



## INDONESIAN POLITICAL SATIRE IN NEW MEDIA

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### ABSTRACT

Media had become a notable medium to transmit symbolical content including political messages. As politics is closely tied with the dominant authority; there is an assumption that any undesirable political messages in news or articles are mostly concealed in mass media messages. However, the author argues that satire messages in media contents tend to be the most honest and open way for citizens to express their critics. This could be commonly seen in New media, as it offers a virtual space for users to dramatically share their critics and anger using satire messages towards people in power. Satire is a style of language that is used in literature, which refers to insinuation and sarcasm. It is often described as a playful distortion of reality. Moreover, satire is often used in political speech to disregard political opponents. In most situations, the makers of satire messages believe that the person deserves to be hurt.

As stated before, a range of satire messages can be easily found in the Internet. This could take form in words and pictures. Thus, Public's disappointment and anger towards government's policy and behavior can be observed from discussion forums on the Internet. A range of communicators is involved, from individual, organization, to media officials. The trend of satire messages could be found in hyperlinks available on the Internet. It is also intended to show users' attempt to double check information obtained about a specific topic. However, their involvements tend to be passive. This leads to an assumption that the Internet users are tend to choose the most suitable opinion, the so-called homophili discussion spirit, thus creating a New spiral of silence.

**Keywords:** Politic, Satire, New media

### Introduction

In 1998 Indonesia experienced a significant shift in its national political scene. A new government era called Reformation articulated Indonesians' spirit toward democracy, with freedom of expression as its core. Consequently, the country encountered a new circumstances where locals could obtain more information than before. This growth of "literate" communities creates a model of information society, as political discourses in Indonesia had no longer belongs to the political elites.

The media literacy development which enable Indonesians to actively observe the government's policies were supported both by conventional and new media. In addition, the growing community involvements in political discourses could generate a 'fresh breeze' for political democracy in Indonesia. In line with a growing number of politic-literate people in this information society, it is expected that the citizen's awareness for better Indonesia would also grow larger and stronger.

It is assumed that the Indonesian citizen's pessimistic expression towards the government is symbolically embedded and transmitted from media. It has also intrinsically related to political circumstances. The Indonesian political scene are captured by media professionals, thus published in forms of news, articles, journalism photographs, and a range of sarcasm. In addition, satire messages might become the most preferable way to express critics towards the people in power and citizen's anger towards the negative consequences of unpopular government's policy.

From a cultural perspective, satire is a style of language used in literature to express critics or ridicule a situation or person. In addition, political satire is specifically refer to entertainment package from any undesirable political phenomenon. It is also being used in political oration to implicitly 'attack' political opponents using sarcasm.

Max Beerbohm stated that "satire messages involve "a fellow laying about him lustily, for the purpose of hurting, of injuring people who, in his opinion, ought to be hurt and injured." (Freedman, 2009). In other words, satirical messages are intended to harm the targetted opponents through abstract symbols that is open for interpretations. This satirical messages always use 'humor' as its primary weapon. It is emotionally hurt the political opponent and entertain third persons at almost the same time. Humor tend to be derived from anxiety. Additionally, comedy could be a way to escape audiences' anxiety. As honesty could be interpreted as funny, comedy, therefore communicate an anxiety or any forms of protest in a different way. Comedy could penetrate social boundaries and provide an accepted way to openly criticize the government for social change.

The growing interest in satire messages seems to be easily observed on the Internet. It could be stated that the notion of active audience has become one bold distinction between the New Media and other conventional mass media. In other words, the Internet users are tend to actively select the contents and messages in their favor, including the satire messages. Moreover, intricate satire messages are more preferred as the Internet audiences are also tend to be well educated.

The satire messages also developed as Dafis (1997) mentions that "The Internet structure offer the public an opportunity to recapture the 'spontaneity and multiplicity' ...". (Kaid, 2004, p.511). Internet satirists are more creative as they are unlimited by strict rules and policies in the conventional mass media. Moreover the messages could also easily be found with hyperlink facilities and on the Internet. The purpose of this study were: (1) To find out what are the political satire messages in the new media about Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the president of Indonesia and governmental cabinet both at the official website of an organization or a personal blog, (2) to determine the pattern of user interactivity in the opinion in public spaces through new media.

### Research Methods

This study utilised multiple methods, commonly known as 'triangulation'. Its main objective is to generate more valid data results than any single research strategy. Jiks (1976. p.604) states that the basic assumption of all triangulation is "that the weakness in each single method will be compensated by the counter-balancing strength of another" (Jensen, 1991).

A qualitative research methods were analyzed in a qualitative content analysis, combining text analysis with semiotic approach and naratology for a more complete reading. Kraucher's (1953) stated that central argument is that the content of a text must be conceived as a meaningful whole. The task of the analyst is to bring out the whole range of possible meaning, not least the "hidden" message of the text. Message of political satire were observed in the form of visual images, caricatures and narrative articles. The visual signs were analysed by using semiological analysis. Barthes (author, year:page) uses the linguistic term 'denotation' and 'conotation' to define respectively to the 'natural' and 'ideological' meaning of text. Than narratological studies elaborated textual structure and social context. The most interesting on New media is the ability of its interactivity and hyperlinks that able to assist users meaning more thoroughly. So, the researchers also questioned the patterns of interactivity and comment on it, then enquired the user who had been interact on the web or blog with satirical politics messages.



## Result

Political communication involves indirect dyadic feedback, so-called "conversation". The talks include political communication discourse from the actors, for example in drawing, motion, gestures, clothing, as well as in other forms of symbolism (Arriane, 2010, p.3). Simply put, political communication is communication that involves political messages and political actors, or power, government, and its policies. Richard Fagen defines that political communication is the communication activities within a political system that has accurate and potential impact. Regarding Fagen's understanding, it could be stated that political communication is not new in academic field (Riswandi, 2009, p.4).

Indonesia as country with Authoritarian regimes to the relatively open, pluralistic systems called democracies (Freedman, 2009, p.157). These are systems that allow, even encourage, political satire. Though there have been superb examples of satire under authoritarian rule, and satirists in democracies are by no means free from the censor, in general satirists have a much easier time of it when they're not subject to the whims of even the most benign of autocrats. A great bust of satire occur on conventional media simultaneously.

Media is commonly used as bridge that carries messages from the communicator to its audience. "Medium is the Message" (McLuhan, 1964), therefore, media selection effects information dissemination depending its characteristics. For example Internet could bring a new hope in democratization establishment in Indonesia. The internet provides a virtual space where anyone can freely argue with others, eliminates pre-existed social disparities and imbalanced political accessibility. These features are not offered by conventional mass media products, as it involves long systematic editorial process. Therefore, the Internet presents personal information swiftness for New media user.

Interactivity has become an important point from New media, in terms of how it provides a channel for the user to actively involve in political information readings. Stromer-Galley (2003, p.3) classifies online political communication participants' characters as homophily and diversity. Homophily spirit could motivate people to actively join the discussion and interact with others who share same political position, to affirm their own opinion. On the other hand, the spirit of diversity involves participants with different political positions to counter different opinions and spread the view to other. Stromer-Galley estimate both perspectives has the potential consequences for online political discourse. However, different motivations and opinions enrich political discussions, which is also called *deliberative conversation* (Tan, 2007).

Dustin Griffin argues that the "functions of satire are inquiry and provocation rather than moral instruction and punishment" (Knight, 2004, p.5). Although satire messages is often considered ambiguous, but most of the active internet-users were able to validate the message. The satirical messages could be grouped by two. First, a unified discourse in postings on community websites and personal weblog, affirm the dominant messages. Second, a varied political opinions on online news portals. However, it could be stated that most of satire messages aimed at the government or its cabinets are mostly agreed by the political communication participants.

Young (2006) states that comedy has been used as sarcasm which requires its audiences to cognitively interpret the ambiguous messages (LaMarre, 2009, p.4-5) It seems that higher degree of rationality in political communication has brought society towards modern democracy which is more open to diverse position in politics (Mierson, 2003, p.84-85). For example, discussions about citizens' dissatisfaction towards Indonesian government's behaviours and unpopular policies are growing on the Internet. Tajfel and Turner (1986) argue, "Individuals with strong political ideologies (eg, very liberal or very conservative) view groups who will share these values and beliefs as an important part of their social self" (LaMarre, Heather, 2009, p.3). Offered a new platform for hate speech.

Reading satire messages, such as caricatures both in conventional media and new media could bring fun, pain, or even sadness. Caricature are entertaining, but at the same time full of sarcasm. Feinberg (1967) states that "Satire is described as a playful distortion of reality" (LaMarre, 2009, p.4). It is derived from critical observation about the social and political condition. Caricature are containing two features: (1) the existence of satire message and (2) the distortion. "Satire" is defined as an irony, tragedy, comedy or a parody. Therefore, in it may contain something that is strange, "absurd", which can make one laugh, but could also cause heartbreak. In short, caricature allows writer to convey the message that was captured from the observed dissatisfactions in the social life.

Caricature messages requires the writer's ability to capture social and political phenomena. Moreover, it also required advanced skill of caricature drawing. Therefore, most of the Internet users though that it is more convenient to personally re-post some caricature from others weblog. This could be seen on some personal blogs below. The reposted caricature to some extent supports the blog owners' opinion about current affairs.

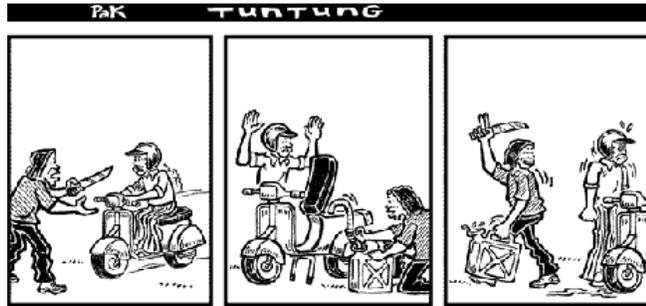
Caricature is a picture that speaks, even with minimum verbal words. It can be interpreted by readers at will. Satirical humors are closely related with uneven political discourse. Folk is mostly represented as minority group with considerable unanswered questions. In addition, the readers are more often than not being offered with persuasive messages.

Discourses that appear in caricatures on the personal blog is real and free from political interests of pre-existed groups. Identified self as government opposition side. It works in ways that provokes both laughter and pain. "Laughter may be the result of knowledge or of ignorance" (Knight, 2004, p.2). In short, caricature represents honest dissatisfaction towards the government in funny rhetorics.



Satire messages is not only intended only for governments and government policies, but also aimed at individual political actors in the government or opposition. Folks visualized in small part than one in authority. Conflicts and different positions are often perceived as an interesting issue to be shown. According to Freedman (2009) Democracies it may be that political satire discourages political involvement by increasing the level of cynicism about politics and politicians (p.163)

Caricature supports bloggers opinion, and frames the audience interpretation of the phenomenon. Even in some conditions, it appears that caricature was becoming the main message while the narrative becoming a supportive explanation. As noted earlier, special skills are required to display interesting caricature. The limited technical skills possessed by the blogger was not a barrier in responding the country's political situation. In other words, satire images could be found with a web searching. Thus, hyperlink enable writers on New media conveniently access strong secondary source in criticizing political phenomenon.



Goffman (1959) stated that the concept of Impression Management as a "process by the which people manage the situation in the social setting and their dress, words and gestures to the correspond to the impression" and the double influence of mass media impression management (Arranie, 2010, p.40). This Impression Management which is practiced by politicians in conventional media seems to be actively reinterpret on New media, as an agreement or disagreement. This public impression is mostly reproduced as satire messages. For example, Indonesian president's conversational style, politician's fashion, and luxurious planning for the parliament building.

### New Spiral of Silence

The one view dominated Indonesian public scene and others disappeared from the public awareness as it adherents became silent. In other words, the people fear of separation or isolation those around them, they tend to keep their attitudes to themselves when they think they are in the minority. This process is called "Spiral of Silence".

Rousseau recognized the battle between people's individual nature and their social nature, between the need to satisfy their own needs and pursue their own interests, on the one hand, and the need to be recognized and respected, on the other. But how, he queried, were people "to find a form of association which defends and protects the person and property of each member with the whole force of the community, and where each, while joining with all the rest, still obeys no one but himself, and remains as free as before. This is the fundamental problem" (Kaid, 2004, p. 342)

It will occur at condition that a person may feel unsupported by the others, fear of isolation, fear of rejection by rejecting their personal opinion from the public will help to avoid fight and they may try to suppressing or avoid personal statement in public. Political conversations on new media in discussing satirical message, particularly in personal blogs, leads to common opinion, which supports the main message, the dominant meaning. Being the part of minority, People loss their confidence and silent or mute to express their views because of the fear of isolation or they feel alone or unsupported. Although mediated by the internet, the condition of fear while giving a different statement with the majority opinion occurred. They will seek the same opinion as their personal opinion on other blog or web pages, interact, discuss, much on reinforce their belief in an case. They would not be isolated, part of an active seeking audiences.

The predication about public opinion in mass media which gives more coverage for the majorities in the society and gives very less coverage for minorities not occur on new media because user will easily find a variation of opinion that exist on other pages. People will be more fragmented in a similar range of opinions by find the right community for them. Emerging silence temporary condition until finding right place and condition.

### Conclusions

Satirical messages in the new media has a more varied and diverse display feedback as well. The online news portal displays satirical images than the narrative. Recurrent political satire object is individual political actors, especially the president who is regarded as the highest responsible government, and the legislature are not able to provide a positive image. Impression management which built in the real world and virtual world was not much of a positive answer to the problem of public imaging in Indonesia. People who are pessimistic about the condition of the country politics is reflected in the comment that appears in response messages on the New media satire.

New media is frequently regarded as the best medium to facilitate the public sphere and open discussion environment. But this study proved that the condition of the spiral of silence, where someone who had a different opinion to the majority opinion also applies in the new media. They would prefer to find other more appropriate pages in line with his opinion. This had caused the polarization of political opinions and positions on small groups. It is also argued that the discussion line was predictable as it often supported the dominant reading. New tendencies spiral of silence, the development of the original form is a new media users are still on the active user, if someone has a different opinion in the real world tend to be quiet and press their opinion, the new media that is specifically for political satire discussion, they are permitted to search for posts in accordance with his personal opinion.

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