
INDONESIA'S MEDIA OLIGARCHY AND THE "JOKOWI PHENOMENON"

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A key discussion among scholars of post-New Order Indonesian politics concerns the nature and influence of oligarchy. Two distinct strands now exist. The first, led by Richard Robison and Vedi Hadiz, and by Jeffrey Winters, argues that while an authoritarian government no longer controls power or sets the agenda, Indonesia's "new era" of democracy post-1998 is dominated by oligarchs,¹ through "the reorganization of the old predatory power relations within a new system" by those who have "interests in maintaining a system of arbitrary power."² While Robison and Hadiz state that the oligarchic thesis does not mean "nothing has changed in Indonesia," they emphasize that "many of the old faces continue to dominate politics and business, while new ones are drawn into the same predatory practices that had defined politics in Indonesia for decades."³

The second strand of scholarship focuses on the process of Indonesia's democratic transition "from below," through "power, class, political agency, and influence."⁴ These arguments were set out in a special issue of *Indonesia* in October 2013 and in the

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¹ Jeffrey Winters, *Oligarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

² Richard Robison and Vedi Hadiz, *Reorganising Power in Indonesia: The Politics of Oligarchy in an Age of Markets* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 223–24.

³ Richard Robison and Vedi Hadiz, "The Political Economy of Oligarchy and the Reorganization of Power in Indonesia," *Indonesia* 96 (October 2013): 35.

⁴ Edward Aspinall, "Popular Agency and Interests in Indonesia's Democratic transition and Consolidation," *Indonesia* 96 (October 2013): 102–3.

follow-up book *Beyond Oligarchy*.⁵ Since that time, Indonesia has elected a new president, Joko Widodo (hereafter “Jokowi”), who catapulted from being mayor of Solo in 2005 to Jakarta’s governor in 2012 to president in 2014. Not part of the established former New Order hierarchy, Jokowi’s ascendance to the presidency undoubtedly raises questions for the oligarchy thesis. Edward Aspinall argued in his essay in *Indonesia* that a key avenue for lower-class influence in politics is “electoral populism,” based on his observations that, since 2005, “a near revolutionary shift in the nature of Indonesian politics has taken place.” While emphasizing the complexity and contestation of oligarchic powers and subordinate groups, Aspinall points to the influence of “popular forces in Indonesian politics” as evidence that the power of oligarchy should be questioned. In contrast, Robison and Hadiz argued that Jokowi “had to enter dubious alliances” with oligarchs during his campaign for governor of Jakarta, in particular with Prabowo’s Gerindra (Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya, Great Indonesia Movement) party.⁶ Jeffrey Winters has explicitly argued that Jokowi’s victory in Jakarta’s governorship election could not have occurred without the oligarchs Prabowo Subianto and his millionaire brother, Hashim Djojohadikusumo. Winters believes “only oligarchs had the power resources to convert Jokowi’s potential as candidate into a reality,” and while “scores” of groups helped him to power, he would never have been chosen in the first place if it were not for the oligarchs.⁷

This article will neither examine the political machinations (secret or otherwise) by which Jokowi was nominated for governor, nor his personal alliances with various oligarchs in Indonesian politics throughout the campaign. Rather, it will examine the ways in which Jokowi became a media phenomenon and the most popular candidate for president as measured by most if not all of the polls during 2013 and 2014, despite his not being part of the oligarchic elite. In fact, Jokowi’s popularity was reported by the media that is owned by the very oligarchs who were also in the running as presidential candidates.⁸ A crucial way to further explore this debate is to examine Indonesia’s oligarchical mainstream media and Jokowi’s rise as a nationwide media “phenomenon.” It will examine the ways in which that mainstream media contributed to, or negated, his overall success during the 2014 election campaign. What implications can we draw from Jokowi’s rise as a media phenomenon to president of Indonesia? Is Jokowi’s victory really one for individual citizens over the large oligarchical powers of Indonesia’s media, or did media oligarchs still play a significant role in the framing and outcome of the presidential election? In answering those questions, this essay aims to examine both the “oligarchic and non-oligarchic forces in

⁵ See *Indonesia* 96 (October 2013; Special Issue: Wealth, Power, and Contemporary Indonesian Politics), quoted extensively in this article; and Michele Ford and Thomas Pepinsky, eds., *Beyond Oligarchy: Wealth, Power, and Contemporary Indonesian Politics* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2014).

⁶ Robison and Hadiz, “The Political Economy of Oligarchy,” 40–41.

⁷ Jeffrey Winters, “Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia,” *Indonesia* 96 (October 2013): 24–25.

⁸ Fieldwork for this article was conducted in Jakarta from December 2013–February 2014, and again in July 2014. It included interviews with chief editors of Indonesia’s leading news organizations, media and campaign managers from Jokowi’s team, and Partai Gerindra, and with Joko Widodo and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama. In all, twenty-two people were interviewed for this research. My conclusions are also drawn from numerous informal discussions from field research at Jakarta City Hall in early 2014, including attending numerous *blusukans* (informal or unscheduled visits) as well as numerous campaign events for both Jokowi and Prabowo during the final stages of the July 2014 presidential election. In addition, I spent numerous hours inside the newsrooms of Indonesia’s oligarchy media discussing politics and media ownership with journalists and editors.

equal measure" through "a more compelling and empirically satisfying manner," as has been encouraged by recent scholarly critiques of oligarchy theory.⁹

Indonesia's Media Oligarchy

Many scholars and observers have compared the current state of Indonesia's media to the authoritarian New Order period (1965–98).¹⁰ Seen through this prism, the Indonesian media is largely operating in a free market-driven environment, where audience and readership largely determines what and how news is produced. Stories of government corruption regularly make the news, local television and community radio stations have grown, and social media is a prominent form of expression and discussion—these are all positive signs of a vibrant and diverse media realm. Other scholars have examined the changes in the political economy of the Indonesian media industry since *reformasi*, and as a result there is a significant amount of scholarship that focuses on the Indonesian media's increasing concentration and conglomeration as well as on the role that powerful owners play in limiting information.¹¹ Media ownership has been the greatest concern for those scholars and NGOs that push for a more free and vibrant Indonesian media, in particular during the past five years.¹²

Media ownership and control is a crucial aspect of the argument that oligarchs continue to exert much political power. Robison and Hadiz include "media control" in their definition of what determines an oligarchy, while Winters explicitly points to media oligarchs as central to his argument in the case of Indonesia.¹³ As many scholars have discussed, the prominence of television in the Indonesian media industry has led to oligarchic control of the media.¹⁴ Analog television currently dominates the media

⁹ Marcus Mietzner, "Oligarchs, Politicians, and Activists: Contesting Party Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia," in *Beyond Oligarchy*, ed. Ford and Pepinsky, 99–116.

¹⁰ See, for example, Philip Kitley, "Civil Society and the Media in Indonesia," in Azra and Hudson, *Islam beyond Conflict: Indonesian Islam and Western Political Theory* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2008); and Janet Steele, "Indonesian Journalism Post-Suharto: Changing Ideals and Professional Practices," in *Politics and the Media in Twenty-First Century Indonesia: Decade of Democracy*, ed. David Hill and Krishna Sen (London: Routledge 2010).

¹¹ Among others, see: Merlyna Lim, "@crossroads: Democratization & Corporatization of Media in Indonesia," published jointly by Participatory Media Lab (Tempe, AZ) and Ford Foundation, 2011, available at: http://participatorymedia.lab.asu.edu/files/Lim_Media_Ford_2011.pdf, accessed January 14, 2015; Ignatius Haryanto, "Media Ownership and Its Implications for Journalists and Journalism in Indonesia," in *Politics and the Media in Twenty-First Century Indonesia*; Agus Suidbyo, *Kebebasan Semu: Penjahan baru di jagat media* (Jakarta: Kompas Penerbit Buku, 2009); and Naunan Harahap, *Bisnis Media vs Kemerdekaan Pers: Dalam Kajian Hukum Praktik Monopoli & Persaingan Usaha di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Penitit Hari Pers Nasional, 2014).

¹² See, for example, the work done by CIPG (Centre for Innovation Policy and Governance) in Yanuar Nugroho, Dinita Andriana Putri, and Shita Laksmi, "Mapping the Landscape of the Media Industry in Indonesia," part of the Report Series "Engaging Media, Empowering Society: Assessing Media Policy and Governance in Indonesia through the Lens of Citizens' Rights," Jakarta, 2012. Other NGOs that have regularly voiced their concern on this issue include Alliance Journalists Indonesia and "Gerakan Frekuensi Milik Publik."

¹³ Robison and Hadiz include "media control" in their argument of oligarchy, in "The Political Economy of Oligarchy and the Reorganization of Power in Indonesia," 40. See also Winters, "Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia," 25–27.

¹⁴ Scholars of Indonesia's media have written about the importance of television during Suharto's New Order, and also the role TV played in its downfall. See Philip Kitley, *Television, Nation, and Culture in Indonesia* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000). Mark Hobart has written that it is "television which

market, being the medium with the most reach and popularity.¹⁵ The importance of television as a medium saw Indonesia's television station owners become key political players during Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's (SBY) presidency (2004–14). What distinguishes Indonesia's media scene is the fact that the owners of the largest media companies have direct affiliations with political parties. Television news stations MetroTV and TVOne are often singled out for special attention in this regard.¹⁶ MetroTV is owned by Surya Paloh, founder and chief of the Nasdem Party (Partai Nasdem, National Democrat Party). TVOne is owned by Aburizal Bakrie, chief of the Golkar party (Partai Golongan Karya, Party of Functional Groups). Their influence over these media outlets dates back to well before 2014, Indonesia's most recent presidential election year. In 2008, as Bakrie and Paloh vied to chair Suharto's old party, Golkar, both networks flagrantly pushed their owner's interests, with Bakrie eventually winning the position. Although their audience share is rarely above 7 percent, their prominence as news providers is clear because they are both free-to-air (broadcast), 24-hour-news, analog television channels that transmit around the entire archipelago.¹⁷ TVOne and MetroTV rely on "rolling news stories" throughout the day, and regularly cover politics and current affairs. While local news television stations exist, MetroTV and TVOne rate consistently higher in viewers than any local news station, and higher than the national government owned station, TVRI.¹⁸ "Oligarchic" media includes TransCorp (owned by Chairul Tanjung), Visi Media Asia (owned by Aburizal Bakrie), Media Indonesia Group (owned by Surya Paloh), MNC Group (owned by Hary Tanoesoedibyo), Jawa Pos Group (owned by Dahlan Iskan), and Emtek's SCTV and Indosiar (owned by Eddy Kusnadi Sariaatmadja).¹⁹

The problem of media concentration and ownership in Indonesia extends beyond television. Ignatius Haryanto observed that, in 2011, nine business groups controlled half the print media in Indonesia.²⁰ Media concentration has been exacerbated by increased conglomeration and platform convergence, with proprietors who previously only owned one platform (such as print, radio, or television) now building large, powerful multi-platform oligopolies.²¹ For example, Visimedia Asia (owned by Aburizal Bakrie) is an Indonesian media conglomerate that includes the free-to-air television stations ANTV (news and entertainment) and TVOne (24 hour national

preoccupies the Indonesian political classes and which most viewers consider their main source of information"; Mark Hobart, "Introduction: Why is Entertainment Television in Indonesia Important?" *Asian Journal of Communication* 16, 4 (2006): 344.

¹⁵ Surveys suggest 90 percent of Indonesians watch television in a given week, with one LSI (Lembaga Survei Indonesia, Indonesian Survey Institute) poll showing that four in every five Indonesians "receive information" predominantly from television. See Ross Tapsell, "Platform Convergence in Indonesia: Challenges and Opportunities for Media Freedom," *Convergence* (an international journal of research into new media technologies), May 2014, doi: 10.1177/1354856514531527.

¹⁶ *Tempo*, for example, called on TVOne and MetroTV to be banned because of this bias. See editorial, "Show Stoppers," *Tempo*, June 20, 2014: 4.

¹⁷ Indonesia recently attained 24-hour, pay-TV, digital-television news stations. So far this includes Bloomberg (part-owned by Aburizal Bakrie), established in 2013, and CNN Indonesia (part owned by Chairul Tanjung), established in early 2014.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5. TVRI audience share is 1.5 percent.

¹⁹ Winters estimates that these groups account for 96.6 percent of all national television stations; Winters, "Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia," 25.

²⁰ Haryanto, "Media Ownership and Its Implications for Journalists and Journalism in Indonesia," 104.

²¹ Tapsell, "Platform Convergence in Indonesia," 23.

news); one digital pay-television news station, Bloomberg Indonesia (24 hours news); an online news site, VivaNews; and two daily newspapers. Visimedia Asia has also invested in Path, a social networking site. This trend of building multi-platform conglomerates is occurring among all large media companies in Indonesia, and the oligarch-owners are not shy about using these media stations to support their interests. Furthermore, ownership considerations cause self-censorship in the newsroom of many of Indonesia’s newspapers.²² Journalists are fearful that if they report critically on stories that involve their owner’s interests, they will be reprimanded, moved to the night editor’s desk, or, in extreme cases, fired. For example, after Aburizal Bakrie purchased the *Surabaya Post* in 2008, journalists there were unable to report critically on his role in the Lapindo mudflow disaster and the lack of compensation to victims.²³

An oligarchical media system in a democracy is, of course, not limited to Indonesia, and the nature and influence of media ownership during elections is discussed and debated during most democratic election campaigns around the world.²⁴ Yet there is little doubt that Indonesian media owners are becoming increasingly involved in politics since SBY’s second term (2009–14). Hary Tanoesoedibjo, whose media interests include television stations RCTI, GlobalTV, MNC, *Sindonews*, and *OkeZone*, first became involved in party politics when he joined Surya Paloh’s NasDem in 2011, before switching to the Hanura Party (People’s Conscience Party, *Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat*) in early 2013. Dahlan Iskan, owner of the powerful JawaPos group—which has over 140 newspapers all around the archipelago, as well as numerous local television stations—became a government minister during SBY’s second term. Chairul Tanjung, owner of TransTV, Trans7, and Detik.com, who had long claimed he was not interested in politics despite suggestions he was close to President SBY, became spokesperson for SBY’s Democratic Party in 2014, and was soon appointed coordinating minister for economics.

While this has occasionally been described as a “cartelisation,”²⁵ suggesting that all competing media owners have a formal, explicit agreement on issues such as fixing prices and production, in reality these oligarchs are not always working together to form agreements around Indonesia’s media and political landscapes. As Winters states, conflict and debate arises in Indonesia’s media predominantly due to “clashes between oligarchic personalities or political groups that own them.”²⁶ According to

²² Ross Tapsell, “Old Tricks in a New Era: The Enduring Practice of Self-censorship in Indonesian Journalism,” *Asian Studies Review* 36, 2 (2012): 227–45.

²³ Ross Tapsell, “Politics and the Press in Indonesia: Aburizal Bakrie, the Lapindo Mudflow, and the *Surabaya Post*,” *Media Asia* 39, 2 (2012): 109–16.

²⁴ Robert McChesney’s work on media oligarchs stands out here; see Robert McChesney, *The Political Economy of the Media—Enduring Issues, Emerging Dilemmas* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008). Rupert Murdoch’s newspapers’ influence in the 2013 Australian election have been the subject of much scrutiny. For examples of India’s media barons, see K. Prasad, “The False Promise of Media Liberalization in India,” in *Free Markets, Free Media? Reflections on the Political Economy of the Press in Asia*, ed. Cherian George (Singapore: Nanyang University Press, 2008). In the Philippines, often described as having the freest media system in Asia, the 2004 national elections saw one presidential candidate, two vice-presidential candidates, and no fewer than ten senate candidates who had media or entertainment industry backgrounds; see K. Seneviratne, “Journalism by Whom, For Whom?” in *Free Markets, Free Media?* In South Korea, media owners were seen as the determinant most likely to influence press freedom; see Eun Suk Sa, “Factors Influencing Freedom of the Press in South Korea,” *Asian Social Science* 5, 3 (2009).

²⁵ Bambang Harymurti, “Under the Rule of Press Law,” *Walkely*, April 15, 2010.

²⁶ Winters, “Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia,” 26.

Winters, because the dominant source of these conflicts are owners' financial and political interests, the power of oligarchs to frame debate and discussion in the public sphere is evident.

The power and influence of oligarchs over national politics is further exacerbated by the Jakarta-centric nature of news production. A city of over ten million people and growing, Jakarta has long been the center of Indonesia's media industry.²⁷ "Jakarta-centric" decisions were prevalent long before *reformasi*, but as explained earlier, the Indonesian media industry became increasingly concentrated after 1998, and large, Jakarta-based conglomerates dominate the market. A recent study by the Centre for Innovation, Policy, and Governance in Jakarta found that around 70 percent of stories on national television news stations produce content from Java, with around half of these stories coming from Jakarta.²⁸ One reason for this is that data on television audiences is collected by media advertising agency AC Nielsen, which surveys only the top ten largest cities.²⁹ Of that data, around 58 percent comes from Jakarta, given its population size in comparison to the other nine cities. While chief editors claim that they do not base all decisions around Nielsen ratings, news producers' annual performance reviews include references to those ratings, both good and bad. For producers of Indonesia's nightly news, a typical goal is a 0.9 rating and 12-percent audience share. This essentially means that if television producers want to achieve their key performance indicators, they must achieve good results in the Nielsen ratings. To do so, they need to appeal to Jakartans in particular, as their viewing habits constitute 58 percent of the Nielsen data. Thus, there is an incentive to push stories relevant to Jakartans, and this regularly manifests itself in the final production of news content.

When examining the political economy of the mainstream Indonesian media, there is little doubt a select group of Jakarta-based oligarchs dominate the Indonesian media ownership landscape. As represented by Robison and Hadiz and by Winters, then, two things are true with regard to Indonesia's media. First, oligarchic owners generally shape news and information according to their wishes. Which means, as stated by Winters, "insofar as the media are heavily dominated by the same actors and political forces, it is unlikely that a critical free press or parties will provide the venues and vehicles for challenging this particular form of oligarchic domination."³⁰ Second, and as a result of the first, "serious presidential contenders for the 2014 elections (and major local elections) must buy media access, which in some cases has meant buying television and radio stations and newspapers outright."³¹ Yet throughout his rise from

²⁷ The exception here would be Jawa Pos Group, whose head office is in Surabaya. But Dahlan Iskan, owner of Jawa Pos Group, is based in Jakarta in his role as minister. His son, Azrul Ananda, is based in Surabaya.

²⁸ Yanuar Nugroho et al., "Creating Content, Shaping Society: Do Indonesian Media Uphold the Principle of Citizenship?" part of the Report Series "Engaging Media, Empowering Society," 40, available at <http://mediarights.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/creating-content-1-web.pdf>, accessed January 14, 2015.

²⁹ The top-ten cities measured by AC Nielsen are Greater Jakarta, Greater Surabaya, Bandung, Semarang, Medan, Makassar, Greater Yogyakarta, Palembang, Denpasar, and Banjarmasin. AC Nielsen measures 2,423 households.

³⁰ Winters, "Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia," 33.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

local mayor to Indonesian president, Jokowi did not buy any media. This leads us to ask—was Jokowi beholden to some media oligarchs in distributing his political message? Or did “non-oligarchic forces” such as grassroots campaigns and “popular” politics overcome the influence of the so-called “super-powerful oligarchs”³² of Indonesia’s media?

The Jokowi Phenomenon

This section will trace the rise of Joko Widodo from his time campaigning as Jakarta governor to his eventual nomination as presidential candidate for the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, PDI-P). During this time, he became a media “phenomenon,”³³ dominating Indonesia’s news coverage of politics from mid-2012, throughout 2013, and into early 2014. It argues that Jokowi’s rise was due to new forms of political campaigning and governance disseminated through nontraditional platforms and media that challenged the oligarch’s media dominance. In this regard, Jokowi’s unconventional vehicles and venues were, in particular, initiatives that allowed for “participatory” forms of media engagement, which was a different approach relative to the traditional modes of communication power previously used in Indonesian politics.³⁴ Much of the international scholarship on media in the digital era has explained how consumers play an active role in collecting, supporting, analyzing and disseminating content. This, indeed, became a feature of how the Jokowi phenomenon challenged the established media oligarchy. However, as we shall see later, this struggle between oligarchic and counter-oligarchic forces was complex and fluid, and in the era of convergence, social media is not completely independent from the larger media system. Prior to the election, it had been argued that dominant forms of participatory media in Indonesia were more likely to involve activities for urban middle classes where political content was only on “the fringes” and where success of new media initiatives “is less likely when the narrative is contested by dominant competing narratives generated in mainstream media.”³⁵ By the end of the 2014 election year, media civic engagement and political participation had become fiercely intertwined.

A former furniture entrepreneur, Joko Widodo entered politics in 2005 by running for mayor of the central Javanese city of Solo. He won that election, and went on to introduce a series of reforms that saw him reelected in 2010 with over 90 percent of the vote. In 2012, he was selected by PDI-P Chairwoman Megawati Sukarnoputri to run for governor of Jakarta, based in part on his reputation for incorruptibility. He received the Indonesian Interior Ministry award for “Best Mayor” in 2011, and was ranked third in the 2012 World Mayor Prize. Yet he remained relatively unknown in Indonesia

³² *Ibid.*, 25.

³³ Greg Fealy, “Indonesian Politics: Seeking Change Amid Graft and Intolerance,” in *ISEAS Year in Review: Indonesia, 2012*: 1–18, used the term “The Jokowi Phenomenon,” arguing that Jokowi’s election victory for mayor of Jakarta “stunned pundits and experienced politicians alike” (p. 4).

³⁴ Brian Loader and Dan Mercea, “Networked Democracy? Social Media Innovations and Participatory Politics,” *Information, Communication, and Society* 14, 6 (2011): 757–69.

³⁵ Merlyna Lim, “Many Clicks but Little Sticks: Social Media Activism in Indonesia,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 43, 6 (2013): 636–57.

outside of Solo, and he was certainly not part of the Jakarta political elite.³⁶ Jokowi was paired with Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, a Sumatran-born Christian of Chinese descent, popularly known as “Ahok,” who was also relatively unknown in Jakarta’s elite circles. By September 2012, the pair had won the Jakarta election with 53.8 percent of the vote. Jokowi’s momentum as a media phenomenon did not stop once he became governor. He continued to make headlines online and in the press, and stories of him led most television news reports. As early as February 2013, nationwide polling showed Jokowi was the leading presidential candidate.³⁷ He continued to lead the presidential polls throughout 2013 and early 2014, and was eventually nominated as PDI-P’s presidential candidate on March 14, 2014.

The pairing of Jokowi and Ahok in the Jakarta governor’s race occurred because of the influence of two oligarchs, Prabowo and Megawati.³⁸ Furthermore, Gerindra’s media and campaign teams were employed by and heavily assisted Jokowi and Ahok’s campaign, including providing significant funds for television advertisements.³⁹ However, rather than being solely supported by media oligarchs and becoming their “puppet” once he was elected governor, Jokowi fostered a unique form of political campaigning that challenged their power, as he rode on a wave of popular sentiment against the “old faces” who had dominated Indonesian politics in the post-New Order period. This occurred through two main avenues. First, he embraced new forms of media that encouraged a “grassroots” campaign that mobilized many volunteers, prod-users,⁴⁰ and youth groups. Second, Jokowi’s distinctive and media-savvy campaign style generated significant profits for those mainstream media companies that covered him (although it meant less coverage for the oligarchs themselves and their allies).

To fully understand Jokowi’s rise as a media phenomenon, we must first understand the context in which he arrived on the Indonesian political and media scene, and how Indonesian media represented him as a break from Indonesia’s political elite. Indonesia has long been known for its corrupt governance, but since the fall of the Suharto regime, Indonesian media has been able to report openly and consistently about that corruption. The establishment of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK, Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi) in late 2003 led to further efforts to crackdown on cases of corruption, and since 2009 a number of high-profile

³⁶ In 2010, his personal wealth was reviewed and estimated at US\$1.5 million (Rp. 18 billion); see Christian von Lübke, “Maverick Mayor to Presidential Hopeful,” *Inside Indonesia* 115 (January–March 2014), available at <http://www.insideindonesia.org/current-edition/maverick-mayor-to-presidential-hopeful>, accessed January 27, 2015.

³⁷ Marcus Mietzner, “Jokowi: Rise of a Polite Populist,” *Inside Indonesia* 116 (April–June 2014), available at <http://www.insideindonesia.org/current-edition/jokowi-rise-of-a-polite-populist>, accessed January 27, 2015.

³⁸ Fealy writes that Prabowo persuaded Megawati that PDI-P should support Jokowi, and that Prabowo wanted Ahok because he could then use this in the election in 2014 to secure Chinese and Christian support. “The championing of Ahok symbolized Prabowo’s inclusive and pluralist agenda,” wrote Fealy; see “Indonesian Politics: Seeking Change Amid Graft and Intolerance,” 6.

³⁹ Winters, “Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia,” 23–25.

⁴⁰ “Prod-users” is a term coined by Bruns and refers to media users who both produce and consume content. See Axel Bruns, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Producership* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008).

corruption cases has kept the media on top of such of stories.⁴¹ Meanwhile, despite winning his second term as president in 2009, SBY disappointed those who hoped he would introduce meaningful reforms. Instead, SBY pursued a presidency highlighted by "the joys of ceremony and increasingly pompous speeches," and his popularity plummeted from 75 percent in November 2009 to 38 percent in September 2011.⁴² In his second term he was often depicted in the media and by protesters as a water buffalo, which SBY himself admitted portrayed him as "lazy, big, and stupid."⁴³ In his first few years as president (2004–06), television news companies broadcast SBY's long, formal speeches. By the end of his presidency, most of the privately owned television stations had stopped these live broadcasts. It was left to the government-owned station TVRI, whose audience share is minimal, to broadcast those speeches and the formal ceremonies. ANTV Chief Editor Uni Loebis explained that "people were switching off. It became less important to see these live speeches on TV. They are long and boring."⁴⁴ In the years preceding the 2012 Jakarta election, the Indonesian media focused heavily on corruption stories. Jokowi's then key media manager, Anggit Noegroho, reflects on the Jakarta governor campaign two years later: "We knew coming into Jakarta there were two issues. First, people were tired of SBY and his style of politics. Second, the issue of corruption was a major problem. This gave us some momentum for change."⁴⁵

In Jakarta, the incumbent governor, Fauzi Bowo (2007–12), was also considered part of the entrenched, established elite.⁴⁶ His critics saw him as arrogant, ineffective, and part of Jakarta's slow and corrupt bureaucracy. Despite increasing traffic in the capital, plans to build a rapid transit system (Jakarta Mass Rapid Transport, MRT) had been shelved, and little action seemed to be taken to reduce flooding in Jakarta during the wet season. By 2012, a gubernatorial election year, these issues had dominated the news in Jakarta for at least three years. This situation allowed space for a reformist who was not considered part of the oligarchic elite to step into the vacuum of leadership, especially one who claimed to represent the anti-corruption movement and promised a "hands-on," action-oriented agenda. Crucial to Jokowi and Ahok's campaign in Jakarta, then, was the "clean" image they projected, and the prospect of reform under their reign. While this article focuses on the Jokowi-Ahok media campaign, one should not dismiss or underestimate the candidates' track records as

⁴¹ The 2009–10 "gecko versus crocodile" dispute dominated news headlines for months. On May 20, 2010, the finance minister and popular reformist, Sri Mulyani, resigned after a campaign against her, spearheaded by the Golkar Party, accused her of wrongdoing in a bailout of Bank Century. The so-called Bank Century scandal became yet another media-corruption spectacle. In December 2012, Sports Minister Andi Mallarangeng was forced to resign. Corruption scandals continued to plague SBY's Partai Demokrat throughout his second term. See Febi Windya and Eko Harry Susanto, "Konflik KPK vs Kepolisian Dalam Bingkai *Kompas* dan *Rakyat Merdeka*," *Jurnal Komunikasi Universitas Tarumanagara* 3, 1 (2011), available at <http://journal.tarumanagara.ac.id/index.php/FIKOM/article/viewFile/1136/1228>, accessed January 20, 2015.

⁴² Mietzner, "Jokowi: Rise of a Polite Populist."

⁴³ Erwida Maulia and Dicky Christanto, "SBY takes Offense at Protesting Buffalo," *The Jakarta Post*, February 3, 2010, available at: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/02/03/sby-takes-offense-protesting-buffalo.html>, accessed January 20, 2015.

⁴⁴ Author's interview with Uni Lubis, Jakarta, January 16, 2014.

⁴⁵ Author's interview with Anggit Noegroho, Jakarta, January 12, 2014.

⁴⁶ He enjoyed the support of President Yudhoyono and the largest number of parties, abundant funds, and an expert team of campaign advisors, and had "deep roots in Jakarta elite politics." See Fealy, "Indonesian Politics: Seeking Change Amid Graft and Intolerance," 5.

reasons for their success. That Jokowi was, indeed, considered “clean” from corruption and purposeful in delivering policy outcomes showed that he was “different” from the elite, bureaucratic candidates for Jakarta’s governorship. Jokowi might have been different from the same “old faces [who] continue to dominate politics and business,”⁴⁷ but how did he effectively disseminate this message to Indonesians, when those same old faces dominated the Indonesian media landscape? In answering this question, two factors stand out.

New Politics, New Media

The 2012 Jakarta gubernatorial election saw social-media platforms become increasingly influential (albeit from a low baseline) for political campaigning in Indonesia. They became spaces for individual citizens to contest mainstream media dominance and dogma, to develop a diverse array of campaign materials, and to disseminate a variety of information. The number of Indonesians’ with Facebook pages ranks fourth among all countries, and Jakarta has been named the world’s “most active city on Twitter.”⁴⁸ Leading international scholarship on social media emphasizes the importance of “spreadability” of news content.⁴⁹ As noted earlier, Bruns has described this as the rise of the “prod-user,” the media user who produces content as well as consumes it.⁵⁰ This term is particularly relevant in understanding the Jokowi phenomenon because of prod-user material that was created and distributed during the Jakarta governor election. For example, in June 2012, Jokowi’s campaign experienced an incredible boost through social-media platforms, with the release of a locally produced music video. A small, local marketing company, CAMEO, adapted the popular UK boy-band One Direction’s 2011 song “What Makes You Beautiful” to Jokowi’s political message of clean governance and reform. The video was explicitly useful for a campaign emphasizing “change,” by showing Jokowi and Ahok as new, different, and opposed to slow bureaucracy, and with the goal of changing traffic problems in the city’s capital. Within a few weeks, it had over one million hits on YouTube; it now has almost 2.5 million hits.⁵¹ Creative adaptations of popular global music videos and games were made by “prod-users” as a way to support Jokowi and Ahok’s campaign. The “One Direction” video was the highlight, but other videos included an adaptation of the international K-pop hit “Gangnam Style” to “Jokowi style,” and an adaptation of the internationally popular video game Angry Birds, in which Jokowi throws exploding tomatoes at corrupt officials.⁵² Jokowi often referred to

⁴⁷ Robison and Hadiz, “The Political Economy of Oligarchy and the Reorganization of Power in Indonesia.”

⁴⁸ Ranked by the number of posted tweets, from data released July 31, 2012, by France-based social-media monitor SemioCast. See Erwida Maulia, “Jakarta Named ‘Most Active Twitter City’ in Recent Study,” *Jakarta Globe*, July 31, 2012, available at: <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/jakarta/jakarta-named-most-active-twitter-city-in-recent-study/>, accessed January 20, 2015.

⁴⁹ Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

⁵⁰ Bruns, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond*.

⁵¹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-zR65eXXPc>, accessed January 20, 2015.

⁵² “K-pop,” or “Korean pop,” is a genre of music first popularized in South Korea that features a wide range of audiovisual components. Angry Birds is a video game that was originally designed for touchscreen-based devices, especially smartphones.

his devotion to the American heavy-metal band Metallica, which made him popular with online "fan" communities and those who saw themselves similarly as consumers of global popular culture. This has been a feature of Indonesian popular culture since *reformasi*, where "the foreign has been indigenized and transformed into something other than a mere copy of an imported product."⁵³ The "prod-user" is largely an urban, middle-class Jakartan youth who is actively participating in the production of campaign material, and sharing alternative forms of locally produced political content on numerous social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Path.⁵⁴

The "spreadable" nature of Indonesia's political videos via social media means the success of such videos should not be measured only according to YouTube views. Television programs either broadcast the videos or covered the videos' popularity as news or entertainment, and print and online news media reported about them. Editors and journalists monitor social-media sites' online "traffic." Sensing the hype surrounding some of the pro-Jokowi initiatives, those videos were incorporated into mainstream news. ANTV Chief Editor Uni Lubis said Jokowi "was very good at personal branding through social media and citizen journalism, and Jakarta is, of course, quite active online." Add to this Jokowi's engaging personality and it is no wonder that he received significant coverage in the television news, as his videos were what people were talking about online.⁵⁵

A volunteer group known as JASMEV (Jokowi-Ahok Social Media Volunteers) was organized to promote Jokowi and Ahok on social media, in particular on Twitter and Facebook. JASMEV was not part of Jokowi's official media team, and so remained a volunteer organization of about twenty to thirty people, but it engaged hundreds of users online as part of a larger volunteer community.⁵⁶ Despite the rather informal and ad-hoc nature of JASMEV, it provided a useful online presence and grew Jokowi's social-media presence. Jokowi's Facebook fan page had nearly nine times as many followers as did Fauzi Bowo's.⁵⁷ New media allowed for a campaign style that incorporated the creativity of many of Indonesia's youth, and their interest in the amateur production of pseudo-campaign material. Riffa Juffiasari, one of Jokowi's media staffers, said that they changed their campaign strategy to focus in particular on young people, and on grassroots campaigning rather than traditional methods (i.e., television and posters):

We knew young people would be important in the election. Jakarta had many first-time voters, and many young people in the previous election didn't bother to vote. So we optimized the use of social media and YouTube, and utilized their

⁵³ David Hill and Krishna Sen, *Media, Culture, and Politics in Indonesia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵⁴ Over one-third of Indonesia's eligible voters in the 2014 presidential election were "between the ages of 16 and 20" and had not voted before. See Nicolas Picard and Michelle Chang, "Will Indonesia's Online Youth Shape 2014 Elections?" *Asia Foundation*, October 16, 2013, available at <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2013/10/16/will-indonesias-online-youth-shape-2014-elections/>, accessed January 20, 2015.

⁵⁵ Author's interview with Uni Lubis, Jakarta, January 16, 2014.

⁵⁶ Key people involved were Kartika Juniardi, Alexander Ferry, Alexander Jerry, Sony Subrata, and Jose Rizal.

⁵⁷ There were 18,712 views versus 2,862 views. See Djohansyah Saleh, "Indonesia Falls for Social Media," Weber and Shandwick, Indonesia, <http://webershandwick.co.id/en/indonesia-falls-for-social-media-eng/>, accessed January 20, 2015.

[young people's] skills. They were often volunteers, very creative. We were very open to all. We used the strength of these voices in our campaign.⁵⁸

Diragayuza Setiawan, who was employed as part of Gerindra's media team, said that 2012 Jakarta Governor election showed that "the role of the media campaign changed. We had some TV commercials, but we found grassroots campaign people made better commercials than us."⁵⁹ He said he learned that "when it comes to social media, you have to relinquish some control [to those most familiar with it]."⁶⁰

New campaign methods delivered via social-media platforms allowed Jokowi and Ahok to be portrayed as unique among political actors, as their political campaigning was being done in creative and noticeable ways. Once in power, Jokowi and Ahok incorporated social media as part of their new form of governance, in particular by publicly reprimanding government officials and posting this footage on YouTube. Ahok, referring to his "bad cop" image, explained that "the media, especially online, only gives you a small quote and a headline, and this can be very dangerous. You are taken out of context. So we thought to upload the whole YouTube video so that when I speak like that [reprimanding officials] it is placed in proper context ... [that] I use reason and argument."⁶¹ One video of a budget meeting involving Ahok has over 1.5 million views.⁶² Residents of Jakarta, in particular, spread this video and other ones similar to it through social-media platforms, seemingly impressed by this new form of leadership. *Tempo* reported in April 2014 that of the 8.2 million "conversations" online and on social media regarding a number of presidential candidates, 6.9 million are about Jokowi, with 1.3 million about the other candidates.⁶³ Jokowi and Ahok did not singlehandedly cause social media and other new media platforms to suddenly become politically important in Indonesia, but their rapid success with these platforms meant other politicians soon followed their lead.⁶⁴

Indonesia's 2014 presidential election has been described by some as "the social-media election."⁶⁵ Such claims are overstated. However, there is little doubt that the rising numbers of social-media users and prod-users, and the success of Jokowi and Ahok in utilizing those platforms in 2012, means social media is now an integral part of any political campaign in Indonesia. Indeed, social-media resources were an important

⁵⁸ Author's interview with Riffa Juffiasari, Jakarta, January 7, 2014.

⁵⁹ Author's interview with Diragayuza Setiawan, Jakarta, January 9, 2014. He estimated that Gerindra's media team spent around 10 percent of its campaign budget on social-media advertising and promotions.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Author's interview with Ahok, Jakarta, January 23, 2014.

⁶² See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipsJ4nEbXbU>, accessed January 20, 2015.

⁶³ Amri Mahbub, "Middle Class Most Influential in Presidential Election: Observer," *Tempo Online*, January 4, 2014, available at <http://en.tempo.co/read/news/2014/01/04/057542140/Middle-Class-Most-Influential-in-Presidential-Election-Observer->, accessed January 20, 2015. Figures are from Prapancha Research regarding the "2014 Prediction on Indonesia's Political, Social, and Economic Conditions." The research was based on conversations on social media and five news portals in Indonesia in 2013.

⁶⁴ A twitter audit reported the following percentages of "fake" twitter followers: for Gita Wirjawan, 74 percent; Anies Baswedan, 65 percent; and Dahlan Iskan, 61 percent (see <http://www.deliknews.com/wp-content/themes/Transcript/cache/2014/02/twitter-audit.png>, accessed August 14, 2014).

⁶⁵ Andrew Thornley, "Indonesia's Social Media Elections," Asia Foundation, April 2, 2014, available at <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2014/04/02/indonesias-social-media-elections/>, accessed January 20, 2015.

battleground in the 2014 elections, a battleground that was largely *not* controlled or manipulated by oligarchs, but rather dominated by volunteer groups and individual citizens. Despite so-far incidental attempts by oligarchs to infiltrate the new media realm,⁶⁶ it remains a place free of oligarchic control, a space where individual citizens are collectively encouraging new forms of campaign material production, disseminated en-masse by volunteers and Indonesia's increasingly online, social-media savvy youth.

The Blusukan

Jokowi's rise as a media phenomenon was not solely due to his ability to use new media. He certainly owes much of his success to coverage from mainstream oligarchic media, in particular television stations TVOne and MetroTV. Jokowi's rise as a media phenomenon was due in part to his ability to engage Jakarta's national television stations, which in turn helped him become known nationwide. One might assume, then, that Jokowi would need to co-opt the support of "leading families of business" (in this case media) to "become enmeshed in the ownership and control of capital."⁶⁷ However, in his time as Jakarta's governor, Jokowi became a media phenomenon without allying himself directly with key media owners such as Hary Tanoesoedibjo, Aburizal Bakrie, or Chairul Tanjung, and only in April 2014 did he become directly allied with MetroTV's Surya Paloh.

Governor Jokowi's media-friendly style of governance meant that media companies soon lusted after "Jokowi stories." In particular, Jokowi's *blusukans* (loosely translated as "unscheduled visits") became a regular, almost daily, feature of national news. His *blusukans* essentially meant that he left his office to visit the field—for example, to troubleshoot problem areas, meet with neighborhood groups and greet individuals from all walks of life, and inspect government officials' activities. Yet this relatively simple strategy was the single most important aspect of Jokowi's nationwide media success. Jokowi's *blusukans* generated superb ratings, and meant, in fact, that journalists sought him for news, rather than him seeking out media owners for favorable coverage. Jokowi said: "I learned in Solo how to manage the media. We make a differentiation. We go the problem locations. We go to the poor people, to the riverbank, for example, and this is sexy for the media."⁶⁸ The tactic was to visit Jakarta's urban poor regularly, a strategy previously unheard of in political campaigns or governance in Indonesia, and certainly different from the formal ceremonies and speeches of SBY.

A *blusukan* generally takes two forms, both of which Jokowi perfected in his home town of Solo. The first is a visit to meet and greet "ordinary" people, usually those from poor or what are considered "problem areas." The second form of *blusukan* is an

⁶⁶ Aburizal Bakrie's son, Anindya, invested in the social-media site Path in 2014. Hary Tanoesoedibyo has investment in WeChat. The CAMEO group, which was not paid by a political party when they created the "One Direction" video, was hired by Gerindra a week after it was uploaded to YouTube. CAMEO continued to work with Gerindra during the 2014 election campaign on the "Mas Garuda" YouTube video campaign material.

⁶⁷ Robison and Hadiz, "The Political Economy of Oligarchy and the Reorganization of Power in Indonesia," 38.

⁶⁸ Author's interview with Jokowi, Jakarta, January 10, 2014.

“unscheduled” visit to government offices to make sure officials are working appropriately. Jokowi made it clear that part of the *blusukan* strategy was to receive attention from the media, and in particular from television. “If you interview in the office or shoot television footage in the office it is not sexy, but if you go to the slum area the readers [reporters] and footage will be more sexy,” he said.⁶⁹ *Blusukans* almost always occur during the morning because the media are looking for a story to file for midday news bulletins, and, if the *blusukan* is particularly newsworthy, they will continue with rolling coverage throughout the day.

As a result of his daily activities, the media began to see Jokowi as a constant avenue for news. Jokowi made it clear that he recognized the importance of the media in his success, saying: “Media is very important. It can give the right or wrong impression about things to the people. We are 80 to 85 percent certain that TV can change the mindset of the people. And if TV can give positive information it can change things.”⁷⁰

Crucially, Jokowi’s *blusukans* provided ample opportunities for television coverage and photo images. As Jokowi said, “If I stay in the office every day, do you think they will cover me?”⁷¹ When an area of Jakarta flooded, Jokowi visited it, sometimes taking off his shoes and wading through the water. When Jokowi planned to move Jakarta street vendors from the side of the road in a notoriously difficult area for traffic, he visited the area and discussed this policy with the local street vendors, cameras capturing those discussions, sometimes “live” to air. As a result, his style of governance was seen as consultative, caring, and humble. As Mietzner writes, the *blusukan* “cemented Jokowi’s image as an on-the-ground problem fixer and grassroots communicator.”⁷²

While media owners were perhaps initially happy to see their news-station profits rising, Jokowi’s status as a “media darling” was certainly upsetting to these oligarchs. Some chief editors explained that oligarchs visited their offices and asked for coverage similar to that given to Jokowi. Rikard Bagun, *Kompas* chief editor, said Prabowo and Bakrie “questioned and criticized us,” noting that “it is all part of the political game to have these candidates come to the office and query our reporting.”⁷³ Chief editors of television stations explained that they gained significant audience share by airing Jokowi stories. Editors of all television stations soon thereafter instructed a camera crew and a journalist to follow Jokowi every day. KompasTV Chief Editor Taufiq Mihadja said this extraordinary coverage occurred because “no other politician operates in this way.”⁷⁴ The *blusukan* was a new form of political campaigning and governance, one that ushered in a new era of Indonesian politicians’ engagement with the media. Footage of Jokowi on *blusukans* helped cement an idea of his character with Indonesians who watched from all over the archipelago. Jokowi was seen as humble and sensitive to, if not actually part of, the *rakyat*. Ahok said of Jokowi’s success:

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Mietzner, “Jokowi: Rise of the Polite Populist.”

⁷³ Author’s interview with Rikard Bagun, Jakarta, December 17, 2014.

⁷⁴ Author’s interview with Taufiq Mihadja, December 15, 2014.

"People are bored. They want someone different. They want the same as them. They see him [Jokowi] as from the same *kampung*, a simple man with similar protocols to them."⁷⁵ The *blusukan* soon became a way for other politicians to try to receive news coverage, and they, too, arranged unscheduled (and often unwelcome) visits to government departments, with television cameras in tow, and uploaded the content to YouTube.⁷⁶ President SBY even dedicated a chapter in his book, *Selalu Ada Pilihan*, to the *blusukan*, having previously said that he, too, often conducts *blusukans*, "but from the heart."⁷⁷ The *blusukan* also had direct benefit for online news sites,⁷⁸ which, like 24-hour news stations, require regular, updated tidbits of information. Indonesians' Internet penetration is officially around 20 percent, but access to online news and social-media sites via inexpensive mobile-phone devices is increasingly prevalent. The key to this form of news is that it is "click-driven," because if readers "click" on the article, that data is recorded and used to sell to advertisers. There was little doubt Jokowi's *blusukans* were attracting huge numbers of "clicks" or "hits." *Blusukans* ushered in a new form of governance that was media friendly, and they helped Jokowi become the politician most regularly covered in the news. As a result, he led all nationwide polls as the most popular candidate for president throughout 2013 and 2014.

The "People's Darling"?

The 2012 Jakarta election saw viewership rise for all of Jakarta's media companies. Because all of the big conglomerates are based in the capital, yet broadcast nationwide, the Jakarta election became a national election by virtue of its expansive media coverage. CIPG's study concluded that these "very powerful messages" were being spread all over Indonesia, where television viewers throughout the archipelago were "being force-fed every detail of Jakartan life repeatedly for weeks."⁷⁹ After the Jakarta election, Jokowi stories continued to create enormous audience ratings and "hits" throughout 2013 and early 2014.

All of the chief editors interviewed for this research claimed that Jokowi stories were popular forms of news reports. Gatot Triyanto, chief editor of TransTV, acknowledged that "60 percent" of his viewers were from Jakarta, and he said it was clear Jokowi was improving the ratings for his news stations: "Even since he has become a governor the ratings have risen. During the [January 2014] floods, people are watching to hear what Jokowi has to say."⁸⁰ Online media data show the popularity of Jokowi in 2013. Kompas.com's top-thirty most-read stories for each month of the year

⁷⁵ Author's interview with Ahok, Jakarta, January 23, 2014.

⁷⁶ For example, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yl6p4RQGA6w>, accessed January 20, 2015.

⁷⁷ Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, *Selalu Ada Pilihan* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2014).

⁷⁸ Online news made a successful entry to the Indonesian media scene during *reformasi* 1998, through the site Detik.com. Detik.com's style is short, fast, and simple news. The average time a reader spends on each story is only around 2.5 minutes, and thus is ideal for those who consume news via mobile, hand-held devices such as smart phones. Detik was joined by online news sites Kompas.com in 2008, and Vivanews.com in 2009. These maintain the model of fast, updated news, but the stories have slightly more depth, meaning the average time a reader spends on a story is about seven minutes.

⁷⁹ Yanuar Nugroho et al., "Shaping Content, Shaping Society," 40.

⁸⁰ Author's interview with Gatot Triyanto, Jakarta, January 23, 2014.

2013 showed that, of these 360 stories, a total of eighty-six featured Jokowi or Ahok (around 25 percent). However, of these 360 popular stories, 130 were unrelated to politics and current events, as they were generated by Kompas TEKNO, which promotes the latest mobile phone and android applications. Thus, of 2013's top monthly stories at Kompas.com that covered Indonesian news and current affairs, over 37 percent featured Jokowi and Ahok.⁸¹ Data from Detik.com shows that "total hits" on Jokowi stories in 2012 numbered 136,526,640 and hits on Jokowi stories in 2013 was 195,587,770. The daily average unique users to "click" on a Jokowi story in 2013 was 535,856.⁸²

After the 2012 governor election, Kompas.com dedicated a section of its website to "Jokowi-Ahok First 100 Days." Taufik Miharja said this was "to make it easier for the people to access news about Jokowi and Ahok. We knew the demand was there so people could go straight to that section. It is also easier to follow up with consistent updated news, rather than put it all together with other news."⁸³ Journalists for online news said their office keeps a close eye on what the leading page views are, aggregated by the news company and placed under the banner of "stories most popular" on the website. Jokowi's stories were receiving thousands of hits, and, as a result, journalists were instructed by editors to follow Jokowi every day. On August 21, 2012, Kompas.com reported that senior politician Amien Rais had criticized Jokowi, and 11,336 readers commented on that story—the greatest number of comments for a single story since the site was established in 2008.⁸⁴ A cursory examination of those comments shows that most of them attacked Amien Rais. Politicians soon realized that if they publicly criticized Jokowi, they would likely attract direct criticism on online news sites.

In online news, the web-page menus containing the "most read" and "most comments" items are determined by the audience. This is one form of direct "participatory media," where actual consumer activity is the key to determining a news story's fate.⁸⁵ In this platform-convergent newsroom model adopted by large conglomerates, news is increasingly determined by what interests readers, who help determine whether a story makes it into a news "cycle." If stories are highly successful online, they may then be deemed worthy to make television news, or to be in the newspaper edition the next day. Editors, of course, still adhere to their own news sense and instructions from managers and owners (where relevant), but online news consumers can provide information regarding what readers want and how they react to a story. As a result, all chief editors interviewed for this research, including those in oligarchic media companies, said their organization covered Jokowi as a

⁸¹ Kompas.com internal data supplied to the author.

⁸² Detik.com internal data supplied to the author.

⁸³ Author's interview with Taufik Miharja, December 15, 2014.

⁸⁴ M. Wismabrata, "Amien Rais: Predikat Wali Kota Terbaik Menyesatkan," *Kompas.com*, August 21, 2012, available at: <http://megapolitan.kompas.com/read/2012/08/21/1625103/Amien.Rais.Predikat.Walikota.Terbaik.Menyesatkan>, accessed January 20, 2015. See also "Ini 10 Berita Kompas.com Paling Banyak Dikomentari Tahun 2012," *Kompas.com*, January 3, 2013, available at: <http://lipsus.kompas.com/gebrakan-jokowi-basuki/read/xml/2013/01/03/16080226/Ini.10.Berita.Kompas.com.Paling.Banyak.Dikomentari.Tahun.2012>, accessed January 20, 2015.

⁸⁵ Henry Jenkins et al., "Spreadable Media."

"phenomenon" because of the great interest from the audience and readers. They all echoed a point made by *Kompas* Chief Editor Rikard Bagun, who said Jokowi was "the people's darling, not the media's darling. The media is just amplifying the people's views."⁸⁶

Until the 2014 election period began, Jokowi's rise as the media's most prominent politician (and his subsequent lead in all the polls) suggested that the profit margins and people's preferences were clearly taking priority over the political interests of Indonesia's media moguls. Jokowi's success caught the oligarchs off-guard. Putra Nababan, PDI-P member and MetroTV chief editor, explained it this way: "We never thought he [Jokowi] would be a national media phenomenon. We thought if he were to go to the national level, he would be better off running for Central Java governor."⁸⁷ Aburizal Bakrie, Surya Paloh, Dahlan Iskan, Chairul Tanjung, and Hary Tanoesoedibjo all performed poorly as presidential or vice-presidential candidates in the opinion polls as a direct result of Jokowi's success. TVOne's Wahyu explained that, as chief editor, daily news-content choices get approved by him, and that he knew that "if we are very fierce on Jokowi, the rating could drop and people change channels."⁸⁸ In terms of media coverage, Jokowi's rise was not through strategic oligarchical alliances and cozying up to media owners. Rather, it was through unique styles of campaigning and governing, carried forward by hundreds of thousands of "ordinary" Indonesians who participated in making him a media phenomenon. In this regard, scholars have discussed the idea of an increasingly "digital media literate" youth, where youth culture increasingly involves active online participation with respect to political events and ideas.⁸⁹

In terms of oligarchy, the question everyone was asking was, would PDI-P Chairwoman Megawati Sukarnoputri nominate Jokowi as the party's presidential candidate? Once this occurred, and the official election campaign was underway, it was clear media ownership was to play a central role in the coverage of Indonesian politics, and the oligarchic media owners were to have their way inside the newsroom, as they tried to exert their power and influence over the election result.

The 2014 Elections

If media owners were initially willing to allow Jokowi stories to increase the profits for their companies, once the election was underway they clearly changed that policy; stations would report negatively on Jokowi, or not at all. By December 2013, both TVOne and MetroTV had stopped regularly sending a journalist and camera crew to city hall. In January 2014, both Jokowi and Ahok acknowledged that some television stations were not reporting on them any longer. Yet both claimed not to be concerned. Jokowi said, "People ask me, 'Why are you not on TV?' and I say 'well, it's because I don't have a newspaper or a TV station.' But the people are smart, they know why.

⁸⁶ Author's interview with Rikard Bagun, December 17, 2014.

⁸⁷ Author's interview with Putra Nababan, February 16, 2014.

⁸⁸ Author's interview with Wahyu, February 14, 2014.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Peter Dahlgren, ed., *Young Citizens and New Media: Learning for Democratic Participation* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013).

People know why and they will switch channels.”⁹⁰ Ahok referred to YouTube as a way to put up his own material so if people want to learn more about him, they can. He said: “I don’t care if they slander us, that’s why I put my own recording up.”⁹¹ Once Jokowi was nominated by Megawati in March 2014, and as the legislative elections neared, journalists from Bakrie’s and Tanoesoedibyo’s media companies were told to avoid reporting about Jokowi, unless it was to criticize his policies. Surya Paloh’s outlets were issued a similar directive, presumably to draw votes away from the PDI-P and toward Surya’s Nasional Demokrat Party. TVOne’s chief editor, Wahyu, admitted that they were being tough on Jokowi, and defended his station’s critical position by saying:

Jokowi is a media darling, but he is not yet proven. For example, has he improved the situation of the floods in Jakarta? People watch anything about Jokowi, whether it is criticism or not; it rates well, and they still watch. Jokowi had a good record in Solo, which we explored so that was why we were positive at the start. But he has been two years in Jakarta and we should ask—has he kept his promises?⁹²

MetroTV’s chief editor, Putra Nababan, echoed this message, saying: “We started to be critical and have hard-hitting interviews after the first hundred days, and on his anniversary [of his election victory] to have a dialogue: what has he achieved?”⁹³ ANTV Chief Editor Uni Loebis, which is in the Bakrie Group, said: “We decided that we don’t want to make a story about Jokowi that doesn’t have news value. By that I mean [we won’t cover] incidental things that he does every day.”⁹⁴ Yet this was clearly not only about reporting the facts of what Jokowi had or had not achieved during his time as governor. Journalists were told that if they needed a comment from the governor’s office, they should approach Ahok. Other journalists interviewed for this research complained that footage of Jokowi would be cut before it made it to news. Journalists also stated that they were encouraged to report on a supposed “split” between Jokowi and Ahok. Managers would enter the newsroom to examine what the stories were for the day, and if they saw Jokowi’s name on a program, they would question the producers. If the story was not an attack on Jokowi, journalists said, they were told to remove it from the plans. At the same time, coverage of media owners by their own television stations increased dramatically.

As early as January 2014, protesters gathered in front of the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission and called for a crackdown on television stations whose reporting was biased toward their owner’s interests. In the lead-up to the April legislative elections, two television programs broadcast by Hary Tanoesoedibjo’s MNC were pulled off the air by the commission for blatantly pushing Hary’s party, Hanura.⁹⁵ While the overall lack of success for these oligarchs in polling as presidential

⁹⁰ Author’s interview with Jokowi, January 10, 2014.

⁹¹ Author’s interview with Ahok, January 23, 2014.

⁹² Author’s interview with Wahyu, Jakarta, February 14, 2014.

⁹³ Author’s interview with Putra Nababan, Jakarta, February 16, 2014.

⁹⁴ Author’s interview with Uni Loebis, Jakarta, January 16, 2014.

⁹⁵ “Hary Tanoes’s MNC Group Sanctioned over Pro-Hanura Bias,” *The Jakarta Globe*, February 21, 2014, available at <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/hary-tanoes-mnc-group-sanctioned-over-pro-hanura-bias/>, accessed January 20, 2015.

candidates throughout the 2014 elections suggests that as presidential candidates, media moguls did not reap significant rewards, evidence shows that the media oligarchs still held sway over decisions within their companies. They were blatantly attempting to use their wealth and power to hinder Jokowi's popularity with the Indonesian electorate. In April, Jokowi reportedly met with MetroTV's Surya Paloh to ask him for fairer treatment,⁹⁶ suggesting he now needed to work more closely with media oligarchs to receive coverage.

Once the legislative elections were over, owners of Indonesia's media companies either joined Prabowo's or Jokowi's coalition. Prabowo enlisted Bakrie and Tanoesoedibjo into his coalition, and each played a prominent role in his campaign. At some campaign events, the two moguls were the only people to address the audience along with Prabowo, while television cameras from their respective stations fixed on them as they spoke. Coverage by TVOne of Prabowo's campaign was all-encompassing, with the headline "the people's choice" running throughout the campaign. Together, the stations owned by Bakrie and Tanoesoedibjo accounted for around 40 percent of all TV viewers.⁹⁷

Jokowi also had supporters in the media. Throughout the presidential campaign, Surya Paloh's MetroTV explicitly supported his campaign, following him wherever he went and often attacking Prabowo. Other media owners allied with Jokowi included Jawa Pos Group (owned by Dahlan Iskan) and James Riady's Lippo Group (owner of BeritaSatu and the *Jakarta Globe*). The *Jakarta Post* also covered Jokowi positively,⁹⁸ as its newspaper's owner, Sofyan Wanandi, was on Jokowi's campaign team. A week before the election, it ran an editorial endorsing Jokowi—the first time it has endorsed a candidate—on the grounds that Prabowo was dangerous for Indonesian democracy.⁹⁹ So this was a media landscape in which many companies clearly supported one candidate or the other, although how, and how professionally, varied enormously. TVOne and MetroTV, for example, felt there was no shame in focusing their coverage on their favored candidates, while other companies—including SCTV news reports and *Kompas* newspaper—were far more balanced in their coverage of both candidates.

Throughout the 2014 presidential campaign, Jokowi's poll numbers plummeted. Some observers noted that Prabowo's positive coverage by major television stations was important, but certainly Jokowi's chaotic and fractured campaign was a significant factor, too.¹⁰⁰ The partisan coverage reached its height on the night of the presidential election. Among the examples of how some media companies rejected the notion of fair and balanced journalism, TVOne's coverage stands out. The network's viewers represented 14.1 percent of audience share—the largest of any television station that

⁹⁶ "Sekutu Baru Teuku Umar," *Tempo Online*, April 7, 2014, available at <http://majalah.tempo.co/konten/2014/04/07/LU/145077/Sekutu-Baru-Teuku-Umar/06/43>, accessed January 20, 2015.

⁹⁷ Ben Bland, "Indonesia's Media Barons Line Up for Election Fight," *Financial Times*, June 5, 2014.

⁹⁸ Sita W. Dewi and Yuliasri Perdani, "Jokowi vs Prabowo: 1–0," *The Jakarta Post*, June 10, 2014, available at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/06/10/jokowi-vs-prabowo-1-0.html>, accessed January 20, 2015.

⁹⁹ "Editorial: Endorsing Jokowi," *The Jakarta Post*, July 4, 2014, available at: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/07/04/editorial-endorsing-jokowi.html>, accessed January 20, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ See for example Ross Tapsell and Liam Gammon, "Field Notes on the Jokowi Campaign," *New Mandala*, July 4, 2014, available at <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2014/07/04/notes-on-the-chaotic-jokowi-campaign/>, accessed January 20, 2015.

evening. Prabowo claimed victory on the basis of dubious quick counts. Coverage seemed to have been planned long before election night, with guests supporting Prabowo's claim of victory already in the studio and primed for comment. Prabowo's victory claims were also somewhat supported by Bakrie-owned ANTV, which ranked second with 13.1 percent of the audience on election night, and Hary Tanosoedibyo's RCTI, ranked third, with an audience share of 12.7 percent. MetroTV's audience share, meanwhile, was only 6.9 percent, making it a poorly placed seventh on election night. Both Jokowi and Prabowo declared victory, but Jokowi's reliance on credible quick counts was confirmed by the KPU (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, General Elections Commission), which declared him the winner with 53 percent of the votes. Despite news stations allied to Prabowo supporting his claims that the election was not fair, there were no mass protests. If Prabowo and his powerful oligarch supporters were trying to create unrest and doubt in the democratic system by using oligarchic media as loudspeakers, the vast majority of Indonesians ignored them.

Conclusion

The article has not set out explicitly to prove or disprove the oligarchy thesis. Observers of Indonesian politics have noted that the role of oligarchs contributes much to our understanding of contemporary Indonesian politics, and this is certainly my contention here. This article explores the oligarchy framework in light of the 2014 elections through a key issue within the oligarchy thesis, one previously unexplored in depth, namely, the mainstream Indonesian media. It shows the increasing oligarchical nature of that mainstream media, and the subsequent power of media owners to control coverage during an election year. Yet it has also shown the ways in which citizens have individually and collectively used both the mainstream media and new media platforms to circumvent the influence of the media oligarchs—specifically, by assisting in the creation of Jokowi as a media phenomenon. Thus, one may perhaps draw two separate conclusions from this research with regard to the Indonesian media and the oligarchy theory.

Those in favor of the oligarchic thesis emphasize that Jokowi was only allowed to campaign as candidate for Jakarta governor in the first place due to the machinations of oligarchs Megawati Sukarnoputri and Prabowo Subianto. Jokowi and his running mate, Ahok, were supported by a well-funded Gerindra media team that, among other initiatives, spent significant amounts on television advertising. Once in power, it was the oligarchic media (largely TVOne and MetroTV) that, through constant coverage of Jokowi's *blusukans*, made him into a national figure. This consistent, unrelenting coverage must have had support from the stations' owners, such as Aburizal Bakrie and Surya Paloh, even if their reasons for such support were profit-driven. Once the election year began, the oligarchs controlled the coverage of the election, and, as they have done in the past, took sides. To win, Jokowi was forced to ally himself with various New Order oligarchs, such as his vice-presidential running mate, Jusuf Kalla, and media moguls Surya Paloh, Dahlan Iskan, and James Riady. Rather than a victory of the individual citizen over the oligarchs allied to Prabowo, this was, in fact, a victory of one set of oligarchs over another. Those in favor of the oligarchy thesis might say that Jokowi's victory does not mean there is nothing new in Indonesian politics, but it does mean that the old faces continue to be the drivers of political power, while new

faces, like Jokowi, are "drawn into the same predatory practices that had defined politics in Indonesia in the first place. In short, the political system is still dominated by oligarchy, whether Jokowi is there or not.

Yet the chameleonic nature of oligarchic media interests is made evident by the fact that Jeffrey Winters's table of Indonesia's oligarchic democracy, compiled in 2013, completely changed once the 2014 presidential elections were underway (at least in terms of who oligarchic media owners were "backing").¹⁰¹ Dahlan Iskan backed Jokowi, not Bakrie. Hary Tanoesoedibyo left Wiranto (who supported Jokowi) to join Prabowo's coalition. Bakrie backed Prabowo and did not run for president himself. Riady's media (in Winters's table supporting SBY and Partai Demokrat) supported Jokowi, while Partai Demokrat eventually joined Prabowo's coalition. Furthermore, Winters also states that in 2013 Prabowo was "trying to buy TV stations"—which did not occur. What do these changes tell us about the nature of media oligarchy? Perhaps this is media moguls reorganizing themselves to gain maximum control over the democratic system, by simply forming new oligarchic alliances. More likely, it shows that the plans oligarchs had for Indonesian politics at the time Winters compiled the table were thrown into disarray due to the Jokowi phenomenon.

Alternatively, Jokowi's victory could be considered a break from the oligarchic New Order-era rulers who have dominated Indonesian media and politics since 1998. Jokowi's rise as a media phenomenon represents a new, media-darling form of popular politician, driven by widespread coverage of a unique form of governance and the regular publicizing of political polling data concerning presidential candidates. Jokowi may have needed the backing of Megawati and Prabowo to become the candidate for the Jakarta governorship, but he still had to beat the well-funded Fauzi Bowo to win. As Fealy wrote, "The Jakarta election showed that conventional political strategies relying on big money and establishment figures were now vulnerable to independent candidates who could connect with electors and draw favourable media attention."¹⁰² Even if this campaign was heavily supported by Gerindra, no serious commentator would argue that Prabowo and Megawati supported his nomination for governor because they wanted him to eventually become president. They clearly hoped for the position for themselves. Many people who supported Jokowi's campaign did so through volunteer groups and through social-media platforms. In Jokowi, many people saw a change from the old oligarchs, such as Fauzi Bowo, then SBY, and later (for the most part), Prabowo.

Jokowi's success was to a large extent driven by "grassroots" campaigning and volunteer communities, as well as new media initiatives and the prod-user, and many in the general public who yearned for news of a politician who represented a break from the familiar faces of Indonesian politics. During the election year, as their power and influence became increasingly threatened, most media oligarchs allied with the former New Order general and oligarch Prabowo, and consistently used their media companies to attack Jokowi and promote their own interests. Meanwhile, Surya Paloh (and others) supported Jokowi and covered his campaign, showing that media oligarchy still played a part in Jokowi's success. But as Aspinall writes,

¹⁰¹ Winters, "Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia," 25.

¹⁰² Fealy, "Indonesian Politics: Seeking Change Amid Graft and Intolerance," 7.

that these struggles are complex, and take place in contradictory and fragmented ways, involving ever-shifting political coalitions and conflicts, reflects the complexity of Indonesian democracy and the kaleidoscopic patterns of social interest that underpin it.¹⁰³

Certainly, rich individuals will continue to dominate the political economy of the media industry in Indonesia, as they do in many other democracies around the world. But Jokowi's rise shows the power of "non-oligarchic or counter-oligarchic actors and groups" to negate the media's power and influence.¹⁰⁴ The role of Kawal Pemilu (Guard the Elections), an initiative of civilian Internet users to "crowd source" voting tabulation around the country, is but one example of these increasingly popular forces enabled by digital technologies.¹⁰⁵ A Jokowi presidency is thus likely to represent a new period of contestation between popular consensus facilitated by new media, versus negotiations and pandering to the oligarchic elite. The first few months of 2015 have shown that the oligarchs have not given up in this contest. For example, the idea to "crowdsource" Jokowi's cabinet never eventuated, with selection of ministers far more determined by the elites, such as Megwati Sukarnoputri and media mogul Surya Paloh. The battle between the police and the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, KPK), also shows this contestation in practice, with media elites rallying behind police-chief candidate Budi Gunawan, and civil society using Twitter to campaign to "save the KPK." But Jokowi came to power through the "perpetual frictions that occur between oligarchic, popular, and other interests,"¹⁰⁶ and these forces are likely to continue to battle and co-opt each other in the ensuing years. The presidential election was indeed a close one, but Jokowi's ascendancy from local mayor to eventually become president in a period of only two years shows that rather than submitting to the same old predatory practices of oligarchy, new practices and initiatives to gain political momentum were forged. The media was indeed a vehicle and venue in the creation of the Jokowi phenomenon, and the Suharto-era oligarchic power and dominance was openly and somewhat spectacularly challenged. How the oligarchs respond to Jokowi and other popular media-savvy politicians will be a feature of Indonesian politics and society in the lead-up to the 2019 election.

¹⁰³ Aspinall, "Popular Agency and Interests in Indonesia's Democratic Transition and Consolidation," 119.

¹⁰⁴ Mietzner, "Oligarchs, Politicians, and Activists," 18.

¹⁰⁵ There was also Jari Ungu (Purple Finger), Perludem's API Pemilu, and Bersih 2014 (Clean 2014). It has been argued that these online social movements during the 2014 elections "show that citizens are sharing knowledge, information, and expertise, and often form allies with mainstream media and journalists to guard their democracy." Inaya Rakhmani, "Technology for Transparency," *New Mandala*, July 21, 2014, available at <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2014/07/21/technology-for-transparency/>, accessed January 20, 2015.

¹⁰⁶ Aspinall, "Popular Agency and Interests in Indonesia's Democratic Transition and Consolidation," 119.