

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN INDONESIAN POLITICS: A CASE STUDY OF METRO TV AND TV ONE DURING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2014 & 2019

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Non-State Actors in World Politics

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Introduction

Media bias has always been there in many countries, for example, Nigeria, Malaysia, and India (Pinter Politik, 2019). In Indonesia, it is also not uncommon for television broadcasting corporations to be in favour of a particular candidate during election – especially if the owners are top political figures. Agatha Lily, the Supervisory Commissioner of Indonesian Broadcasting Commission stated to BBC Indonesia that "*Berdasarkan pemantauan KPI, kami menilai, menjelang pilpres, beberapa televisi menunjukkan ketidaknetralan* (Based on the supervision by Indonesian Broadcasting Commission, we see that some TV stations show partiality)" (BBC News Indonesia, 2014, para 4).

To further elaborate the phenomenon, she said that "*Hal ini tampak bukan hanya pada durasi, tetapi juga frekuensi kemunculan capres tersebut. Bahkan kecenderungan pemberitaannya* (It is not only prevalent in the duration of the advertisement, but also the frequency of the appearance of the said presidential candidate. To some extent, even the tendency of the content)" (BBC News Indonesia, 2014, para 6). The reality that TV stations tend to echo the interests of the capital owners instead of being impartial is not in line with their real function, i.e., as a medium of political education and social control for the society (Rani, 2014).

The nature of this paper is descriptive – which is intended to “describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. This research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened” (Nassaji, 2015, p. 129). It also seeks to analyse the role of media, in this case, Metro TV and TV One, in Indonesian politics – taking the local and presidential election as a case study. Metro

TV and TV One are chosen because they seem to represent different stances when it comes to the election. In order to help answering the research question, content analysis is employed as a research method. The data used in this study are journal articles, news, and reports from which the answer to the research question can be got.

This essay consists of 4 main parts, i.e., introduction, Metro TV, TV One, Discussion, and the conclusion. The first part introduces the reader to the issue. The second and third part shall provide a short explanation about Metro TV and TV One and what they have done during the time of presidential election in 2014 and 2019 respectively. Eventually, the fourth part shall wrap up the whole discussion by reiterating the main points while drawing a conclusion.

Metro TV

According to Pinter Politik (2019), the team of the candidates for president and vice president Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno (Prabowo-Sandi) stated their objection for the including of Metro TV as one of the TV stations authorised to organise a presidential debate 2019 – the reason for the objection being the clear bias of the said TV station perceived as hurting their reputation among the general public.

Furthermore, the team of Prabowo-Sandi stated that Metro TV tend to not give publicity to them while giving “free publicity” to the other candidate, i.e., Joko Widodo and Ma’ruf Amin (Jokowi-Ma’ruf). However, the claim was rebutted by Don Bosco, the spokesperson and editor in chief of Metro TV, who said that Metro TV has actually allocated time slots for publicity of Prabowo-Sandi and contacted them but to no avail (CNN Indonesia, 2019; Pinter Politik, 2019).

To further explain the confusion of Metro TV, he stated that “*Semua sudah ditentukan A sampai Z-nya. Aturan main sudah ditentukan, pertanyaan sudah ditentukan, lalu durasi sudah ditentukan, lalu apa yang buat teman-teman di sana (BPN) keberatan*” (Everything has been decided from A to Z. The rules have been established, the questions have been prepared, and the duration has

been decided, so why do they (the team of Prabowo-Sandi) feel the need to object?" (CNN Indonesia, 2019, para 12).

The suspicion on the unfair treatment by Metro TV among the loyalists of Prabowo-Sandi culminated right after the presidential election. There were many TV stations broadcasting the quick count result – and Metro TV was one of them. The quick count televised on Metro TV showed that the number of votes casted for Prabowo-Sandi surpassed that of Jokowi-Ma'ruf. However, the audiences, mainly the loyalists of Prabowo-Sandi, noticed that during the live report, the reporter tried to give some signals to change the display – and the display did change to be the inverse (Santoso, 2019).

To the defence of Metro TV, they said that it was purely an accident. There was an error in their system so that the quick count was displayed wrongly – confirming that the ones where Jokowi-Ma'ruf won were the correct ones (Kompas, 2019; Santoso, 2019). However, it did not manage to calm the loyalists of Prabowo-Sandi. The event also further divided the nation to be two parties, i.e., the loyalists of Jokowi-Ma'ruf.

The loyalists of Prabowo were suspicious of Metro TV as they were among the TV stations broadcasting the win of Jokowi-Jusuf Kalla (Jokowi-JK) in 2014. Whereas, many other TV stations broadcasted the win of Prabowo-Hatta Rajasa (Prabowo-Hatta) in 2014. Their suspicion in 2019 was to the extent that the whole election was a fraud involving the incumbent president and media owned by his sympathizers (Sadikin & Bhayangkara, 2019).

TV One

Even prior to the presidential election in 2019, TV one has always shown that they are a fair and balanced media when it comes to reporting – as opposed to Metro TV which has shown its obvious “affiliation” with the government (in 2019) and with political parties supporting Jokowi’s candidacy (in 2014). TV One has even changed its motto from "*TV One Memang Beda*" (TV One is indeed different) to be "*Terdepan Mengabarkan*" (Advanced in Spreading News). TV One has been

keeping its motto of being advanced in spreading news ever since – even when it means that the news is against the government or the government policy (Putra, Djuj, & Mani, 2017).

In 2014, TV One broadcasted the quick count result of presidential election with Prabowo-Hatta as the winner – by excluding the surveys done by poll institutes with Jokowi-JK as the winner. It made the supporters of Jokowi enraged because they accuse TV One of spreading fake news – due to the fact that there were so many TV stations showing the quick count result with Jokowi as the winner.

Moreover, still at the time of the election, TV One intensively broadcasted the rumour that *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) is a party with the agenda of reviving communist ideology and the infamous Indonesian communist party. It was such a sensitive issue because communism has taken millions of lives in Indonesia before it was completely annihilated from the country. However, TV One did not provide any specific proof to their claim. It has led the sympathizers of *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* to shut one of the offices of TV One in Yogyakarta province because they perceived TV One as spreading fake news which may lead to national disunity (Republika, 2014a; Republika, 2014b).

There was one thing the people from both sides, i.e., the supporters of Jokowi and Prabowo, did not realise. Neither of the media were fully fair and impartial. The chaotic situations happened during the 2014 and 2019 presidential election were caused by the different framing taken by both media (Anggoro, 2016; Rosinda & Suryandaru, 2020).

Conclusion

This paper has successfully answered the research question on what is the role of media, particularly Metro TV and TV One in Indonesian politics – taking the time of the presidential election as a case study – with content analysis as the employed research method. It thus means that the purpose of this study, i.e., to describe a particular phenomenon rather than to explain why such phenomenon happened, has been reached.

It can be inferred from the discussion that Metro TV tended to side with the incumbent government – be it during the time approaching the presidential election or even prior to the year of the election. Whereas, TV One tended to be neutral prior to the year of the election and finally turned to be biased towards Prabowo-Sandi when the time approaching the presidential election.

Their different stances prior to and during the time of presidential election has divided Indonesian society to be two groups, i.e., the loyalists of Jokowi (Jokowi-JK in 2014 or Jokowi-Ma'ruf in 2019) and the loyalists of Prabowo (Prabowo-Hatta in 2014 or Prabowo-Sandi in 2019). The loyalists of Jokowi tend to watch Metro TV as it somehow frames the good things about him and his governance. Whereas, the loyalist of Prabowo tend to watch TV One as they felt that the TV station is fair and impartial when it comes to the news broadcasted about Prabowo.

Metro TV and TV One actually caused a chaos in Indonesia because each side of the audiences believed that they were the right ones with credible sources of information while the reality was that they were the result of media framing – something which the broadcasting watchdog, Indonesian Commission of Broadcasting, has warned the media to stop as it is not suitable with their real function as a medium of political education and social control for the society.

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