

# Political Communication and International Public Opinion: A Study of Jokowi's Indonesia

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# **POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION: A STUDY OF JOKOWI'S INDONESIA**

**SUKAWARSINI DJELANTIK\***

## **ABSTRACT**

Joko Widodo (nicknamed Jokowi) is Indonesia's 7th President, elected amid strong popular hope for a new, clean, and effective government. With the support from Indonesia's Democratic Party for Struggle (PDIP), Jokowi won popular support (53%) against Prabowo (47%) in the 2014 election. This paper analyzes the effectiveness of Jokowi's political communication from the general election up to his presidency (2014-2015). Furthermore, the paper discusses Jokowi's international image through verbal and non-verbal communication. Prabowo, his rival during the election, depicted Jokowi as an Enemy of Islam, a supporter of Christianity, an anti-Muslim, a Zionist, and a mere puppet of the West, in addition to drawing attention to his Chinese descent. Jokowi's main supporters were volunteers, or "the people's coalition" as the media called them. Jokowi's victory was due to the strong support of volunteers who had made effective use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, SMS, and online games). Jokowi's most significant volunteers were performers and musicians who successfully organized spectacular music concerts for free. These concerts enabled the increase of popular support significantly. After Jokowi became President, people's expectations were very high. Their expectations were tempered by previous experiences when Indonesia was challenged by corruption perpetrated at various levels of government as well as business interests. This research aims to analyze Jokowi's political communication performance and international image using the Strength, Weakness, Threat and Opportunity (SWOT) analysis. It concludes that Jokowi's failures were due to poor political communication management. However, his changes in political strategies and management of coalition parties have successfully gained both media and popular support.

**Keywords:** political communication, Jokowi, political party, Indonesia.

## **Jokowi's Road to the Presidency**

Joko Widodo (Jokowi) was inaugurated as the 7<sup>th</sup> Indonesian President on October 20<sup>th</sup> 2014. Unlike previous established figures who dominated the political arena, the 53-year-old Jokowi came from a humble provincial background: he grew up in a riverside slum in Solo, Central Java, and didn't have ties to any influential family.<sup>1</sup> His

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<sup>1</sup> Yenni Kwok, "With the Election of Joko Widodo, Indonesia Writes a New Chapter."

victory demonstrated the maturity and democratic stability of Indonesia. Jokowi is the first leader in Indonesia without any affiliation to the old ruling class. He is a self-made man who built a political career with his honesty, smart policies, and good results.<sup>2</sup>

His political career started as Mayor of the City of Solo, supported by the Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle and the Nation's Awakening Party (PKB). PDIP is a party under the leadership of Megawati Soekarnoputri, a former Indonesian President and the daughter of Indonesia's founding father, Soekarno. Jokowi served as the Mayor of Solo from 2005-2012.<sup>3</sup> His achievements were mainly in the fields of poverty eradication and economic empowerment, especially at the grass-roots level.<sup>4</sup> Another policy was to shortcut the bureaucratic chain and reduce red tape. His most popular activity was known as *blusukan*, that is to say taking regular jaunts onto the streets to chat with voters and talk about their needs. His popularity increased significantly after national television broadcasted the way he succeeded in relocating street vendors. His popularity led him to be re-elected in the second round as Mayor.<sup>5</sup> He was also awarded third place in the World Mayor Prize in 2012 by *The City Mayors Foundation*, an NGO based in London, UK.<sup>6</sup> Another popular policy is his constant support of local and traditional products, such as the production of the *Esemka* automobile.<sup>7</sup>

His success and popularity as Mayor of Solo led him to a greater challenge, namely running for Governor of Jakarta in 2012. Jokowi was supported by PDIP and the Great Indonesia Movement (Gerindra) Party, which introduced Basuki Tjahaya Purnama as Vice Governor.<sup>8</sup> The result of the election was that in March 2012 Jokowi was inaugurated as Governor of Jakarta for the period 2012-2017.<sup>9</sup> In Jakarta, Jokowi continued his achievement and approaches to win peoples' hearts and minds. Among other popular programmes, he proposed poverty eradication, fighting endemic corruption, and increasing a minimum wage for Jakartan labourers in October 2012. Additionally, he succeeded in solving several urgent problems such as flooding and traffic jams through increasing the use of mass transportation.

His good reputation, hard work, and down-to-earth personality brought him the Presidential candidacy in 2014.<sup>10</sup> His rival Prabowo Subianto, a former military General,

<sup>2</sup> Michael Schuman, "The Big Challenge for Indonesia's New President: Proving Democracy Works," *Time*, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014, accessed on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://time.com/3026972/the-big-challenge-for-indonesias-new-president-proving-democracy-works/>

<sup>3</sup> Metro TV News, *Perjalanan Panjang Jokowi Ke Pintu Gerbang Istana*. <http://pemilu.metrotvnews.com/read/2014/07/22/269305/perjalanan-panjang-jokowi-ke-pintu-gerbang-istana>, accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Bimo Nugroho dan Ajianto Dwi Nugroho, 2012, *Jokowi: Politik Tanpa Pencitraan*, Jakarta: Kompas Gramedia, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> World Mayor, *World Mayor Contest 2012 Result*. [http://www.worldmayor.com/contest\\_2012/world-mayor-11-results.html](http://www.worldmayor.com/contest_2012/world-mayor-11-results.html) accessed on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Bimo Nugroho dan Ajianto Dwi Nugroho, 2012, *Jokowi: Politik Tanpa Pencitraan*, Jakarta: Kompas Gramedia, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Detik News, *Begini Perjalanan Politik Jokowi*. <http://news.detik.com/berita/2723501/begini-perjalanan-politik-jokowi-si-capres-kerempeng>, accessed on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Liputan 6, *Jalan Panjang Jokowi Menuju Istana*. <http://news.liputan6.com/read/2121373/jalan-panjang-jokowi-menuju-istana> accessed on, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/pemilu/hot-politic/14/03/14/n2f2cv-jokowi-resmi-jadi-capres-pdip>, accessed on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

was the son-in-law of Soeharto. Prabowo was also the leader of the Gerindra Party. Unlike his rival, Jokowi had no history of political party leadership, which is a new phenomenon<sup>2</sup> in Indonesian political history. Regarding this matter, *Time* magazine reported: "His candidacy would have been improbable just a few years ago." *Time* further reported: "this has not historically been a country in which parents told their children that they could grow up to become President."<sup>11</sup> Jokowi was supported by Vice President Jusuf Kalla, a wealthy businessman who had previously been leader of *Golongan Karya*, or the Golkar party. Jokowi's candidature was also supported by five political parties: the National Democrats, the Nation's Awakening Party (PKB), the People's Conscience Party (Hanura), and the Indonesian Justice and Unity Party (PKPI).<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, Prabowo was supported by the coalition of the Unitary Development Party (PPP), the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), and *Golongan Karya* (Golkar).

Both parties conducted creative media campaigns using social media as well as mainstream media. The campaigns used infographics, songs, creative pictures, *memes*, and video movies. Above all, Jokowi's support was rose after he delivered his vision and mission during the Presidential debate. As the debate was broadcasted on national television, the people were able to witness the image, personality, communication skills, and political maturity of both candidates. Jokowi's communicative strength was due to the establishment of community support and the social media campaign. Jokowi's focus during the campaign was more on community development, nationalism, and political independence from foreign influence. He often used the personal pronoun "we" during his campaign, which indicated inclusivity and less distance between him and the general public. He promised to be more cooperative with the people and implement more bottom-up program approaches and community development. As previously mentioned, he would directly meet and greet people. His strong orientation towards the people attracted volunteers from all walks of life, who established "Jokowi-JK community radio," newspapers, fliers ("Koran Bakti"), and other media. Volunteers also created a social media campaign using *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *YouTube*, and online games. They defended him from his rival's smear tactics. Money from crowdfunding was also collected by volunteers through different social media activities. His success was further supported by his famous jingle "Salam Dua Jari" or "Victorious Greeting," composed by volunteers. The concert "Salam Dua Jari" also played a significant role in increasing people's support, especially from the floating masses.

Various kinds of support from different community groups, such as "The friends of Jokowi," were the key to success during his political campaign. People's support proved to be more effective than the political party system. Compared to his rival, Prabowo, who had created a common enemy to play the security card, Jokowi offered his internal strength as a source of power. Prabowo's strong personality had created a patron-client relationship, while Jokowi promoted the idea of decentralized power. In

<sup>11</sup> Yenni Kwok, "With the Election of Joko Widodo, Indonesia Writes a New Chapter," *Time*, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, accessed on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://time.com/3020999/indonesia-joko-widodo-jokowi-declared-president/>

<sup>12</sup> Metro TV News, *Perjalanan Panjang Jokowi ke Pintu Gerbang Istana*: <http://pemilu.metrotvnews.com/read/2014/07/22/269305/perjalanan-panjang-jokowi-ke-pintu-gerbang-istana>, accessed on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015.



Jokowi's vision and mission, "nation" and "public" dominated, which indicated his focus on people. The word "public" was considered new in Indonesian political campaigns, especially when compared to the more popular phrase of "the masses," which indicated a passive crowd. Another significant topic was his commitment to finalizing the legal process in cases related to previous human rights violations (i.e., student demonstrations on May 1998). Other issues included the Trisakti and Semanggi cases, which had led to the downfall of the New Order government, and the disappearance of human rights activists, Talangsari-Lampung, Tanjung Priok, the 1965 *Coup d'Etat*, and others. He also committed himself to erasing all forms of impunity in the national legal system considered as sources of human rights abuses under previous governments.<sup>13</sup> Jokowi was challenged by strong competition and the black campaign created by haters. In comparison, Prabowo's negative image was mainly due to previous human rights abuses and activists having been kidnapped during his military career.<sup>14</sup>

Jokowi was negatively depicted as the Enemy of Islam, a supporter of Christianity, as someone of Chinese descent, as a Zionist supporter, and as a mere puppet of the West. Prabowo's supporters on the other hand, depicted their leader as one with the ability to save the nations from the Western world's economic control and as a defender of Islam.<sup>15</sup> The image of the Jokowi-JK tandem depicted leaders with a problem-solving orientation who were responsive and hard working. These images were advantageous to reconstructing a more comprehensive image at the national level and enabled him to be forgiven after leaving his previous unfinished position as Jakarta's governor. The hegemonic model of Jokowi's communication model is "emergent," and appeared as an alternative to past leadership, or as a counter-hegemonic type. Both Prabowo and Jokowi's leadership models are dominant in Indonesian culture, namely ones involving active competition between the hierarchical traditional leadership model versus the new people-oriented model. Prabowo, for example, depicted himself as a mighty strong military man and a devout Muslim. This Muslim identity is important in the New Order politics since it endows him with perfect coalition characteristics. This perfect Prabowo character was advantageous for the propaganda need of increasing popular sympathy. It was the reason why the election results amounted to a thin victory for Jokowi, only 53.15% as compared to 46.85%.<sup>16</sup> Jokowi's remarkably thin victory led Prabowo to challenge the election result at the Constitutional Council.<sup>17</sup> Prabowo demanded that re-elections should be held at some voting stations.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Jokowi believed that his victory had been a

<sup>13</sup> <http://indoprogress.com/2014/06/antara-rakyat-dan-publik-politik-komunikasi-pemilu-2014/>, accessed on January 11th, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Merdeka, Kampanye Hitam Pilpres: Jokowi Capres Boneka, Prabowo Isu Ham: <http://www.merdeka.com/politik/kampanye-hitam-pilpres-jokowi-capres-boneka-prabowo-isu-ham.html>, accessed on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.kompasiana.com/ian-wong/kampanye-hitam-anti-jokowi-vs-anti-prabowo\\_54f72a70a33311b06d8b45d5](http://www.kompasiana.com/ian-wong/kampanye-hitam-anti-jokowi-vs-anti-prabowo_54f72a70a33311b06d8b45d5), accessed on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*,

<sup>17</sup> VOA Indonesia, MK Tolak Gugatan Prabowo-Hatta, Kubu Prabowo Menerima dengan Catatan: <http://www.voaindonesia.com/content/mk-tolak-gugatan-prabowo-hatta-kubu-prabowo-menerima-dengan-catatan/2423392.html> accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Tempo, Ini Tanggapan Jokowi Soal Isi Gugatan Prabowo: <http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2014/08/06/269597694/ini-tanggapan-jokowi-soal-isi-gugatan-prabowo> accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015.

reflection of the real condition.<sup>19</sup> Prabowo's claim was backed by 400 lawyers, while Jokowi's claim was supported by 200 lawyers.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the Constitutional Council declared Jokowi as the winner.<sup>21</sup> Jokowi made history as the first common man to lead the country.

### **Political Communication, Mass Media, and Public Opinion**

This case study of Jokowi's political communication evaluates the effectiveness of messages. The crucial factor that makes communication "political" is not the source of the message, but its content and purpose.<sup>22</sup> The study further aims to analyze the strategic use of communication to influence public knowledge, beliefs, and action taken in political matters. The analysis emphasizes the strategic nature of political communication, highlighting the role of persuasion in political discourse.<sup>23</sup> Political communication is "purposeful communication about politics. Therefore, the study also covers verbal and written statements, as well as visual representations. In other words, it includes all those aspects that develop a 'political identity' or 'image.'"<sup>24</sup>

Strategic political communication (SPC) is manipulative in intent and applies social scientific techniques and heuristic devices to understand human motivation, human behavior, and the media environment. SPC also informs what should be communicated effectively. It also details what content should be withheld, with the aim of taking into account and influencing public opinion in order to create strategic alliances and enable a supportive environment for government policies. The analysis of public opinion can be applied both at home and abroad.<sup>25</sup>

Mass media are instruments of political communication which are necessary to inform political messages and influence public opinion. This is in accordance with the main focus of political communication, which is to formulate public opinion.<sup>26</sup> To form public opinion, the mass media conduct three activities: use the language of politics, conduct and formulate strategies, and set the political agenda.<sup>27</sup>

Political communication involves the use of mass media to form public opinion to increase the government's success synergistically. The process itself depends on the attitudes and behaviours of political communicators. If politicians become more sensitive towards public opinion, they could influence the process of establishing policy and the decision-making process in government. The leader being the most important

<sup>19</sup> *Republika*, *Ini Tanggapan Jokowi atas Pidato Prabowo*. <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/pemilu/hot-pidato/14/08/06/n9vpiw-ini-tanggapan-jokowi-atas-pidato-prabowo-di-mk> accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015.

<sup>20</sup> *Tempo*, *Advokat Prabowo Versus 200 Pengacara Jokowi*. <http://nasional.tempo.co/read/news/2014/08/06/078597539/400-advokat-prabowo-versus-200-pengacara-jokowi>, accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015.

<sup>21</sup> *VOA Indonesia*, *MK Tolak Gugatan Prabowo – Hatta, Kubu Prabowo Menerima dengan Catatan*: <http://www.voaindonesia.com/content/mk-tolak-gugatan-prabowo-hatta-kubu-prabowo-menerima-dengan-catatan/2423392.html>, accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Denton R.E., Woodward G.C. *Political Communication in America*, New York: Praeger, 1998, p.11.

<sup>23</sup> Swanson, D. & Nimmo D. "New Directions in Political Communication: A Resource Book." Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1990, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> McNair B. *An Introduction to Political Communication*, London: Routledge, 2003, p.24.

<sup>25</sup> Bakir, V. *Torture, Intelligence and Sousveillance in the War on Terror: Agenda-Building Struggles*. Farnham: Ashgate (2013), p.3. See: <http://www.ashgate.com/isbn/9781472402554>.

<sup>26</sup> Asep Syamsul M. Romli, *Komunikasi Politik: Pendekatan Teori dan Praktik*, ASM Romli, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> Ibnu Hamad, *Konstruksi Realitas Politik dalam Media Massa: Sebuah Studi Critical Discourse Analysis terhadap Berita-berita Politik*, Jakarta: Granit, p.2.

public figure is significant in the process of political communication.<sup>28</sup> The image of leaders is quite significant in the process of communicating political messages to party members and the general public and leads to the establishment of an open and transparent government.

### Jokowi's Political Communication

A political leader needs to build communication with the people, the political parties, and the government. This communication aims to inform the public on government policies. Jokowi realized that his government was being challenged by a lack of communication, as indicated by positive programs and policies that were not published in the media.<sup>29</sup> Jokowi's political communication was considered to be "low context," that is to say, avoiding highbrow terminology. Jokowi's speech, gestures, and body language are humble, to-the-point, and easy to understand. His political communication tends to increase empathy and create "omni-feeling" (representing society at large), so he is able to clarify his aims directly.<sup>30</sup> As a ruling party and supporter of Jokowi's victory, Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP) has played a significant role. The party is expected to support the establishment of better political cooperation within the parliament and other supportive parties. PDIP somehow takes great interest in seeing him succeed as president, because his success would increase its electability in the next general elections.<sup>31</sup>

Jokowi's physical performance has been reinforced by his modest attire in the shape of a white shirt and black trousers. As a way to reject over-personification, Jokowi also avoided media campaign advertisements using him as a model. His pictures appeared only minimally, and there was a strong emphasis on programmes.

A week after the presidential inauguration, on October 27 2014, Jokowi established a ministerial cabinet, the so-called "Working Cabinet."<sup>32</sup> The cabinet consisted of 34 ministers, 15 from political and 19 from professional backgrounds.<sup>33</sup> The cabinet brought strong hope to the people, especially related to poverty eradication, decreasing the amount of corruption, and increasing the development process.

Global circumstances made economic conditions worsen after Jokowi's election. There was a downturn in the value of the Indonesian currency (IDR) against the US dollar (USD) and a rising rate of unemployment. As predicted during the election campaign, his economic cabinet seems unsuccessful when it came to managing the

<sup>28</sup> Brian Mc Nair, *An Introduction to Political Communication*. Fifth Edition, New York: Routledge, p.35.

<sup>29</sup> Republika, *Istana Perlu Bangun Tiga Simpul Komunikasi*. <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/politik/15/04/17/nmy72p-istana-perlu-bangun-tiga-simpul-komunikasi> accessed on 2nd January 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Lampung Post, *Komunikasi Politik Ala Jokowi*. <http://lampost.co/berita/komunikasi-politik-low-context-ala-jokowi>, accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Tribun, *Pengamat Sarankan Jokowi dan PDIP Saling Perbaiki Komunikasi Politik*. <http://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2015/04/11/pengamat-sarankan-jokowi-dan-pdip-saling-perbaiki-komunikasi-politik> accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2016.

<sup>32</sup> Media Pendidikan, *Pembentukan Kementerian dan Pengangkatan Menteri Kabinet Kerja Periode 2014 – 2019*: <http://www.mediapendidikan.info/2014/12/pembentukan-kementerian-dan-pengangkatan-menteri-kabinet-kerja-periode-2014-2019.html> accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2016.

<sup>33</sup> BBC Indonesia, *Kabinet Jokowi Jokowi Dibayangi 'Kepentingan Parpol'*: [http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita\\_indonesia/2014/10/141026\\_kabinet\\_jokowi\\_pengamat](http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2014/10/141026_kabinet_jokowi_pengamat) accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2016.



economic situation and bringing a better life to the people. Jokowi responded to these challenges by reshuffling his cabinet.

### **Jokowi's Weakness: Lack of Parliamentary Support**

Even though Jokowi had won the general election, his parliamentary support came from a minority. Following his defeat in the general election, Prabowo's supporters were able to dominate the parliament. With the support of only four coalition parties, Jokowi's presidency suffered from a lack of support from the members of parliament. After the parliament's establishment, the People's Representative Council (DPR) was divided into two blocks: the Red-White Coalition (KMP) and the Great Indonesia Coalition (KIH). The KMP consisted of Gerindra, PPP, Golkar, and the Democrat Party, and KIH consists of PDIP, PAN, PKS, Nasdem, Hanura, and PKB. The Number of KMP supporters is larger in comparison with KIH, which significantly influences the dynamics of voting. The competition during the election continued between KIH and KMP, as indicated during the election of the head of MPR, DPR, and the Commission Heads.<sup>34</sup> The fact that the winner of the general election did not hold major positions in MPR and DPR, was a new phenomenon in the modern history of Indonesia. The position of Parliament's Speaker fell to KMP while other important positions such as Vice Speakers and Commission's Heads were also given to Prabowo's supporters. The Speaker's position of the People's Consultative assembly (MPR) also fell into the hands of the KMP group.<sup>35</sup> The division further affected the establishment of the People's Representative Council (DPR) and the General Assembly (MPR). The two blocks obviously wanted to gain significant and strategic positions that could influence the government's image and performance. As the winner of the general election, the KIH conducted a motion after its failure to gain parliamentary power.<sup>36</sup> The reasons for KIH motions were that the speakers were biased toward the interest of coalition parties and that the commission leaders' elections was undemocratic; the positions of all 16 Commission heads under the parliament was secured by the KMP cadres.<sup>37</sup> The latter also led the council's affiliate bodies.<sup>38</sup> The parliamentary leaderships led to miscommunication and conflicts of interest, indicated by frequent walkouts of KIH supporters during sessions.<sup>39</sup> KIH further demanded Jokowi to announce government's decrees related to MPR, DPR, DPD and DPRD (UU MD3). The previous decree stated that the position of parliament's speaker was held by the winner of the legislative

<sup>34</sup> Detik News, *Jejak Perseteruan Koalisi Indonesia Hebat dan Koalisi Merah Putih di DPR*. <http://news.detik.com/berita/2738595/jejak-perseteruan-koalisi-indonesia-hebat-dan-koalisi-merah-putih-di-dpr>, accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Metro TV News, *Ini Daftar Perolehan Kursi DPR Tiap Parpol*. <http://news.metrotvnews.com/read/2014/05/14/241830/ini-daftar-perolehan-kursi-dpr-ri-tiap-parpol> accessed on 2nd January 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Liputan 6, *Adu Kuat KMP vs KIH di Senayan*: <http://news.liputan6.com/read/2126952/adu-kuat-kmp-vs-kih-di-senayan> accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Liputan 6, *Mosi Tidak Percaya KIH Tunjuk Pramono Anung Jadi Ketua DPR*. <http://news.liputan6.com/read/2126310/mosi-tidak-percaya-kih-tunjuk-pramono-anung-jadi-ketua-dpr> accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Liputan 6, *Adu Kuat KMP vs KIH di Senayan*: <http://news.liputan6.com/read/2126952/adu-kuat-kmp-vs-kih-di-senayan> accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Detik News, *Jejak Perseteruan Koalisi Indonesia Hebat dan Koalisi Merah Putih di DPR*: <http://news.detik.com/berita/2738595/jejak-perseteruan-koalisi-indonesia-hebat-dan-koalisi-merah-putih-di-dpr> accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2016.



election.<sup>40</sup> To end this strong rivalry, Jokowi approached both KMP and KIH leaders informally, with satisfactory results.<sup>41</sup> Jokowi had minimized political tensions temporarily after the KMP promised to stop acting as a political challenger and act as policy balancer to control the executive powers.<sup>42</sup>

During the election of cabinet ministers, the political party competition continued as the President could not independently choose his own ministers. Lack of power and party involvement resulted in the ineffectiveness of the cabinet ministry. For example, there was a conflict of interest between parties concerning the appointment of the Minister of Law and Human Rights and the Attorney General. A neutral position was ideally held by non-party ministers to avoid conflicts of interest.<sup>43</sup> Other examples of government ineffectiveness included the fact that the parliament was dominated by KMP and prevented Jokowi from carrying out development programs as stated in the declaration of his vision and mission during the election campaign. Another issue was related to the Coalition party's interests that had prevented him from establishing a strong executive power, for example, the appointment of Budi Gunawan as the Head of National Police and the appointment of the Attorney General.<sup>44</sup> Jokowi experienced problems in terms of inter-institutional communication, as indicated by his colleagues' complaints about difficulties in gaining access to the President. He was also challenged by the conflict between the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and the National Police. The conflict was initiated by the appointment of Budi Gunawan as the head of National Police with strong backing from Megawati Soekarnoputri, the head of the PDIP Party.<sup>45</sup> Jokowi was further challenged by communication problems between the party leaders, especially the government supporters, and the return of the National Mandate Party (PAN) as government supporters should have been able to regain the power of KIH. However, after intensive formal and informal political communication with party leaders (both from KIH and KMP), Jokowi was able to bridge the communication gap.

### Jokowi as Media Darling

Related to media-government relations, Jokowi was considered to be "the darling of the media" during the campaign. Jokowi was even portrayed as Indonesia's very own Barack Obama. The supporters believed that they had decreased the number of *Golput* (the "White Group" or non-voters during the general elections). *Time* magazine's report on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014, stated that his candidature had increased people's enthusiasm to join the election, calling it "the Jokowi effect."<sup>46</sup> However, Jokowi's inability to manage the media and various issues was a significant factor that almost

<sup>40</sup> *Op.cit.* 1, Liputan 6.

<sup>41</sup> Kabar 24, Jokowi Bentuk Komunikasi Ketatanegaraan Substansial: <http://kabar24.bisnis.com/read/20141015/15/265263/jokowi-bentuk-komunikasi-ketatanegaraan-substansial>, accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Kabar 24, Jokowi Bentuk Komunikasi Ketatanegaraan Substansial: <http://kabar24.bisnis.com/read/20141015/15/265263/jokowi-bentuk-komunikasi-ketatanegaraan-substansial> accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Antara News, Setahun Pemerintahan Jokowi - JK, Prestasi dan Tantangan: <http://www.antaranews.com/berita/524661/setahun-pemerintahan-jokowi-jk-prestasi-dan-tantangan> accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2016.

<sup>44</sup> *Op.cit.* *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Kwok, "The 'Jokowi Effect' Could Be the Most Important Thing in Indonesia's Elections."

killed his political career. However, he was able to maintain the strong hope of bringing better times to Indonesia. Most importantly, people were tired of the strong culture of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) during the previous presidency and wanted to see the changes realized under Jokowi. On the other hand, he had to fight against the Energy Mafia, another sector that was sapping the Indonesian economy. People's support for Jokowi was demonstrated by the market response. Positive economic indicators was demonstrated by the strengthening of the Rupiah and the increase in the value of the Stock Exchange in Jakarta.<sup>47</sup>

Internationally, the reality that Jokowi did not come from any political or military elites had increased the interest of national and international media. His humble background, not being part of the military, political, or business elites, had also been advantageous to gain popular support. Jokowi was a different person, a representation of the common people.<sup>48</sup> Indonesia was able to have a political leader through a proper democratic process. This condition inspired many countries. As emphasized by *Time*, Jokowi appeared as an alternative candidate who enjoyed close relations with common people, as demonstrated by his pro-people, such as health insurance for all Jakarta's citizens, development of slum areas, and other popular policies.<sup>49</sup> This was highlighted by *Time* in its July 2014 edition, under the title: "With the Election of Joko Widodo, Indonesia Writes a New Chapter." His background from a humble family of *wong cilik* (Javanese for "little people"), made him an interesting figure in the eyes of both national and international media.<sup>50</sup>

### Conclusion

Jokowi's popularity was due to his humble, down-to-earth and honest personality, sincerity, and hard work. However, facing several political issues, he neglected the importance of media support to keep winning peoples' hearts and minds. As a "media darling" since his early political career, Jokowi needs to maintain his positive reputation and image in order to attain his vision and mission to improve Indonesia's condition. The strength of Jokowi's political communication, supported by his personal branding, has enabled him to win popular support among people from various walks of life. Despite several political weaknesses, (i.e., the lack of party support and defection in his coalition cabinet), the grass-roots support remains strong. Communication challenges that emerged after his Presidency were due to his concentration on development programs. Fortunately, his communication team promptly developed more effective political communication strategies in order to maintain parliamentary support. Therefore, Jokowi should manage and maintain political communication channels to keep winning popular support. Working hard is necessary to solve complicated development problems, but this should be followed by employing strategic media management and shaping positive national and international public opinion and images. International support would also strengthen Jokowi's position on global issues.

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Time reported as follow: *As governor of Jakarta, Jokowi is known as a man of the people, taking regular jaunts onto the streets to chat with voters, and fighting endemic corruption.* Lihat, Michael Schuman, "The Measure of Two Men," *Time*, 3 April, 2014, diakses pada 15 Oktober 2015, <http://time.com/47827/the-measure-of-two-men/>, accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Kwok, "The 'Jokowi Effect' Could Be the Most Important Thing in Indonesia's Elections."

Failure to maintain the support of media and people would decrease his presidential success.

Specific international media articles on Jokowi, especially the ones published during his election, have created a positive image of Indonesia. Indonesia is currently considered a mature democracy with the ability to promote multiculturalism and manage political interests. The general election, conducted peacefully amidst differences, has shown the international public that Indonesia is truly a democratic country.



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