Digital Democracy in Indonesia's 2019 Election:

Between Citizen Participation and Political Polarization

Amalia Sustikarini*
Department of Political Science and International Relations
University of Canterbury
Christchurch New Zealand
*amalia.sustikarini@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Abstract—**In April 2019 Indonesia conducted its fourth direct election since the 1998 democratic reformation. This election is frequently described as one of the most complicated elections in the world, given a large number of voter and simultaneous process with the legislative election. The eminent feature of the current elections in Indonesia is the increasing use of the internet for the various forms of electoral politics. The internet has been widely used in the election campaign, voter education as well as disseminating information on electoral rules and election result. It leads to the question about the influence of the online platform to electoral political participation in Indonesia. This paper attempts to investigate the nexus between digital democracy through an online platform and political participation by analysing the role of Kawal Pemilu and AyoJagaTPS, the crowdsourcing projects run by civil society. This platform is an essential effort to prevent electoral irregularities that could undermine the legitimacy of the election. Taking the classical literature on political participation that classified political participation into four dimensions: voting, campaign activity, contacting official and collective activities, this paper argues that online political participation through digital democracy offers a new dimension of participation by accentuating voluntarily action from the public. However, it also creates competition and distrust around the subject of digital data resulted from deepening polarization in Indonesia's politics. This paper employs qualitative methods to analyse a case study of Kawal Pemilu and AyoJagaTPS, the citizen digital platforms as one of the forms of political participation during Indonesia 2019 election.**

Keywords: democracy, digital, political participation, election

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital democracy as the contested concept has been emerging in the last decades. NESTA offers a simple meaning by defining digital democracy as the practice of democracy using digital tools and technologies [1]. In a similar vein, Van Dijk defines digital democracy as the pursuit and the practice of democracy in whatever view using digital media in online and offline political communication [2]. Dijk emphasizes the distinction between online and offline because political activities are not only occurring through the internet but also in physical meeting assisted by mobile digital media [2]. NESTA classifies digital democracy into a minimalist and maximalist definition. The minimalist definition focuses on giving citizen access to government information and enabling them to interact with government through online consultation or transactional service online. The maximalist definition contains a more participatory aspect by enabling them to collaborate with government officials as well as make their own decision about how they and their local governments are governed. [1]. these definitions correspond with political participation. Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, and Jae-On Kim [3] defined political participation as those legal acts by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or actions that they take. Furthermore Verba and his associates [4,5] categorizes political participation in four dimensions: voting, campaign activity, contacting officials, and collective activities.

However, with the rising role of the internet, these traditional measures of political participation cannot accommodate the new form of political activities available to the public [6]. Citing Gennaro and Dutton, de Zuniga, Veenstra, Vraga and Shah [6] argue that the level of internet interactivity and the propagation of alternative channel have established the new form of political engagement. This trend is evident in the Indonesian election, particularly during the last two cycles of this electoral democracy practice in 2014 and 2019. The creation of crowdsource website, Kawal Pemilu (Guard the Election), the initiative to digitize the election result in the 2014 Presidential Election, marked the emergence of digital democracy in Indonesia. While the citizen participation election monitoring movement is not new feature in Indonesian electoral politics, as pioneered by KIPP (Komite Independen Pemantau Pemilu/Election Monitoring Independent Commission), Forum Rektor (Rector Forum) and UNFREL (University Network for Free and Fair Election), the digitally-driven citizen political participation is relatively new in Indonesia. Against this backdrop, this paper formulates two research objectives: the first one is to observe the influence of digital democracy on citizen political participation and the second one is to assess the impact of political polarization to the development of digital democracy in Indonesia.

II. METHODS

This paper uses qualitative methods with case study approach. One of the main distinctive features of qualitative research is that it allows the researcher to identify issues from the perspective of study participants and understand the meaning and interpretations that they give to behaviour, events

or objects [7]. The researcher also needs to be considered as a part of research setting and being reflective and self-critical [8]. In addition to qualitative methods, this thesis employs a case study approach. A case study should be considered to answer "how" and "why" questions [9]. Case studies give an opportunity to the researcher to explore or describe a phenomenon in context using a variety of data sources [10].This research collects the data from the secondary sources that comprise of books, journal and online news.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Jiang [11], while there has been a general consensus about the importance of internet in individual's political life, the issues of how internet affect's individual political life is still unsolved due to three competing arguments. The first camp emphasises the optimistic argument about the potential of the internet to enhance citizen's involvement in politics and contribute to the quality of democracy [11]. The proponents of the positive impact of internet believe that internet opens a new channel of interactive communication between voters and political parties/legislative members, it offers easy and low-cost access for political information and knowledge to foster the political interest, participation and engagement. The sceptic, on the contrary, argues that instead of encouraging participation, the internet is a depoliticising medium that distracts the individual from political engagement. The last camp falls somewhere in between, asserting that the internet has a mixed impact on the citizen's involvement in politics. The empirical evidence for such claims indicates that the effects of the Internet are not directed to all citizens but to a specific group of people and specific forms of political participation [11]. In the realm of electoral politics, Campante et al. [12] found that internet use may mobilise people for participation in non-electoral activities while it does not have such influence on participation in electoral activities.

More specifically on the subject of digital technology and electoral politics, the previous study by Cheeseman, Lynch and Willis [13] acknowledge the prominent development of the deployment of digital technology in elections in the past two decades, specifically in African and Asian countries. The intricate process of democratization contributes to several electoral problems such as malpractices, procedural problems or both. Thus, digital technology is perceived as a solution to compensate for the weakness of the state and to halt the misconduct by politicians and officials. Moreover, Cheeseman, Lynch and Willis explain that "the new technology will enhance the electoral environment in three main ways:

- By making the functioning of the electoral commission more robust and efficient, by reducing the scope for electoral manipulation, and

- By generating greater clarity and transparency regarding election outcomes.

- By boost the process's legitimacy – and hence that of the elected government" [13].

From the three abovementioned factors, it is indeed appealing to see how digital technology is expected to generate an accountable and fostering the legitimacy of the elected government. The importance of the free, fair and transparent election as a foundation of legitimate government and parliament resonates the necessity of citizen participation. This is where the convergence between digital technology, citizen political participation and democracy lies. The subsequent section will explore the development of citizen election monitoring in Indonesia, by using both digital and non-digital platform

A. *The Development of Participatory Election Monitoring in Indonesia*

As have been mentioned in the earlier section, the non-partisan, citizen participatory election monitoring organization in Indonesia was pioneered by Komite Independent Pemantau Pemilu (KIPP) or the Independent Election Monitoring Committee. It was founded in 1996, during the Suharto's New Order administration, a period where elections were marred by rampant manipulation, mobilization and intimidation. The establishment of KIPP was initiated by various elements of civil society such as activist, intellectuals, journalist, lawyer and former government officials and intended to "promote a fairer and more competitive election as a significant step towards genuine democracy and new hope for the public [14].

During the 1999 general election, the first election after the 1998 democratic reformation, Indonesian voters witnessed a robust development of election monitoring organizations. In addition to KIPP, there are university-based election monitoring organizations, such as University Network for Free Elections (UNFREL), the Rectors' Forum for Democracy (the Rectors' Forum) UNFREL. The other prominent organization is Jaringan Pendidikan Pemilih Untuk Rakyat (JPPR) or the People's Network for Political Education. This establishment of JPPR demonstrated the involvement of the two largest Islamic organizations, Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah in electoral politics to ensure the management of free and fair election in Indonesia.

The 2014 election is the new phase of the development of election monitoring in Indonesia that was marked by the establishment of two digitally based crowdsourced election monitoring, Mata Massa and Kawal Pemilu. Mata Massa is an application that was launched by Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI) or Independent Journalists Alliance and ICT Laboratory for Social Changes (iLab) in November 2013. This application receives reports of election violations such as money politics through mobile phone [15]. Mata Massa deployed 200 volunteers to organize the reports submitted by the citizens through their devices [14].

While Mata Masa focused on the mass reporting on election violation, Kawal Pemilu is the application to digitize the election result. This crowdsourcing digital platform was initiated by Ainun Najib, an Indonesian data-scientist expatriate who works for a Singaporean company. The post-voting tension was very intense due to the competing victory claim between two contenders, Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla and Prabowo-Hatta Rajasa. Each candidate based their claim of electoral triumph on the quick count result released by their own trusted pollster. Given the two weeks of the time span between the voting day and the release of the official election

result, Ainun and his four friends developed Kawal Pemilu to give the alternative information about election result that is based on the real count. Kawal Pemilu has a simple operating system by scanning downloaded C1 form from KPU website. The scanned tabulation forms then were cut, snipped and placed in internal site with limited access only for Ainun and his team [14].

According to Purwanto, Jansenn and Zuiderwijk [15], Kawal Pemilu faced a challenge in recruiting volunteers to digitise 478,829 C1 forms. In order to solve this problem, Ainun chose to adopt Multi-Level Marketing recruitment by recruiting ten friends as "downline" who then recruited another ten and so forth, through a secret Facebook group [15]. This method enabled him to gather 700 volunteers in only one day after he set up this platform [15]. Ainun also strictly applied confidentiality to the four initiators and volunteers to prevent bribery and intimidation. In term of volunteer's profile, Kawal Pemilu has a very diverse category, from 14-year-old middle school student until a 59-year old pensioner. Despite the clear statement that Kawal Pemilu is neutral-open data initiative and not a political movement [16]. Ainun said that they still recruited supporters of Prabowo or Jokowi as long as they comply with Kawal Pemilu rules and principles [14].

Kawal Pemilu had been widely praised by the public during the 2014 presidential election when they proved their ability to quickly compiled open data released by the General Elections Commission (KPU). The results were posted on its website and regularly updated every 10 minutes by their 700 volunteer [18] Kawal Pemilu provided us with a successful example of the convergence between digital technology and political participation. The software developed by Ainun Najib and his associates allowed the fast process of data compilation. The recruitment system and the enthusiasm from the 700 volunteers are the evidence of the citizen engagement and participation in electoral politics. Kawal Pemilu has achieved its objectives as the data backup plan for the election to ensure transparency and stop fraud [16].

The establishment of various election monitoring organizations in Indonesia is the entangled part of the democratization process that emphasis on citizen participation in electoral politics. Diamond and Morlino [17] coined a concept of participation that essentially requires citizens to not only vote, but to also be actively involved in the political process as a whole, including the elections monitoring. According to Gromping and NDI, as cited by Suryani [14], there are three contributions of election monitoring to democratic quality. Election monitoring will contribute to democratic quality in three ways:

- It improves the transparency and quality of a political process that will lead to greater public confidence in election and increase the legitimation of election result.

- It encourages public involvement in public affairs which can help to transform the way citizens view their relationship and participation in politics and governance

- It promotes political accountability; broader political and civil liberty rights and the rule of law in general

thus could be a step forward toward substantial democracy.

B. *Digital Dilemma: Citizen Participation and Political Polarization*

The 2019 election is the first simultaneous presidential and legislative election in the Indonesian electoral democracy history. Its technical and procedural complexities, coupled by the deep polarization between the community supporting two candidates, the incumbent Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin and Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno increases the importance of a strong and credible election monitoring organization's presence in Indonesia. The repetition of the nomination of Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto contributes to this polarization between their loyal supporters. The spread of hoax and the lingering identity politics had made this election a test case for the quality of Indonesia consolidated democracy. Departing from its earlier success in digitizing result in 2014 election, Kawal Pemilu consolidated again, manually tabulated actual vote results and posted them online so the public could compare them with official tallies [18]. Unlike the 2014 election, during the 2019 election Kawal Pemilu applied a different mechanism to increase the accountability and authenticity by requesting the volunteer to take and upload the photo of tabulated data or C1 from the individual polling station into the website.

In addition to Kawal Pemilu, a similar platform, AyoJagaTPS (Let's Guard our Polling Station) was founded by James Falahuddin to monitor and digitize election result during 2019 election. The procedures of AyoJagaTPS is similar to Kawal Pemilu, but they also requested the uploader to input their identity number and their ID card [18]. Bawaslu or Election Supervisory Body enthusiastically welcomed the establishment of the new election monitoring groups as they will be their counterpart in assuring free and fair election.

The post-voting situation during the 2019 election is a resemblance to the 2014 election. On August 18, one day after the voting day, the two candidates claimed their victory based on their own trusted sources. Joko Widodo claimed to get 54,5% votes that were recapitulated from the 12 quick count result released by 12 pollsters [19]. On the other hand, Prabowo also claimed as the winner of the election by obtaining 62 % votes [19]. Sandiaga Uno revealed that the vote recapitulation of their camp was based on the result released by AyoJagaTPS platform [20]. Sandiaga's statement indicated the partiality of this crowdsourcing platform. While Falahuddin did not mention that his platform supported Prabowo and Sandiaga, but there is no similar statement from Jokowi camp to trust the particular crowdsourcing election monitoring as Sandiaga did. Other than AyoJagaTPS, there is also vote-counting device site Jurdil 2019, which claims a Prabowo victory with 60.4 % of the vote as of April 20 2019 [18]. This site was also promoted by Prabowo's supporters on social media as the most appropriate reference for vote counting [18].

Predictably, the result between Ayo Jaga Pemilu and Kawal Pemilu was different. On May 13, 2019, Falahudin announced the final result of Ayo Jaga Pemilu that indicated the victory of Prabowo-Sandi with 55,31% votes while Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin obtained 44,69% votes [21]. While on May 22, Kawal Pemilu

also announced their final recapitulation that was won by Jokowi-Ma'ruf with 55,21% while Prabowo-Sandiaga attained 44,79% votes. The result from Kawal Pemilu just had a slight discrepancy with the official result from Indonesian Election Commission (KPU) and SITUNG or vote-count information system from KPU which the former showed the result of 55,40%-44,50% and the later came up with the result of 55,39%-44,61%

The differing result between digital crowdsourcing of election monitoring was not the only appealing feature in the 2019 election. The release of the SITUNG (vote-count information system) result from KPU was highly criticized by the Prabowo campaign team. Volunteers of the Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno campaign team claim to have recorded 13,000 instances of inconsistent counting on the General Elections Commission's (KPU) vote-count information system (Situng) on its website [22]. Because of the findings, Said Didu, a Prabowo campaign team member, asked Bawaslu to drop the KPU's Situng system. However, Bawaslu head, Abhan, said that the election watchdog would not order the KPU to stop operating Situng but to fix the procedures instead [22].

These two occurrences, the differing result of digital crowdsourcing election monitoring organizations and a distrust to the result digital vote-count system from the official election commission leaves us with a question about the ideal construction of the role of digital technology and citizen political participation in the election. While these two elements are beneficial in creating efficient, transparent and accountable election and enhance the legitimacy of elected government officials, in the highly polarized political situation, digital data is prone to be manipulated to support one competing party. It accentuates a statement by John Githongo, Kenya's former anti-corruption advocate, "you cannot digitize integrity" [13].

Moreover, as shown by the suspicion on the SITUNG result, a deep political polarization could also lead to the massive scepticism to any digital efforts and scientific-based application in electoral politics.

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper is based on the research about digital democracy and aim to seek the impact of digital technologies and citizen participation on the quality of electoral democracy. By utilizing several concepts on digital democracy, political participation, election monitoring and digital dilemma and by taking a case study of Kawal Pemilu and AyoJagaTPS as the crowdsourcing election monitoring organizations, it is found that the digitally based crowdsourcing is paving the way for the convergence between digital technology and citizen participation. This digital platform is also essential to safeguard the election transparency, accountability and strengthen the legitimacy of the newly elected government officials. Indonesia began to have a robust participatory election monitoring organization after the fall of the Suharto New Order Administration in 1998. The election monitoring went into the digital platform during the 2014 Presidential Election by the establishment of Kawal Pemilu. Kawal Pemilu has provided a successful example of

the open data initiative that combined the effective digital technology and enthusiast volunteer to ensure transparency, legitimacy and prevent electoral irregularities. However, the development during 2019 simultaneous election exposed the different side of the digital technology in Indonesia's electoral politics. The growth of the similar digital crowdsourcing platform as shown by the establishment of AyoJagaPemilu closely correlates with the deep polarization in Indonesia's politics, especially during the election between the two presidential candidates and their supporters. Consequently, the digital crowdsourcing election monitoring that is initially intended as participatory, voluntary and neutral open data initiative has inevitably dragged into political contestation. While we should keep optimistic about the role of digital technology in strengthening Indonesian electoral democracy, the development of this "digital partiality" warrants further investigation as it potentially harms the substantial democracy and undermines the scientific effort in electoral politics.

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