



## **DEMOCRACY TODAY: Assessing Democracy Phenomenon in Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

*Democracy as a political and the government system has demonstrated its existence in the history of the world. This existence can be seen from the many countries that implement it, especially Indonesia. The democratic process becomes an interesting phenomenon because it cannot be separated from the dynamics of the community itself. At present the community has entered the digital era, that the utilization of information and communication technology are massive. One phenomenon of concern is the widespread use of social media. The reality of the utilization of social media not only showed the trend of community interaction and communication but also the trend of political participation which correlates with the sustainability of democracy in Indonesia. At least, it has happened in the last decades, where political figures have been using social media as a channel to construct personal image. On the other hand, social media for civil society is as a new media (alternative media) in channeling aspirations, support, and even criticism to political and government figures. Social media trends also cannot be separated from the figure of young people as massive users of these contemporary products. Even social media is a preference for young people to participate in upholding democratization in Indonesia. It can be seen from the posts or their responses to the socio-political conditions in this country through their account lines and the number of comments they wrote on the accounts of a number of political and government figures.*

**Keywords:** *Democracy, Social Media, Youth.*

### **Introduction**

Democracy is a political system that always shows its charm on the one hand but also it is a problem which worth to discussed. Nevertheless, democracy is a political system that able to show its existence compared to other political and governmental systems. This was reinforced by Francis Fukuyama's statement in his phenomenal writing of this century, "The

End of History” (Fukuyama, 2015). Democracy is a political system that the most enduring than others. It’s because the character of democracy are flexible and easily accepted by the community. On the other hand, democracy system offer aspirations space for community or society.

Democracy showed an interesting side in the trajectory of history, especially in Indonesia. Indonesia is considered as one of the largest democratic countries in the world. It has even become a role of democracy implementation. It was interesting fact because since the beginning of independence day, Indonesia had declared itself as a democracy state. Second, It can be seen from geographical conditions and heterogeneity of the people. Indonesia is the fourth largest country in the world and heterogeneous country. Nevertheless, Indonesia can prove the consistency in maintaining democratic characteristics based on Pancasila as foundation.

Based on the Indonesian context, of course we cannot equate the conditions of early democracy with now condition. Because the condition of society is dynamic and social change certainly affect the implementation of democracy in each country and society itself. In the current era, the country and society are faced with a technological era, where technology has been *embedded* in the daily activities of the community, and millennials have been born. Masification and determination of technology ultimately shifted society to the new revolution, namely Industrial Revolution 4.0. Referring to this phenomenon, it does not rule out the possibility that the determination of information and communication technology and the Industrial Revolution 4.0 affect the political aspects and democratic life of society.

One of the example is the phenomenon of a decade ago related to the election events in the US, which finally won Obama as US President. The development of information and communication technology became one of the tools that eventually led to the biggest political contestation of USA. Facebook as kind of the social media which was originally intended as a means of friendship communication actually can attract sympathy and even support from community or society.

A similar fact was occurred in the political and democratic process of Indonesia. Started at the 2013 when Partai Demokrasi selection of vice presidential candidates that involving a number of Indonesian politicians and academics. Some of candidates used Facebook and Twitter to socialize their thought, vision, and mission. The fact showed that social media is considered as a new opportunity in upholding democracy. As a result of the decline in the neutrality of mass media and electronic (conventional media) because it tends to be a forum for a few interest people. So, it was reasonable that many people choose social media as an alternative in voicing aspiration because it is egalitarian and can be accessed by anyone in various strata (Governance, 2012, p. 28). It should also be noted that social media is currently popular among the community, especially the young. The orientation is clear that young people are massive users of social media, so that new construct was emerged that politics is not only popular for adult and old people but also concern to young people or millennial generations referred to as generations Y and Z.

Referring to this background, this paper tries to review the dynamics of democracy in Indonesia. Especially the phenomenon of contemporary democracy which is also influenced by the development of social media and the participation of young people as a representation of millennial generations.

## Method

This article uses qualitative research with descriptive approach as its research method. A descriptive case study is necessary in describing and explaining the research question, about democracy Phenomnon in Indonesia. As a library research, data for this article is collected through any supporting documents from online verified journal, newspaper etc.

## Theory

### *The Essence and History of Democracy*

Before discussing further about democracy, it is necessary to discuss democracy from its terms first. The words democracy comes from Greek words, namely *demos* and *kratos/cratein*. *Demos* means people and *cratein* means government. Thus, in general it can be said that democracy is a people's government. More explicitly, democracy is often referred to as the government of the people, by the people, and for the people (Nihaya, M, 2011, p. 15).

Its definition showed that in democracy involves active participation from the community. This participation does not mean placing a physical presence in the government but through aspirations conveyed to representatives in the government. The presence of representatives is as the holder of the people's mandate because the government exists to ensure the welfare of the community. Thus, the democratic system puts forward the sovereignty that is in the hands of the people.

Discussing about democracy certainly also cannot leave its historical process. During this time, democracy was regarded as a system of government that emerged in Ancient Greek society, precisely in the Athens city around 500 BC. At that time, Greece consisted of several cities such as Athens, Macedonia and Sparta (Direktorat Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan Ditjen Dikti, 2012).

The system was preceded by Kleistenes' effort (an Athenian citizen) to carry out several reforms of the government of Athens city in 508 BC. Kleistenes divided the Greeks into several "tribes", and each consisted of several *demes*. Then each *demes* sent its representatives to the assembly so that there were 500 representatives. The provision of assembly membership was limited to once a year, and a person was limited to only twice during his life to be able to become a member of the assembly.

The existence of the assembly was to discuss and make the decisions about various issues concerning the life of Athens city. Later, its model was called by Herodotus (490-420 BC) as a democratic system or ancient democracy. However, Democracy in Athens only lasted until 322 BC after being conquered by the Romans (Direktorat Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan Ditjen Dikti, 2012).

The idea of democracy was implemented and developed again in the plains of Europe after the emergence of the concept of *nation state* in the 17th century. The idea

was grounded by thinkers, they are Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), Montesquieu (1689-1755), and JJ Rousseau (1712-1778), who encouraged the development of democracy and constitutionalism in Europe and North America. At that time the idea of secularisation and popular sovereignty were developed which was later called modern democracy (Direktorat Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan Ditjen Dikti, 2012).

Knowledge of democracy is increasingly spreading in various countries and accepted as a government system, include in Indonesia. Even democracy has become a government system since the beginning of independence day of Indonesia. Although on the process there were many things that were not in accordance with the principles of democracy that were expected due to political issues.

## **History and Realities of Contemporary Democracy in Indonesia**

### ***Democracy Before Reform Era***

As previously explained, Indonesia was a democratic country since it was declared at the independence day. Nevertheless, democracy that has been running in Indonesia after independence until before the reformasi era also ups and downs.

In general, Indonesia's democratic history is divided into three periods. First is *Demokrasi Konstitusional* which emphasizes the role of parliament and party. In this condition, Indonesian democracy encountered a challenge. Colonialism came again to threaten sovereignty. However, the sovereignty was recaptured. The first general election was held in this period in a multiparty manner (Sunarso, 2006, p. 87).

Second is *Demokrasi Terpimpin* which the implementation tends to be contradictory to constitutional democracy. The second period of Indonesian democracy is also often referred to as the *Orde Lama*. At this time, there was political upheaval and chaos due to various revolts in a number of regions (Sunarso, 2006, p. 89).

Third is *Demokrasi Pancasila* which implementation tends to lead to a presidential system. This period is also referred to as a *Orde Baru* that initial purpose is to overcome the conflict and restore the values of Pancasila into the political and government system. However, contradictions also occur again, which are related to the president's domination and aspiration restrictions (Sunarso, 2006, p. 91).

### ***Democracy in the Reformation Era***

In the historical trajectory, the turning point of massive democracy occurred in 1998, known as the Indonesian Reformation. Reformation was the climax point of democratic deviations felt by the people for about 32 years of *Orde Baru*. These deviations are mainly in terms of limited freedom of opinion, dual functions of the Indonesian Armed Forces (involved in government politics), and banning of mass media which should be able to become a forum for channeling the aspirations of the people. Thus, the Reformation towards the millennium became a new hope for some intellectual figures and the public.

The process of democracy that has entered its twentieth year has had an influence on the political dynamics in Indonesia. The dynamics can be seen from several aspects that become distinctions from the previous conditions (Nugroho, 2012), that are:

### ***The existence of political freedom.***

Political freedom is a form of positive change that able to build clean and authoritative government. Of course political freedom is the most visible characteristic of the democratic process in this reform era. Nowday, people in Indonesia can choose the way they think and act at political area without disturb by another person or intimidated by others. People have full of political freedom at this Reformation era, it is different when Soeharto era, which people would not have political freedom. In this era, people have the same right as other at the political right.

### ***Mass Media Liberalization***

Proliferation of mass media in the reformation era was the great momentum, because people expect the public space to express their aspirations to the government. Thus, the government can always improve to provide the best service for the community or society. Through this way also the government of the people, by the people, and for the people can be realized according to what was conveyed by Abraham Lincoln.

The mass media as a medium for express the aspirations is also an axis that can increase civil society participation in politics and government. Thus, indirectly, the mass media is the most likely place to be accessed by the general public or civil society. Besides that, mass media freedom is also an indicator of democracy and democratization that are running in Indonesia.

### ***The Election***

Election is a five-year large democratic agenda that does not only aim to elect representatives at the central level but also in the district. Election is referred to as a democratic party because it guarantees the right of the people to elect representatives of the people which is called *one man one vote*. One vote is considered valuable to determine the future of Indonesia's democracy in the next five years. The democratic agenda after the reforms in 2004 and 2009 has shown the most tangible form of freedom and participation in democracy. Although the implementation process is not yet perfect. However, it should be appreciated as a democratization effort that shows the progress of democracy.

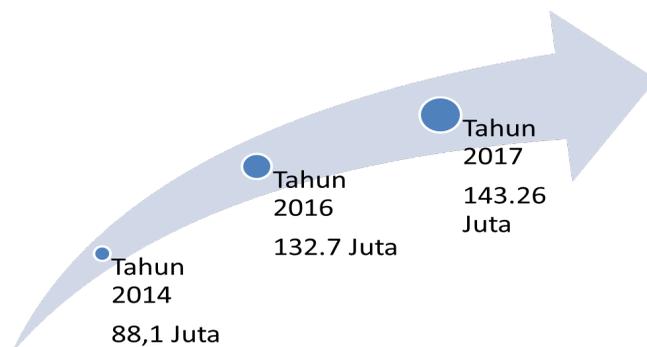
Thus, democratization is a process that have seen in Indonesia and have a positive impact on the people of Indonesia. The democratization certainly needs to be maintained because it is able to build trust for the community towards the government that the government is able to provide changes in welfare.

### ***Democracy and Social Media***

Similar to the dynamics of society and the changes that occur globally, the political atmosphere and government trends also experience dynamics. As we know that globalization has brought many changes to countries in the world. The development of transportation and communication technology has eliminated distances between regions and even countries. Unconsciously the community has arrived in an era without limits as stated by McLuhan as *Global Village*, which is an era where one is able to explore the world without limits even if only sitting in a limited space (Dutton, 2004, p. 45). This era is what is called the digital era where software (for example smartphones) has been the determination of all community

activities without exception in Indonesia. It can be seen from the use of gadgets and access to the internet which has increased significantly over the past four years.

**Picture 1. Internet access from 2014-2017**



**Source: Asosiasi Penyedia Jasa Internet Indonesia Tahun 2014, 2016, dan 2017**

From the diagram above, it shows that for 4 years the number of gadget and internet users increased by almost 100%. It means that most of the Indonesian people have technology literacy.

The most obvious reality of the emergence of the phenomenon *global village* and the industrial revolution 4.0 is the acceleration of information network and communication technology. Includes information and communication transformation. Not just electronic mail, communication media has developed into a variety of choices and uses, an the trend called social media. The most popular social media is *Facebook*, which is then followed by *Twitter*. Social media trends have also led to a new order called netizens. They can post, make a dialogue and comment on various things including the hottest topics/*trending topics* (Istriyani & Widiani, 2016, pp. 292–293).

The development of technology and the spread of social media and its users cannot be separated with the reality of politics and democracy. If we discuss participation and democracy, of course it cannot be equated with the form or pattern of participation of the previous era and the present. The reason is clear that the media of participation is also quite plural, especially those currently are mass media and electronics. In addition, participation in democracy is not only related to voting in elections, but also aspirations, opinions, criticisms, support, and so forth. Thus, social media as a public space that contributes to the dynamics of politics and democracy in Indonesia cannot be ruled out.

If in the United States there is Barack Obama who is able to attract sympathy from the community (especially young people) by utilizing his, facebook account. Similar realities also occurred in Indonesia in the 2009 elections although it was not yet so massive and significant (Wisanggeni, 2008). However, the use of social media colored the democracy event in Indonesia ahead of the presidential elections in 2014. One of the potret was on the agenda of the *Konvensi Partai Demokrat* which attempted to open an open selection for candidates from various backgrounds. In the agenda appeared Gita Wirjawan and Anies Baswedan who were indeed trying to build self-*image* through posting on social media. Through these posts, both of them received many responses, sympathy, support, or criticism from netizens. This is a new trend of participation in democracy.

Thus, social media showed its influence on the dimensions of politics and democracy. Social media provides a more personal communication space. Political and government figures can share information and influence through their personal account which can then be accessed by anyone. The mechanism of communication or personal transactions is finally able to build support and loyalty (Rahmawati, 2014, p. 26). So, it is understandable that political and government figures used social media as a means of building self-image and support.

### *Youth in Democracy Today*

In 2020 referred to as the golden year for Indonesia because it has the potential for high population demographics, namely the younger generation. Based on Central Bureau of Statistics data in 2019, the majority (67%) of Indonesia's population are productive age groups. As many as 45% of these numbers are between 15-34 years old (Bappenas, 2017). It means that young people become the foundation of Indonesia's sustainability. Not only on the economic and development aspects but also in the future of democracy in Indonesia.

Youth are often forgotten in the topic of democracy in this country. The discussion of democracy often targets election and government affairs which are sometimes identified with senior groups. Even though youth as heirs of democracy are participants who are actually active in upholding democracy. Of course, it is still sticking in the mind that the Reformation in 1998 is a form of youth initiation (in this case college students) in restoring and upholding the democracy of this country. Oration and demonstrations is a form of participation that deserves attention. Nevertheless, the demonstration was then considered negative because it caused more anxiety and ended in anarchism. Slowly the demonstration seems to have begun to recede but also cannot be interpreted to disappear. At this point, the existence of youth in a democracy is experiencing ups and downs and it is sometimes called apathy for politics and democracy (apolitism).

Reflecting on the current reality, the voices of youth are still heard in the discourse of democracy. At the very least, the vote is embodied in various public spaces such as social media. They often respond to government processes through their social media accounts or even respond to posts in the timeline column of a number of political or government figures. This shows that young people are not really apathetic about the country's democratic process. In fact, they are able to channel aspirations according to their trends, namely this millennial era. Where, this generation -millennial generation or often referred to as generation X and Y- are indeed attached to the use of gadgets and the internet. As a generation born in the era of internet booming, their daily lives cannot be separated from social media access (Putra, 2016, pp. 128–131). Thus, it is not surprising that a number of political and government figures are active in updating information and posts on their social media accounts, without exception, presidents, vice presidents and cabinet teams.

On the other hand, a number of young figures who are involved in the political world also utilize social media as a means to get closer to their constituents. One of them is Ridwan Kamil who actively posts work projects and opens criticism suggestions on his social media accounts. He also interact directly with the majority of people who are young people. This reality indirectly shifts the communication and participation of conventional models. Considering that the majority of social media users are young people, it is not surprising that

RidwanKamil is considered a representation of Indonesian youth who are making a liquid democratization trend, followed by other young leaders.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that democracy in Indonesia is so dynamic. This dynamic is especially post-reformation where democracy is a system that truly becomes the foundation of the future of Indonesian society, because democracy is able to guarantee the distribution of aspirations and justice.

The dynamics of democracy cannot be separated from the dynamics of society itself. Especially the massive influence of the use of information and communication technology to shift the pattern of community participation (especially civil society) in the democratic process. Social media is one of the new alternatives to convey aspirations and responses to socio-political conditions without intimidation. The trend of using social media has also attracted the participation of young people to be responsive to the dynamics of Indonesian politics and government. Thus, it can be said that the democracy of this era is so fluid and dynamic. Young people become the new trend of democracy that grows in this millennial era.

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