worth a vote.

In terms of *form*, hoax content circulating on social media before the 2017 Jakarta election demonstrated a specific pattern of how users deliver hoax information. When spreading hoax content, users tend to:

1. Post an edited image with personal comment (Example 1 and 5).
2. Share a link to a blog (fake news) with personal comment (Example 2).
3. Post a deceptive statement and an unrelated or misinterpreted photo (Example 3 and 4).
4. Post a defaming narrative with claims by a perceivably influential figure supported by an edited image (Example 6).
5. Post a deceptive statement with support of screen captures of chats or Facebook status about similar claim (Example 7).

Table 1.
Hoax samples during January-March 2017 from www.turnbackhoax.id

| No | Upload Date | Title |
|----|-------------------|---|
| 1 | January 3, 2017 | Ahok ziarah ke makam ibu angkatnya memakai sepatu (Ahok visited his Mother's gravesite wearing shoes) |
| 2 | January 8, 2017 | Ahok kabur untuk menghindari amukan warga (Ahok fled to avoid the people's fury) |
| 3 | January 17, 2017 | "Teman Ahok": Kami semua siap bunuh diri jika Pak Ahok kalah dalam Pilkada 2017 (Friend of Ahok: We swear we would commit suicide if Ahok was lost in the 2017 Jakarta election") |
| 4 | January 25, 2017 | Kalijodo dimiliki oleh Sinarmas Land (Kalijodo area is owned by Sinarmas Land) |
| 5 | January 26, 2017 | Temuan money politic dari PASLON No. 2 (Money politic evidence from candidate no. 2) |
| 6 | January 26, 2017 | Ahok & Djarot Terlibat Perselisihan (Ahok & Djarot involved in disputes) |
| 7 | February 6, 2017 | Tangkapan Layar dari Video Metro TV Yang Berjudul '300 Juta Orang Hadiri Kampanye Ahok-Djarot Di Gue 2, Dimeriahkan Band Slank & Iwan Fals' (Screenshot of Metro TV Video Entitled '300 Million People Attends My Ahok-Djarot Campaign 2, Performance by Slank & Iwan Fals Band') |
| 8 | February 18, 2017 | Mujahid Cyber Membela KPU Dari Serangan Hacker Ahok (Mujahid Cyber Defends Committee of Election from the Attack of Ahok's Hackers) |
| 9 | February 18, 2017 | Istri Ahok: Pribumi Indonesia Jadi Rakyat Aja Ngeropotin, Apalagi Jadi Pemimpin! (Ahok's Wife: Indonesian natives are burdensome, let alone when they become leaders!) |
| 10 | February 19, 2017 | Ahokers Organization Cyber Team/AOCT meretas dan mengganti data KPUD Pilkada 2017 (AOCT hacked and modified the results of Ahok's votes in the 2017 Jakarta election) |
| 11 | February 19, 2017 | Uang Bayaran dari Tim Basuki-Djarot (Bribe money from Basuki-Djarot Team) |
| 12 | March 6, 2017 | Prof. Taruna Ikrar: "Ahok dan Pendukungnya Alami Masalah di Otak" (Prof. Taruna Ikrar: "AHOK and its supporters have brain problem") |
| 13 | March 6, 2017 | KPK jemput paksa Anies Baswedan di rumahnya, karena tersandung korupsi dana Frankfurt Book (Commision of Corruption Eradication fetched Anies Baswedan from his house due to the Frankfurt Book corruption case) |
| 14 | March 6, 2017 | Ahok Resmi Dihukum Pancung (Ahok is Officially Beheaded) |
| 15 | March 15, 2017 | Pendukung Ahok Tidak Paham Sholat Jenazah Tidak Pakai Ruku' (Supporters of Ahok did not know how to practice mortuary prayer) |

Source: Data collected by the author

From this finding of textual construction, it is visible that this memetic form implies hoaxes are circulated with an intention to make the misinformation look legitimate. For instance, photos that were taken from other sources that have no relation to the topic—or are related but misleadingly interpreted—are used to support false information and create a narrative as if the statement is true. Other forms of hoaxes are a screen capture of television news program with edited headline (Example 1 and 5). Sometimes it also includes a seemingly official source to build the impression that the information is legitimate (Example 4). The creator or disseminator of the hoax may not always intend to make people believe that the hoax information is a fact; however, they had constructed the text in the hoax content so that

their memetic idea of “the candidate is not worth a vote” appears valid.

In terms of *stance*, Table 2 illustrates that in conveying ideas, the hoax creator or disseminator staked the opposite position from the candidate discussed in the hoax content. The messages generally use persuasive and provocative tones to convince the reader or receiver of the messages that the information is legitimate and at the same time fueling people's existing beliefs or sentiments towards the political candidates.

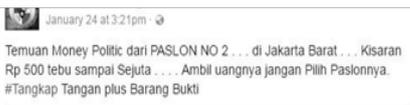
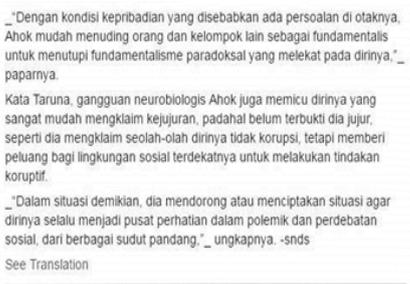
The pattern illustrates the role of hoaxes during the Jakarta election in 2017. Repackaged images, comments, or links to a post containing hoax content are supporting each other in expressing the idea/ideology being conveyed in the post. The pattern also contributes to

Table 2.
The Memetic Dimensions of Hoaxes during the 2017 Jakarta Election

| No. | Sample | Description | Memetic dimensions |
|-----|---|--|--|
| 1. |  | <p>A user posted an image (a screen capture from a news program) and a comment to Facebook.</p> <p>The headline in the screen capture was: “<i>AHOK RESMI DIHUKUM PANCUNG [AHOK IS OFFICIALLY BEHEADED]</i>” and the user’s comment was: “Don’t forget to throw his body to the sea.”</p> <p>The image was taken from a TV news program in 2014. The headline of the news program was edited. The original headline was: “<i>JELANG PUTUSAN MK [LEADING UP TO JUDICIAL VERDICT].</i>”</p> | <p>Content - Ahok has been beheaded.</p> <p>Form - Edited and manipulated image. - Provocative new headline. - Resentful comment from user.</p> <p>Stance - The edited image and user’s comment suggest hate against Ahok.</p> |
| 2. |  | <p>A user posted a link to an article on a blog. The article headline was: “<i>BREAKING NEWS...!!! COMMISION OF CORRUPTION ERADICATION FETCHED ANIES BASWEDAN AT 8.30 FROM HIS HOUSE DUE TO THE FRANKFURT BOOK CORRUPTION CASE....</i>” The user’s comment was: “What car should we use to pick him up?”</p> <p>The picture in the article was actually from a news report on a verified news outlet about factual corruption case, but not involving Anies Baswedan.</p> <p>The original photo was used to support a non-factual article.</p> | <p>Content - Anies Baswedan has been implicated in a corruption case.</p> <p>Form - Attached a link to a fake news article. - Mocking statement from user.</p> <p>Stance - The edited image suggests hate against Anies. - User’s comment signals mockery of Anies; exaggerating and dramatized fake news headline.</p> |
| 3. |  | <p>A Facebook user shares a photo of Kalijodo Green Open Space landmark sign with a comment claiming that the space has been bought by Sinarmas Land, a major property developer company in Jakarta.</p> <p>The user connected the image with forced evictions during Ahok administration in the beginning of Kalijodo green space construction in early 2016. The comment indicated that Ahok was evicting people from Kalijodo so he could sell the land to the conglomerates.</p> <p>The picture was genuine; however, Sinarmas Land was the developer who built the green open space but did not buy it.</p> | <p>Content - Sinarmas Land has bought Kalijodo Green Open Space.</p> <p>Form - Deceptive statement. - Factual and original photo— but has been misused.</p> <p>Stance - User’s comment signals resentment against Ahok.</p> |

continued to page 93

connection from page 92

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>4. </p>  | <p>A Facebook user posted a picture and insert a comment: "Found money politic evidence from candidate No. 2 [Ahok-Djarot] ... in West Jakarta ... ranging from Rp500,000 to Rp1,000,000 ... Take the money, but don't vote for them #caught in the act with evidence." The photo was abused. It was originally from an article on a trusted news site antaranews.com, dated August 13, 2013, covering an issue that has no correlations with 2017 Jakarta Election.</p> | <p>Content Ahok had paid/ bribed the citizens to vote for him in the election.</p> <p>Form Deceptive statement. Captured images of Facebook posts with similar claims.</p> <p>Stance - User's comment signals resentment against Ahok.</p> |
| <p>5. </p>  | <p>A user posted an image (a screen capture from a news program) and a comment to Facebook. The headline in the screen capture was: FRIEND OF AHOK: WE SWEAR WE WOULD COMMIT SUICIDE IF AHOK WAS LOST IN THE 2017 ELECTION," and the user's comment was: "WATCH TV NOW I hope they kill themselves for whatever reason. See, I've told you Team Ahok (Ahokers) are out of their mind... let's get this viral!" The original image was taken from a screen capture from a TV news program on December 4, 2016. The headline of the news program was edited. The original headline was: "PARADE BUDAYA KITA INDONESIA [WE ARE INDONESIA] CULTURAL FESTIVAL]."</p> | <p>Content - Friend of Ahok (Ahok's supporter community) made a vow to commit suicide if Ahok did not win the election</p> <p>Form - Edited and manipulated image. - Resentful caption.</p> <p>Stance - User's comment suggest hatred against Ahok.</p> |
| <p>6. </p>  | <p>A Facebook user posted a narrative about Ahok and his supporters having a "brain/mental problem." The post included a picture of a scientist with a headline: "AHOK and his supporters have brain problem...." The narrative stated that Dr. Taruna Ikrar, an Indonesian professor from University of California Neurobiology, United States has claimed that Ahok had a personality disorder and needed to get his brain examined. Dr. Taruna Ikrar via his Twitter account clarified that the narrative is not true as he has never made such claim.</p> | <p>Content - Ahok and his supporters have brain/ mental problem, signaling that he was not qualified to lead Jakarta</p> <p>Form - Defaming narrative. - Picture of a well-known and influential figure. - Deceptive quote.</p> <p>Stance - User's comment signals resentment against Ahok.</p> |

continued to page 94



connection from page 93



A post from a Facebook account claimed that Mujahid Cyber Muslim were trying to defend the Election Commission's site from hacker attacks. It claimed that the hackers were from Ahok's team who wanted to change Jakarta election data. It also claimed that the site was down for a few moments. When it was working again, all the data has changed. The user captured chats and other posts showing similar claims. Turnbackhoax.id clarified that the data on the site has changed as the result of vote updates not because of the hackers. The site itself was not a legitimate vote counting device. Any changes that happened on the site would not have affected the election result.

- Content** - Ahok's IT team was trying to hack the Election Commission's website, but Mujahid Cyber Muslim had managed to defend the site.
- Form** - Deceptive statement.
- Captured images of Facebook posts with similar claims.
- Stance** - User's comment signals resentment against Ahok.

Source: Data collected by the author

assessing how a hoax is used as a tool for staking a position in the election. Hoax content was mainly circulated with the addition of the user's comments. The comments embedded with the hoax content that was shared indicates one's interpretation of the text and political position. For example, edited images with a deceitful statement reflect resentment against a candidate. It does not always indicate which candidate they support, but it is clear that they are using the hoax to attack people they are opposing.

In exploring hoax as a meme, all the hoax examples in this paper act like memes in how they dismantle "existing source material everyone knows to tap into ideas or sentiments people connect with" (Mallonee, 2017, para. 4). Someone takes a photo, a GIF or a drawing and alters it with words, Photoshop, or other images to send a message. That message resonates with other people, who spread it around and adapt it. The majority of the hoaxes identified were built like memes. In Example 1 and 5, for instance, the creator

appropriated screen capture from a television news program and altered it by editing the headline. They are similar to Example 7. The creator made a defaming narrative with claims by a perceivably influential figure supported by an edited image. The manipulation did not repeat a meaning that was already there; it created it. In Example 7, Ahok was said to be having a mental/brain problem that resulted in his harsh behaviour. According to the narrative, the claim was stated by a perceivably influential figure (a professor) supported by the image of the figure and caption written over it. The site www.turnbackhoax.id debunked it confirming that it was not true. However, Ahok's controversial attitude confirmed the issue being raised in the hoax content. Ahok did not have mental or brain illness, but that does not matter. The implication is still read as fact. So regardless of the accuracy, people still shared it because it was a representation of what they thought about Ahok.

Dovetailing with that notion, hoaxes as memes are not just a series of copied and

imitated items, but they also contain the creator's or distributor's ideology and interpretation regarding issues raised in the society. It is visible in the contexts of local electoral politics discussed in this paper. Users had taken a product that was originally designed for different objectives, reproduced texts in the form of false information, and linked it with political candidates. They repurposed the texts for a vehicle to transmit the misinformation they created about the candidates. The intervention by users turns a text into something else, although the original information is accurate. It can be problematic in political context because people may see the new item of information as verified and legitimate, where in fact it is a product of a users' intervention.

In politics, hoax as memetic practice has the potential to form a community of shared beliefs and ideology. If memes are used to participate in a normative debate about how the world should look and the best way to achieve it (Shifman, 2014, p. 119), then hoaxes are both the vehicles for this promotion and the subversion of normative debate. In an ever-connected world where speed takes precedence over truth, the issue in a hoax can quickly become a talking point for the members of the community—even if it has been proved as false.

The general spread of political hoaxes in Indonesia leads to the emergence of fact-checking websites such as Turnbackhoax.id, the database source for this study. Turnbackhoax.id is an acclaimed non-partisan fact-checking site run by a team of volunteers and receives the help of Facebook pages Forum Anti Fitnah, Hasut and Hoax (FAFHH) mentioned earlier in this paper. Volunteers of this site always monitor their social media feeds and check with credible sources when they find any indications of a hoax (Renaldi, 2017, para. 13). The administrators mainly use online search engines to find valid information to clarify issues raised in hoax content. If it is a legitimate hoax, the volunteers post it on the

website. The objective of this site is to build an accessible database for the public, and it indeed has grown into "an important resource for Indonesians to check the veracity of memes and fake stories" (Renaldi, 2017, para. 12). It also illustrates that such fact-checking activities are now increasingly significant, especially when the political temperature was rising in the lead up to an election. The FAFHH group even engendered new forms of participation and user engagement with social media by allowing the members of the group to ask and clarify hoax contents.

Conclusion

The study in this paper analyzes 15 hoax samples found through the www.turnbackhoax.id website during January-March 2017. Of the 15 hoaxes analyzed, 14 of them attacked the incumbent candidate, Basuki Tjahja Purnama (Ahok), and only 1 was addressed to rival candidate, Anies Baswedan (Anies). There was a significant gap in the statistics of the hoax samples addressing the two candidates; however, this research was not intended to compare them. It instead aims to investigate the characteristics of a hoax circulated during the Jakarta electoral period in early 2017. Based on the analysis of the dimensions of content, form, and stance of all hoax examples, it is visible that hoax content spread in Indonesia during the electoral period carried out the idea to attack a candidate. The idea of political hoaxes during the 2017 Jakarta election is that the candidates is fraudulent or not qualified to be a leader.

In terms of form, the hoaxes propagated in Indonesia during the 2017 Jakarta election were in the form of edited images with a personal comment, a deceptive statement with an unknown or unrelated picture to support false information, a post containing a link to a fake news blog and own commentary, as well as a false narrative with professional or scientific claim from influential figures. Meanwhile, the dimension of stance was depicted in the way

that the hoax creator or disseminators position themselves against the political candidates. It is visible that the imitation and propagation of edited images with a deceitful statement reflect the role of hoaxes as a means to stake a political position. When sharing a hoax content together with a resentful personal comment, it is clear that a user utilizes hoax as a tool to attack people they are opposing, although it is not conclusive whether it means they support the other candidates.

As a memetic practice, hoaxes spread in Indonesia during the 2017 Jakarta election cannibalize an original item and alter it into a new form of artefact with a new message. The new form and message resonate with existing beliefs in society. As a consequence, a hoax can create a culture that is based on a shared belief among the community. Therefore, hoax has the potential to be used as tool of partisanship. However, in turn, the use of hoax as a means of political partisanship can be dangerous as it can overpower the truth and lead people to avoid believing facts. Further work is needed to assess the strategies to counter the negative effects of hoaxes particularly in Indonesian politics.

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