SOCIAL MEDIA, CYBER HATE, AND RACISM

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ABSTRACT

In the era of information technology, the power of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other products of digital technology have led to dramatic changes to the social life of people in a pluralistic Indonesia. The establishment of a digital public space that can accommodate all entities, classes, or social communities to communicate freely, without limit and open up greater opportunities for the achievement of goals in accordance with the interests, both on the basis of political goals, economic, cultural, trust and ethnic , also helped to increase the potential for social conflicts with more complex backgrounds. One of them is the widespread of racism in social media against ethnic of minorities as it occurred during the 2017 Jakarta governor election involving Basuki Tjahaya Purnama, a candidate of the ethnic of Chinese-Indonesian. This paper seeks to explore the contribution of social media as a medium for spreading the hate of speech and racism and the factors that cause it. This article finds that; firstly, the development of information technology and freedom gained by every user in managing social media member space for racism group in Indonesia utilizes the progress of information technology as medium in spreading hatred and racism in Cyber space. Secondly, the existence of hate speech and racism in social media cannot be separated from socio-political situation in society.

Keywords: social media, hate speech, racism

A. Introduction

The evolution of information-communication technology has given a great change for human civilization, especially for the needs in accessing information and communication. The presence of social media as part of innovation of information technology advancement has been transformed as a fast, integrative, and interactive communication medium. The presence of communication systems with various advantages that increasingly facilitate the community in overcoming the constraints in communicating and accessing the information automatically also has shifted the role of traditional media in accommodating the flow of information, opinions, and public communication system. In political context, the presence of social media is also increasingly enriching the channels for citizens to actively participate in politics (Andriadi, 2016). However, freedom of participation or discretion in responding to issues that are developing through social media is often expressed with antagonistic expressions, scorn and swearing, even leads to racism. This paper will specifically analyze how social media play its role in lifting racist sentiments by taking the example of Jakarta governor elections in 2017, where the utterances that lead to racism are found in many social media pages such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The target of the racial utterances are adressed to candidate of governor from chineese ethnic, Basuki Tjahaya Purnama, also known as 'Ahok.' In addition, racist attitudes and actions are also addressed to supporters and to those deemed to support or represent identity of the minority.

The case of alleged blasphemy that ensnares Ahok can be said to be a catalyst for the return of sentiments against Chinese ethnic in Indonesia, but for the record that

the case emerges as a national polemic and eventually leads to racial issues, also indispensable role of social media, video recording of Ahok's speech in Kepulauan Seribu by the end of 2016 which allegedly contained the vilification of the majority religion in Indonesia that goes viral and widespread through Facebook. Despite the results of research showing that the level of racial sentiment towards Chinese citizens is relatively low, for example, the results of research conducted by Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC) for the last fifteen years which indicate that the racial sentiment especially to ethnic Chinese in Indonesia is very small, especially when compared with the hatred of the community against terrorist groups such as ISIS which ranks first (Florene, 2016), but in fact, the intensity of speech hatred and racism against the Chinese ethnic through social media, especially Facebook can be quite massive.

To understand the phenomenon, Andrew Jakubowicz in Cyber Racism (2012), states that the internet has proven to play a key role in spreading racism, opens opportunities and strengthens community networks based on skin color (White power), Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and ideology-ultra national. At the same time, according to Jakubowicz, racist groups are also seeking to exploit and explore the potential of the internet to spread racism (Jakubowicz, 2012). For the example is what happened in England According to Awan (2014) The Internet and social networking sites have been politically used by far-right groups such as the English Defense League (EDL) and the British National Party (BNP) to rise the issues of Islamophobia in Europe and promote online Cyber hate attacks against Muslim communities. Similar to England, after the Arab Spring in 2011, there is also the case of Cyber hate using social media to radicalize society against refugee and asylum seekers taking refuge across Europe which are mostly Muslims. The empirical research held by Hazelka and Schmidt (2017) indicate that social media is used by radical groups such as

the Initiative against Islam (former Block against Islam) in Czech Republik and *Pegida* (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident) in Germany to mobilize society to expel Muslims out from Europe. Similar in England both of them are middle organizations which are frequently use the social media to do racism and hate speech.

In the digital age, information and communications containing racist elements can spread in various media spaces with increasingly complex subject involvement and, of course, increasingly luminous for a pluralistic society (Jakubowicz, 2012)In the context of socio-political life in Indonesia, we can see that racial sentiments towards Chinese ethnic have long been one of the most sensitive and vulnerable issues of social upheaval that occurred in May 1998. Until today, despite the fluctuating and heating intensity at certain moments, racial sentiments against Chinese ethnic is proven to be still ongoing in the middle of social life of society in Indonesia as happened at the time of governor election of DKI Jakarta in 2017 and thereafter. In addition, we cannot deny that in today's digital era, the social media holds a role in increasing racial sentiments in Indonesia. New symptoms of racism flow against the Chinese community can be seen when Ahok as a politician and mayor who often showed a hard and controversial attitude began often spread through social media. For intolerant and racist groups, it becomes an opportunity to make the attribute 'Ahok' as a capital to build a negative perception of Chinese ethnic. Provocative, sensational and racial stories are made and disseminated massively through online media and social media ultimately able to mobilize anti-Chinese sentiments instead of criticism of Ahok's policies in an objective manner. The mass media in social media about the inherent arrogance of Ahok's leadership style also produces a new mockery attributed to Chinese descendants. If previously there were ridicule in the form of 'Chinese,' 'Cokin,' or 'Singkek,' as racial calling to Chinese ethnic, now the word 'Ahok' is also used as a term that represents racial sentiment to them after the Ahok

phenomenon is crowded in the media social. Apart from that it is a deliberately created situation with political goals and motives, but beyond that, these facts also prove that social media plays a very significant role in spreading racism in Indonesia.

B.   Social Media

Social media is one of the products of technological development that cannot be separated from people's lives. Social media offers easiness for the community in various aspects, such as the easier to obtain and convey information, express them and gain social and economic benefits. Those things are supported by various gadgets that the community can afford plus the development of sophisticated, cheap and easy-accessible internet network. The rapid development of social media also changes the function of traditional media which formerly dominated by large companies into an egalitarian media with private sphere. As Peters et al (2013).

> "*Social media are communication systems that allow their social actors to communicate along dyadic ties. As a consequence, and in stark contrast to traditional and other online media, social media are egalitarian in nature.*"

The term of Social Media is the construction of two areas of research, communication science and sociology. Media in the context of communication is just a means to store or convey information or data. In the communication aspect, there are four important elements that underlie the interaction relationship in social media; the motive, content, network structure, and interaction (Peters, 2013). In the context of this paper, the discussion will only focus on the aspect of one's motives of interacting in social media. The motive of someone doing something is based on the motivation, opportunity and ability to do what the person's purpose is (Peters, 2013). In the context of racism and Cyber hate, the motive of hatred of actors personal causes these actors to interact by distributing hate-filled

content, including racism in social media, as well as the possibility of facilitating in falsifying identity in social media. The ability to spread hate speech and racism can also seen from the ability of actors in accessing information and technology easily.

To understand social media relations with social dimension, social media must be understood by sociological approach.
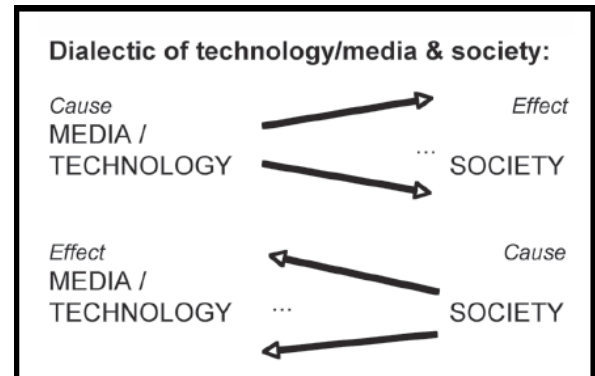

Figure 1. The logic of the relationship between media technology and society (Fuchs, 2012).

This terms sees that the technological and societal relationships creates a dialectical relationship which influence each other in the complex ways. (See figure 1), Fuchs (2012) explains:

> "*Society conditions, the invention, design and engineering of technology and technology shapes society in complex ways. Technology is conditioned, not determined by society, and vice versa.*"

It means that social conditions, interests and conflicts affect the possible emerged technology, because modern technology is a complex part of the part that interacts with certain unpredictable areas (Fuchs, 2012). Technology shapes society in a complex way, which often means there are many effects that can contradict one another because both are also complex systems. It causes the small possibility of a single effect or a single dimension appearing in this interaction. This allows a causal relationship between the media / technology and society to be seen as a multidimensional interaction. Therefore, media / technological and community relations have many potential

impacts on the social system. Likewise, both can support or inhibit each other. Related to which potentials can be more realized, it depends on how society, interest, and power structure in using technology in a complex relations.

By using the perspective on seeing technology above, we can critically look at the significant relationship between social media and the condition of society, whether it social, economic and political conditions. Social media is not only can be an opportunity for free citizens to communicate and speak their voices in Cyberspace, but also can be a threat to the community's own order. Adapting metaphor from Gillan Wong Miswardi, social media is a *double-edged sword* (Miswardi, 2015) because it can be a tool which promises advantages to support the improvement of life, even though it will also rise some disadvantages.

C. Racism and Cyber Hate

Racism has a wide range of definitions and diverse dimensions. For instance, racism can be viewed as a form of reinforcing the position of an ethnic, religious or national identity through an expression that demonstrates superiority to others. The act of mutual hostility, slander, and other group identity pollution with tribal or cultural motives can also be identified as a form of racism (Jakubowicz, 2012). If it refers to the concept of interpellation proposed by Louis Althusser (1971) in understanding racism, he proposes the following definition:

> "*We derive our sense of identity from how we respond to the ways in which others implicitly categorize us through public speech and gestures each day.*"

Furthermore, in the Council of Europe Protocol (2006) racism is defined as any act or attitude that leads to efforts to create hatred, discrimination and violence directed against individuals or groups on the basis of ethnicity, color, offspring (ethnicity and citizenship), including the belief in a religion as a pretext for such action.

In the context of this paper, the discussion of racism will only be focused on racism explicitly, especially through social media. Therefore, it is necessary to categorize from a narrower racism to understand the rise of racial action through social media. One of them can be identified in the form of hate speech nuanced with issues of race, ethnicity, religion, and group that spreading through social media. With the availability of social media as the wider space for expressing people's hatred, the opportunity of violence increase as well. People nowadays have space to either vent their hatred online or to make actual threats offline. There are several series of attack against Tionghoa communities, such as the combustion of two Buddist's Vihara (Monastery) and five temples in Tanjung Balai, North Sumatra in the middle of 2016, which also followed by the spreading of racial hate speech in social media accounts (Handayani, 2016). The contents are mostly about the provocation of people to reiterate what happened in 1998 to Tionghoa ethnic communities such as killing and raping. This shows us how that the hate speech the presence of social media which allows anyone to freely shows their hatred can be the trigger of racial violations.

Chao (2015) mentions that a dark side effect of the internet is the rapid reproduction and quick legitimization of discrimination. The reproduction of legitimacy and discrimination that exist in social media can be in many ways such as Hoax, Hate Speech, Hate Crime, Cyber crime, Cyber racism, Cyber bullying, Cyber Radicalization.

According to Anti-Defamation League Cyber hate is:

> "*Any use of electronic communications technology to spread anti-Semitic, racist, bigoted, extremist or terrorist messages or information. To this, electronic communications technologies belong to the Internet as well as other computer and cell phone-based information technologies.*" (ADL, 2010)

The majority of Cyber hate cases occur in social media such as, Twitter, Facebook and

YouTube. Yet there are so many definitions for Cyber hate, both in terms of academic, legal and political. Cloud and Blakemore explain, cited by Hanzelka & Schmidt (2017), in an attempt to understand the concept of Cyber hate, we only have to focus on aspects of Cyber that correlate with the spread of hatred through modern technology such as internet and gadgets. This aspect is very important because social media in particular has different characteristics from other technology platforms that can support these hate spreading processes. Referring to Wang et al's research quoted by Hanzelka & Schmidt (2017), shows that the rate of mobilization of Cyber hate on Facebook is significantly higher than e-mail based communication. Moreover, features owned by social media such as Facebook are also very effective in spreading ideologies that target potential supporters. Facebook also provides an efficient container for those who want to take political action to mobilize the times, share opinions, and sharing collective identity and solidarity.

D. Social media as a new public space of spreading hatred and racism: The phenomenon of 'Ahok' and the new stream of racism in the digital age

The nature of social media. with the meaning, the situation that can be built by social media is different from traditional media, where media-based digital technology has given full flexibility to its users to process information and communication. It is, therefore, not surprising that all aspirations, expressions, and reactions poured without going through the screening process and information confirmation open up the potential to create social clashes. These factors ultimately also become a big hole that became the source of several problems, one of which is the users of social media does not have the concern or even feel can hurt others through the posts and comments made in social media. This is because in the internet, especially social media is very easy to falsify identity or even to commit

a crime (Cahyono, 2016). The Second is about the lack of awareness, maturity and ethics of social media users. Social media topologies are not like traditional media that have applicable journalistic ethics and professional norms embraced in creating and conveying information, therefore it is very natural that social media users come from different segments of society, with diverse backgrounds of age, profession, status social and educational levels do not understand the importance of ethics, awareness and maturity in the use of social media. The above situation is exacerbated by the abundance of 'hoax' information by credible online media that exploits the political situation in society to gain personal or group benefits by making people polarized. While maturity in sorting out, filtering and managing the information received is one important aspect so that people do not easily accuse, justify, and diversify a person solely for the information they are accused of, so they can easily spread hate speech through social media.

The rise of Basuki Tjahaya Purnama as Jakarta governor replaces Joko Widodo who was elected president of the Republic of Indonesia in the 2014 presidential election, did not end the polarity of the divided society during the election campaign. On the contrary, the emergence of Ahok as a new figure in the Indonesian political scene, especially in the capital city of Jakarta, opens up new challenges for the harmony of pluralism and democracy in Indonesia. One of the problems that arises is the return of sentimental rise in society as a consequence of the heating up of political contestation in elections governor of Jakarta in 2017, including confrontation between supporters and SARA campaigns that meet the social media throughout the election stage until after him. The phenomenon is not without clear cause. In the history of politics in Jakarta, Ahok is the first governor of Chinese ethnics; he is regarded as an outlier in the political arena in Indonesia which has been dominated by the majority of Java. In addition, his status as a non-Muslim also makes him

hold a double majority status in a country with the largest Muslim majority in the world (Ismail, 2016). Some people believe that the emergence of the Ahok figure is a repository of Chinese ethnic revival. Although in a democratic perspective it is regarded as a glorious achievement and as a manifestation of democratic values, but for some groups it is seen as a threat to the existence of majority groups. The reason is quite clear, the historical record of Chinese ethnicity in Indonesia has been going on for quite some time, one of which can be understood as the fruit of the political scenario created by the New Order and the result of the economic disparities that occur in society, where most of the macroeconomic sector is dominated by tycoons- tycoons from the Chinese, inversely proportional to the condition of the majority of Indonesians who only serve as middle-class actors down in the management of the economic sector.

One interesting thing to note, however, is that the racial sentiments that emerged during the 2017 Jakarta governor contest were dominated by racism channeled through social media in the form of racial-smeared campaign content. Although it cannot be directly concluded that such conditions fully represent the reality of true binary opposition, it can be said that the digital age has provided a new space for tribal polarization in society. Freedom of expression and voice in a democratic climate are supported by technological advances, also followed by the spirit to hate and act racist. In the case of Ahok, it is felt that the mobility to voice racial and hate speech against the Chinese gubernatorial figure is done by massively spread Buzzer and volunteers in social media. See figure 2:

Figure 2. The Examples of racial expression on social media against Ahok (Google Image)

The religion and ethnicity are platforms used to provoke and build bad opinions on everything related to ethnic Chinese. For example, the news stating that there will be an invasion of 10 million workers from China who will take over the wheels of the Indonesian economy (Florene, 2016). In addition, the alleged blasphemy case by Ahok through the video spread of his speech quoting one of the verses in the Qur'an at online news portals, especially in social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram became a climax for groups who did not want Jakarta led by both Chinese and non-Muslim descendants for racism.

Ahok's controversial and outspoken leadership style eventually became a potential opportunity to build a negative impression on the Chinese communities; therefore, some of the Chinese descendants felt threatened and worried about being the target of racial behavior.

According to Tobias Basuki, a researcher at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, as a popular figure, especially as politicians who do not want to play safe as Chinese politicians in general, Ahok also often display the expression of tribal identity on various occasions, such as using ethnic Chinese clothing, to be one of the reasons why the polarity of the people on the basis of ethnic differences becomes easy (Emont, 2017). Furthermore, false news about the threat of Chinese invasion of Indonesia with the aim of protecting Indonesians of Chinese descent also contributes greatly to the creation of racial sentiment between indigenous and Chinese group. This is confirmed by the senior researcher of Center for Strategic and International Studies, Christine Susanna Tjhin, that false news was deliberately created with the intention of building a negative perception of Chinese citizens (Emont, 2017).

Although the current situation is very much different from what has happened during the New Order government, especially in 1998, where the economic growth of today is quite stable with the policy of infrastructure development in remote areas is being encouraged, the society has become more intelligent and literate towards technological developments, but today's political trends dominated by ethnicity and religious issues rather than criticism of the performance of government objectively in the spaces of public debate, particularly in social media, still pose a serious threat to the existence of ethnic minorities such as the Chinese in the midst of pluralism and the plurality of Indonesians (Holmes, 2016).

E. Conclusions

The presence of hate speech and racism in social media is one of tragedy which appears as result of the intense relation between technology and social daily live nowadays. This condition are used by racism groups as an effective media to intimidate other groups which are considered as the inferiors. Furthermore, If the hate speech through radio broadcast could bring the massacre of Tutsi race held by Hutu, so this case of racism in social media could be considered as the potential chance of leading us to the more dire humanitarian disaster than what happened in Rwanda. The high number of social media users in the middle of increasing racial sentiment in such a multi-ethnic society like Indonesia opens the great opportunity for racism to fertilize widely. Ahok in the contestation of Jakarta governor campaign in 2017 is the proof that the stream of racism in social media happened massively. Hate speech, provocative black campaign, perpetual irrational debates between followers, hoax, and the mockery against Ahok to make a negative stigma to the Tionghoa descendant ex-governor of Jakarta and indirectly represent as the hatred against Tionghoa ethics in general. Of course this all will danger the compound and pluralism of Indonesia multi-ethnics society. However, this fact shows that the role of social media with all those features which ideally should become a facilitate for its users access their needs more easily, in fact is not always bring the better life for future humankind. By referring to Ahok case, we can see that if technology controlled by any users and groups which cannot understand the universal benefits of development technology, the disastrous potency they shall have.

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