Media and Politics in Indonesia: The Alignments of the Media in the 2019 Elections

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Abstract – This study aims to determine the framing of the news in the Kompas and the Republika newspapers on the debates of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the 2019 elections in the Republic of Indonesia. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method comprising the framing analysis developed by Zongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki which suggests four analytical tools, namely Syntactic, Script, Thematic and Rhetorical structures. The results showed that the Kompas newspaper reported the presidential and vice-presidential debates in a balanced and neutral manner, because the owners of this media were not affiliated with any political interests in the 2019 presidential elections. The Republika newspaper constructed the news of the presidential and vice-presidential debates by giving coverage to news in favour of the presidential election of Jokowi and Ma’ruf Amin. This is influenced by media ownership factors, as its owner, Erick Thohir is a chairman of the National Winning Team (TKN) for Jokowi and Ma’ruf Amin.

Keywords – election, framing, media, the Kompas, the Republika.

1. Introduction

Indonesia adheres to a democratic political system, in which the government is determined by the people through elections.

Following the principle of democracy, the people have great power in determining the government [2], [4], [9]. In a democratic system, the mass media has an important role in influencing the people's suffrage in determining future state leaders. The media very often becomes a contested tool by the authorities for their political interests [18], [19].

For the public, the reporting of politics is of great interest. If the media reports on the issue of poor state government, the focus of the people will be higher because the people determine the next government. Political news becomes even more interesting when reported close to an election. The involvement of the mass media in politics implies that there is an interest between the media and the political power reported on, whether it is an economic interest, power or ideological interest [7]. News on the same day, sometimes even on the same event, can be reported differently. Due to the fact that some people have a high interest in political news, those who are fighting in an election consider the political news to have a major influence in realizing their political ideals; hence the media are fought over. Most media consider political news important, some even put it on the front page (headline news) making it the main topic. Sometimes, political events are written from different points of view producing different meanings, by interviewing different people, with different opinions. This leads [17], [6] to refer to the subjectivity of the news media.

This research focuses on the Kompas and the Republika newspapers. Both of these newspapers are major newspapers in Indonesia and are read by people nationally. Political reporting in the two newspapers focused on the presidential and vice-presidential debates for the 2019 Indonesian elections. In these elections, the first presidential candidate (left) is the incumbent Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and his deputy is Ma’ruf Amin. While the second presidential candidate (right) is Prabowo Subianto, the incumbent's opponent, standing with his deputy Sandiaga Uno (Figure 1).

In general, the media in Indonesia play a powerful role in reporting the debate, including the Kompas and the Republika newspapers. What is interesting here is that the owner of the Republika, Erick Thohir, is the chairman of the National Winning Team (JKN...
including both the presidential and vice-presidential candidates, Jokowi and Ma'ruf Amin, while the Kompas newspaper does not support any candidate pairs. The question arises whether differences in political interests will affect the content of the news in reporting on the debate of the candidates for president and vice president of the Republic of Indonesia. Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine the reporting related to the presidential election debates for 2019 in the Kompas and the Republika newspapers.

Figure 1. Debate atmosphere
Source: Internet, 2019

2. Literature Review

According to Shoemaker and Reese [15, [14], there are several factors that influence the content of the news. These factors are individuals, routine, organization, outside, and ideology. According to Shoemaker and Reese, the media message delivered to the public is the result of the influence of internal policies in the media organization itself and the influence of external media. The internal influence of the media is related to the interests of the media owner, individual journalists working in the media and the daily routine. The external media factors that influence media content are advertisers, markets, government control and regulation.

But what really determines or influences the content of the mass media according to [15], [14] is the media organization. The owner of the media exerts the main control in a media. Typically, media owners will interfere in the news if reporting on something that has an impact on economic and political interests. In the political field, the media has an important role. Media such as newspapers, political magazines, television, radio and websites are tools used by politicians to shape public opinion. The mass media is used as a means of political communication by political actors to create political images, public opinion and also influence the level of public political participation.

According to [3], [1], in the political sphere, the media are sometimes used to attack the opposition in political struggles, damaging the image of the opposition, for example by intimidating, criticizing and so on. This phenomenon can be seen in the number of campaigns using mass media facilities such as the use of social media, television, newspapers and others. In addition, it is not only for campaigns, but can also be used as a media to socialize government policies, so that it can be easily and quickly known by the public. Since the media have great power, there is media collaboration with figures that hold political power and money. Moreover, there is interference in the content of the media itself, in order to satisfy the interests of its owners.

According to [12], the relationship between the media and politics is a relationship of mutual need. Political actors need the media to publicize the advantages of their political parties or even use it as a place to campaign for their political parties. On the other hand, media owners will gain money or other power interests given by political actors if their political goals are achieved.

3. Method

The research method used in this study is a qualitative research with a framing approach. According to some authors [8], [20], [22], qualitative research is research based on the philosophy of post positivism, used to examine natural conditions. In qualitative research, researchers are the key instrument. Because researchers interpret the data obtained through interviews, observations, documents and analysis through framing techniques. While framing, according to other authors [11], [13], [21], is the way in which the media focus on certain events in order to produce a certain meaning. For this study, researchers interpreted data using framing techniques according to Pan and Kosicki [10].
The subjects in this study were the Kompas and the Republika newspapers. The data analyzed in this study were ten headlines published after the debate on 18 January 2019, consisting of 5 in the Kompas and 5 in the Republika. The following Table presents the news headlines analyzed in this study (Table 1 below).

### Table 1. News headlines analyzed

| Date              | Kompas                                    | Republika                                |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 18 January 2019   | “Capres Belum Saling Mengapresiasi”       | “Debat Petakan Kualitas” [Translated to English: "The Candidates Did Not Acknowledged Each Other"] |
| 18 February 2019  | “Debat Kedua Lebih Berkualitas” [Translated to English: "The Second Debate is Better Quality"] | “Debat Makin Tajam” [Translated to English: "Sharper Debate"] |
| 18 March 2019     | “Debat Cawapres Tanpa Perdebatan Berarti” [Translated to English: "Vice President Debate Without Meaning"] | Ma'ruf Luar Biasa, Sandi Oke [Translated to English: "Ma'ruf is Very Good, Sandi Okay"] |
| 31 March 2019     | “Debat Berlangsung Dinamis” [Translated to English: "The Debate Becomes Dynamic"] | “01 Pemerintahan Dilan, 02 Prioritas Hankam” [Translated to English: "01 "Dilan" Government, 02 Defence and Security Priority"] |
| 14 April 2019     | “Saatnya Menentukan Pilihan” [Translated to English: "Time to Make a Choice"] | “Indonesia Pusaka, Tutup Debat Pamungkas” [Translated to English: "Indonesia Pusaka, Close the Debate"] |

### 4. Results

Based on the results of the research conducted on the analyzed news, using the framing of the Pan and Kosicki model [10], the differences in viewpoints of the Kompas and the Republika newspapers were identified. Table 2 clearly shows the difference in viewpoints between the Kompas and the Republika newspapers in reporting the issue of the presidential and vice presidential debates in the 2019 elections.

### Table 2. Results of the analysis of the Kompas and Republika newspapers

| Date of News | Media       | Analysis Tool | Results                                                                 |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 18 January 2019 | The Kompas | - Syntax, - Script, - Thematic, - Rhetorical | Following the first debate, the Kompas ran the headline "The Candidates Have Not Acknowledged Each Other". In this first debate, the Kompas highlighted the issue of disharmony among the candidates. The Kompas reported that they did not greet each other. The Kompas also criticized the candidates for bringing new ideas to the debate material. |
| 18 January 2019 | The Republika | - Syntax, - Script, - Thematic, - Rhetorical | Following the first debate, the Republika newspaper ran the headline "Debat is Mapping the Quality of One Another". In this case, the Republika explained that the first debate provides a picture of the quality of the candidate pair. The Republika did not write down the names of the presidential and vice presidential candidates, only giving the name "Indonesia Forward" for the Jokowi-Ma'ruf pair of candidates and "Indonesia Winning" for the Prabowo-Sandi pair of candidates. |
| 18 February 2019 | The Kompas | - Syntax, - Script, - Thematic, - Rhetorical | Following the second debate, the Kompas ran the headline "The Second Debate is Better Quality". In this debate, the Kompas focused on the debates taking place. According to the Kompas, the second debate was of better quality than the first debate. The candidates in the debate talked about important matters for the people. In the second debate, the candidates offered many important programmes to be carried out for the people. |
| 18 February 2019 | The Republika | - Syntax, - Script, - Thematic, - Rhetorical | Following the second debate, the Republika ran the headline "Sharper Debate". The Republika highlighted the issue of Jokowi delivering success, and Prabowo promised to improve. The reporting focuses on the candidates' visions and missions and the denials of each candidate. For example, when Prabowo criticized the infrastructure built in the Jokowi era, it was judged to lack feasibility. As a result, the infrastructure built, such as the Palembang LRT and Kertajati Airport in Majalengka, were unused. Then Jokowi denied Prabowo's statement by saying that it was indeed not easy to change the culture of the people to support mass transportation. "If it is not yet crowded, it has only been built for about four months or six months". |
- Syntax
- Script
- Thematic
- Rhetorical

Following the third debate, the Kompas ran the headline "Vice President Debate Without Meaning". The Kompas focused on the debate, which without the presidential candidates and only attended by each vice president, was said to lack enthusiasm, was flat and without any bright ideas, especially related to the issues of education, employment and health. In this report, the Kompas criticized much of the debate material delivered by the two running mates. According to the Kompas, the two candidates seemed not to understand the issues discussed.

For the third debate, the Republika ran the headline "Ma'ruf is Very Good, Sandi Okay". The Republika praised the vice-presidential debate material of Ma'ruf Amin by saying "very good". The Republika gave an illustration that Ma'ruf Amin's running mate was very good at presenting ideas, while Sandiaga was "okay" in presenting ideas.

For the fourth debate, the Republika praised the debate material of Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin, who spoke about information technology. According to the Republika, information technology is important for bureaucratic transparency. In reporting on this debate, the Republika wrote about Jokowi's rebuttal of Prabowo's criticism. For example, when Prabowo criticized that "Indonesia is weak because of weak security and defence, it has minimal money for this matter". Then the Republika wrote Jokowi's rebuttal "the government is consistent in the development of the national defence sector, one of which is the budget given to the Ministry of Defence of as much as Rp 107 trillion or the second largest after the budget for the Ministry of Public Works".

The fifth debate was the final debate, in which the Kompas ran the headline "Time to Make a Choice". The Kompas emphasized the issue of making choices. Expecting the people of Indonesia to maintain a calm, safe and peaceful atmosphere. By quoting the statement of the Chairperson of the General Election Commission (KPU), Arief Budiman, the Kompas wants to invite all parties to be ready to win and be ready to lose. The Kompas hopes to maintain mutual calm and peace.

For the last debate, the Republika ran the headline "Indonesia Pusaka, Close the Debate ". In the description of the news, it conveyed that the fifth debate was the close of the entire series of debates and campaign activities that had taken place since 23 September 2018. Furthermore, the election process entered a quiet period. Quoting the statement of the Chairperson of the General Elections Commission (MPU), Arief Budiman, the Republika reported "We all hope that all parties can maintain calm and peace. Solve all problems that occur in a predetermined space that is through legislation. Sovereign voter, strong state".

5. Discussion

According to the Syntax structure, the Kompas newspaper in its reporting wants the reader to understand that the issues presented by the presidential and vice presidential candidates in the debate is not spelled out in detail and concretely. While the Republika newspaper tends to report the content of the debate about the achievements of Joko Widodo's administration. Observing in-depth the news published by the Kompas newspaper, it tends to provide balanced reporting. The researchers noted that Kompas used informants from both successful teams from political observers and academics. On the other hand, the Republika newspaper only uses one source from the presidential and vice presidential statements at the time of the debate.

According to the Script structure, the Kompas newspaper emphasizes the elements of who the source of the news (who) is and how it happened (how). While the Republika newspaper places more emphasis on the elements of what were the events (what) and how did they occur (how).

According to the Thematic structure, overall both of the newspapers, the Kompas and the Republika, had one theme so that the delivery of information was complete and focused. However, in terms of conveying information about the debate issues, the Kompas reviewed them in more depth compared to the Republika. The two newspapers uses a lot of explanatory language which is indicated by the conjunctions "then" or "and", as well as the causal
language marked by the conjunctions "cause" or "because". The tenses used are generally deductive. The types of pronouns that are often used are first person plural pronouns and third person single pronouns.

According to the Rhetoric structure, the use of affirmative sentences by the two newspapers Kompas and Republika are different. Overall the Kompas used a photo of the presidential and vice presidential candidates on the debating stage for each of its stories. In the first and second debates, the Kompas also used a table comparing the 2014 and 2019 debate themes. The Republika generally used a sketch of the presidential and vice presidential candidates in each of its stories. In every report, the Republika included the candidates' visions and missions and answers to issues submitted by candidates on the theme of the debate.

From the analysis conducted, it can be said that the Kompas newspaper pays attention to balanced information in reporting the debate of the presidential and vice presidential candidates. This can be seen from the news text that has been analyzed, which has a balance in news sources and is impartial (i.e. equal coverage for each source citation) in accordance with the scheme of Pan and Kosicki [10]. While the Republika newspaper makes statements or answers to the president and vice president or from its supporters as news sources, so that the Republika news gave a positive side to Jokowi, and the criticism made to presidential candidate Prabowo - Sandiaga.

Each media translates a reality with different constructed meanings [6]. This is caused by several factors, which are generally divided into two, namely internal factors and external factors of the media. The theory put forward by Shoemaker and Reese [15], [14] classifies the influence of media content into the individual influences of media workers, routines, organizational influences, outside organizational influences and ideology. However, Shoemaker and Reese assert that what happens in each of these factors is always influenced by the factors above it.

The Kompas and the Republika newspapers constructed the reporting of the presidential and vice presidential debates of the Republic of Indonesia in the 2019 elections based on different interests and backgrounds. On routine factors, the Kompas newspaper uses news sources from academics, political observers and even the two successful teams of candidate pairs. While the Republika newspaper is a news source filled with quotes from the statements of the candidates when the debate takes place. According to [15], [14], news sources usually do not have a significant impact on the content of the news, but the dependence of the media on news sources more or less affects the content of the news.

On organizational factors, the Republika newspaper accommodated the reporting of the presidential and vice presidential debates in the 2019 elections due to media ownership that had political interests. In the 2019 election, Erick Thohir was the chief commissioner and also the owner of the Republika who was affiliated with the politics of Jokowi and Ma'ruf Amin. Erick Thohir became the head of the Jokowi - Ma'ruf Amin National Campaign Team, so that the contents of the Republika reports contained a lot about the achievements of the Jokowi government. Meanwhile, for the Kompas, the organizational structure does not have political interests in the presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the 2019 elections, so that the news is more neutral.

Regarding the ideological factor, compared with other factors it tends to be more abstract, because it is related to the way a person interprets reality. According to some authors [5], [16], [17], the ideology adopted by the media can be reflected in the news it writes. The Kompas newspaper always adheres to the principle of independence of the media so that the contents of the news about the debates of the presidential and vice presidential candidates are quite balanced and prioritize the objectivity of the coverage (cover both sides). On the other hand, the Republika along with the Islamic newspapers did not clearly highlight their ideology, but it had an implied meaning that highlighted the reporting of candidates Jokowi - Ma'ruf Amin. Moreover, Erick Thohir is the owner, and he has an affiliation with the interests of the candidate and also the figure of Ma'ruf Amin who is a strong person with Islamic knowledge because he was the chair of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). This is in accordance with the mission of the Republicans who favor the Muslims.

6. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion presented above, it can be concluded that the Kompas newspaper constructs news about the debates of the presidential and vice-presidential nominations in the 2019 elections giving a neutral and balanced review of debates. The Kompas considers that the offer of ideas and issues submitted by the two candidates was not spelled out in detail so that it informs the reader that the ideas or issues submitted have not been detailed. The news source used by the Kompas to strengthen the frame comes from academics and political observers so as to provide the principle of balance and impartiality. On the other hand, the principle that the Kompas always adheres to is independence. Therefore, the Kompas reports the presidential and vice presidential debates objectively. While the Republika newspaper constructs news about the presidential and vice presidential debates in
the 2019 General Elections to provide a biased review of debates. This can be found in the Republika news content which emphasizes the achievements of the Jokowi government during his leadership of Indonesia in the previous period. This is influenced by media ownership. Erick Thohir has political interests with the Jokowi - Ma'ruf Amin camp, and the vice presidential candidate, Ma'ruf Amin, is an influential Islamic figure in Indonesia, and he has served as a chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI).

If one follows the journalistic principle that demands balance in reporting (covering both sides), the Republika newspaper should report the debates of the candidates and vice presidential candidates in a balanced manner, so that there is no media alignment in politics. Therefore, the Republika newspaper has to set aside the political interests of media ownership, because one of the tasks of the media is to act as a watchdog in a country that adheres to the principle of democracy. In this case, it is necessary to strengthen the role of the people, to make them more critical in understanding the news content, especially political news when elections are held, so that people can make choices based on the reality of the candidates – not the reality of the candidates created by the media. Political news is a vital necessity for the people to find and recognize the candidates who will become the leaders of their country.

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