Facebook and Virtual Democracy:
A Political Movement Against the Criminalization of the KPK

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Abstract
As a social networking website, Facebook is not only struggling in terms of companionship, but also has penetrated into the other things, including politics. Its usage has evolved from merely socializing to news of politics, fundraising, gathering masses and voicing public opinion, among others. Even Indonesian political situation recently added that as technology advances, the virtual world or the Internet, especially Facebook, should be the next pillar of democracy.

Key Words : Facebook, virtual democracy, Indonesian polititical situation

On the month of October until November 2009, Indonesian political situation heats up. This condition is triggered by the detention of Bibit Samad Rianto and Chandra M. Hamzah, two leaders of Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), for alleged abuses of authority, by National Police. The detention had made the KPK take the sympathy of the public. That is when term "*cicak melawan buaya*" (gecko versus crocodile) became popular. The Gecko is the nickname for the KPK, while the crocodile is the nickname for the National Police.

The situation becomes more outrageous when the Constitutional Court (MK) on November 3 held a judicial review of Article 32 of the 2002 law on the KPK. The Court heard tape recordings allegedly describing a plot to frame the two KPK deputy chiefs in a judicial review filed by the detained commissioners against the law on the KPK. A number of top law enforcers were mentioned in the recordings, the transcripts of which were widely circulated prior to the court hearing. Bibit and Chandra were declared suspects on September 15 and detained on October 29 for alleged abuse of power and bribery.

Support for the Commission comes from two worlds, the real world and cyberspace (virtual world). In the real world, national leaders volunteered to pledge ourselves to liberate Bibit and Chandra. They also eagerly took to the streets to join other elements of society to rally. Support in the real world from Jakarta to spread to various regions. Meanwhile, even more fantastic place in cyberspace. This can be seen from the support for the Commission on the

Facebook social networking account that set a target of one million members. Whereas on Facebook there are several other accounts that support the Commission. Average of more than 100 people every minute to give support. This support through time and space limits.

A. Facebook and Politics

Facebook is a social networking website that allow members to share personal information, opinion and media. At first, Facebook was launched on February 4, 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg as a community solely and a medium to know each other and make friends for the college students, especially at Harvard University. Membership has since been opened to anyone with an e-mail address and members can affiliate themselves with an ever –increasing number of network– from academic institutions to cities to employers. Each member has a home page to post information such as birth date, interest, educational background, employment and several favorite things. Members can also communicate privately with each other via "messeges" or publicly via post on another member's "wall".

Facebook facilitates interaction among like-minded people by sharing information through the digital mapping of real-world social connections.[1] It is true that facebook is a website, but in a sense, it is an internet within the internet, one that is many things that the larger internet is not.[2] With a variety of facilities and conveniences in it, Facebook rapidly globalizing and become a special trend in the virtual world. With more than 300 million users worldwide, Facebook is a social networking site with the most number of members compared to MySpace, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Facebook is not only struggling in terms of companionship, but also has penetrated into the other things, including politics. Its usage has evolved from merely socializing to news of politics, fundraising, gathering masses and voicing public opinion, among others.

Facebook is effective for political purposes. President Barack Obama of the United States at the time of campaign is also using Facebook. He has received campaign contributions about US$500 million dollars online, including from his 3.2 million supporters on Facebook. Former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra of Thailand opened a Facebook account to update his

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[1] Facebook."Facebook Factsheet". Press Room. http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?execbios (January 6, 2010)
[2] Lev Grossman, "Why Facebook is the Future", *Time*, August 23, 2007.

supporters about his daily activities, as well as to criticize the Thai government. In Iran, Presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi relied heavily on Facebook to spread messages to young Iranians. Collaborating with the Colombian Intelligence Agency, the FBI used Facebook to locate youth who threatened to kill the son of President Alvaro Uribe. Israel's internal security service, Shin Bet, acknowledged that Hizbollah used Facebook to recruit Israeli spies and agents. Inspired by Facebook, the US intelligence community —consisting of the CIA, FBI, DEA, NSA, and others— created its own internal Facebook like site —called A-Space— to share stories and files among themselves.[3]

Meanwhile, Indonesians have effectively created various groups on Facebook to influence government policy. These include those that voiced support for the arrested deputy chairmen of KPK, for the establishment of an inquiry committee in the parliament to probe the Bank Century scandal, and for Prita Mulyasari, a woman who was face a legal trial for criticizing health care provisions in an e-mail. Realizing the major role that Facebook has played in our lives, especially in pressuring the government, in the case of Indonesia, questions still linger: To what extent does Facebook impact the working of our democratic government? And how should the government respond to people's opinion on Facebook?

B. The Fifth Pillar of Democracy

Actually in a democracy there are four pillars, namely the government (executive), parliament (legislative), the court (judicial), and finally the media. Media is the last pillar that has the function of social control. The fourth pillar each has an independent position and should not intervene in each other. It aims to create conditions of checks and balances. Democracy will not work well when one or more of the pillars of democracy intervened by other pillars. Or when governments intervene in the Parliament, the courts, and the media, it is clear democracy will die.

Democracy will die when the condition of checks and balances no longer exist. In the case of the political drama between the Commission III of the House and Police on November 5 show there is no more checks and balances because the Commission III of House on more pro-

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[3] Diaz Hendropriyono, "How to Respond to Publik Opinion on Facebook?", *The Jakarta Post*, December 31, 2009.

police and government, and leave their constituents vote. In these conditions, it was clear the first and second pillar of democracy, the government and Parliament, had joined. If conditions were maintained, would endanger the existence of democracy itself. Authoritarian government will appear. Then, hope lives on the third and fourth pillar, namely the courts and the media. However, state courts are currently infected judicial corruption, unless the Constitutional Court (MK), so that contributions to the running wheels of democracy hardly expected. Last hope is in the media, a relative working in the social control function. The right to freedom of opinion and expression has been really well used by the media. Although there is dominance of capital owners in the media policy, the media does not forget its social control function.

On the other hand, the virtual world grow with the development of wireless technology so rapidly after the emergence of social networks like Facebook. People really have taken advantage of the virtual world to effectively express opinion or to extend their networks. In an open society, Karl Raimund Popper describes the flow of information will be the key word in determining human civilization. Civilized human beings are who follow the development of information and be able to manage information well. Humans are not able to follow the development of information and properly manage the information will be crushed with the times.[4] Social networks in cyberspace is the answer to the question of how to follow and manage information in an open society.

Actually, Indonesian political situation recently added that as technology advances, the virtual world or the Internet, especially Facebook, should be the next pillar of democracy, be the fifth pillar of democracy. Each of these pillars, then, should serve as checks and balances for the other. It is to defend democracy to survive. The demise of democracy is not something we expected because the age of democracy in our country just twelve. Democracy is the only political system that has been tested hundreds of years. Democracy also provides the opportunity for all people without discrimination to participate in taking policies related to governance and the state.

In the famous KPK vs. the National Police of Republic of Indonesia (Polri) case, we saw these pillars of Indonesia's democracy at work. When people felt the House of Representatives

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[4] Karl Raimund Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge,* Routledge & Kegan Paul plc, New York, 2000, p. 228.

sided with Polri, while the executive was behind the screen for sometime and the judiciary played no role (except the Constitutional Court) people turned to Facebook as the next pillar to voice their opinions. While this may show a healthy democracy at work, at first glance, we should not conclude so, perhaps not too soon. We should know that Facebook does not represent the voice of all Indonesians. While the number of Facebook users in the country has reached 13.9 million, this amount is only 6 percent of our population, mostly concentrated in big cities, and not all from that figure participate in virtual political discussions.

Furthermore, since it only requires a few easy clicks to join a group to pressure the government, there is still the possibility that a user does not know the case they are supposedly fighting for in-depth. As evidence, although the number of supporters for the KPK's chairmen exceeded one million, the number of protestors on the street was much fewer, perhaps in thousands. Of course the government is not expected to ignore people's opinion on Facebook, or even block the social networking site, such as China, Iran, and Vietnam have done.

However, must be recognized that social networks in cyberspace give major contribution to the formation of opinion in the case of hostilities between the KPK and the National Police of Republic of Indonesia. Especially when Usman Yasin created a group on Facebook titled "*Gerakan 1.000.000 Fecabookers Dukung Chandra Hamzah & Bibit Samad Riyanto*" on October 29 in order to garner support for Bibit Samad Rianto and Chandra M. Hamzah, and had broken through the 1 million Facebookers. When the government and the Parliament united to defend the police, social network in the virtual world is an alternative vehicle to accommodate the aspirations of the people. In the virtual world, public opinion can not be dammed or censored. Voice of the people is the voice of God (*vox populi vox dei*), the 1 million votes in the Facebook group should not be taken lightly by the government and Parliament.

Social networks in cyberspace is the fifth pillar of democracy that effectively not only to shape public opinion, but also determine people's participation in determining the direction and administration of state government. Social networks in cyberspace, the Constitutional Court (MK) and the media will take turns running each wheel of democracy, when the government, parliament and the courts conventional in paralysis.[5]

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[5] Uli Parulian Sihombing, "Dunia Maya Pilar Kelima Demokrasi", *Media Indonesia*, November 12, 2009.

C. Virtual Politics

According to Juergen Habermas, in a democratic state of law, democratic legitimacy lives in the quality of discourse.[6] So, in the open society, it is today, the legitimacy of democracy is not only determined by the government, parliament, and courts. Role of media and social network in cyberspace in shaping the quality of discourse is also the key to democratic legitimacy. This means that democratic legitimacy is in the media and social networking in the media when they can give something universalised and accepted by the community.

In the case of the criminalization of KPK, Facebook again transformed into an effective political media that carries several virtual democratic discourse as Juergen Habermas said. Furthermore, Facebook also carries important messages.[7] First, popular support for the KPK on Facebook this is real. Called real because they are providing the support that has never known closely with Bibit, Chandra and other KPK leaders. They moved to provide support based on the promptings of conscience. They called upon to give support because they believe that Bibit, Chandra and institution of KPK were victims of the criminalization.

Second, the virtual world is no longer a power of "unseen" and not grounded. Politics in the virtual world is transformed into a real movement. This social network has turned into a political network. This is evidence that the virtual world is now no longer in the air, but it has become a massive movement of pragmatism and idealism. Furthermore, Facebook has been transformed into a political medium that can influence the national political constellations and even global.

Third, the support on Facebook is showing distrust of the president and other elites. The proof, after the precedent or other elite held a press conference, the amount of support to the KPK instead jumped more sharply. In fact, it must be admitted, great support from Facebook was later able to push the President and other elites. The proof, step by which they are always changing with increasing amount of support to the KPK on Facebook.

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[6] Juergen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2008, p. 24.

[7] Harun Ni'am, "Facebook dan Politik Virtual", *Wawasan*, November 13, 2009

Fourth, the support of the people on Facebook is also a response to congestion of formal democratic channels as well as a reaction to the political cartel that exhibited by a big coalition of political parties. A political party means as people struggle in ideality, more happy with the ruling alliance. Not surprisingly, the current political parties chose silence, looking for safe and did not raise their voice on this alleged criminalization of KPK. Meanwhile, in the legal world, procedural hegemony ensued, which ignores reason and sense of public justice.

People now are aware of the House can not expect more fighting for their votes because the Parliament has experienced social myopic and social indifference. Parliament was busy with his own affairs and forget the sound of its constituents. People also have to understand the behavior of the House who are running a cartel in order to secure political and access sources of power.

D. Political Movement : Solid Mass

Facebook has a great power. This certainly could give rise to a time bomb that is very powerful. They certainly did not remain silent witness to the engineering of the criminalization of the KPK. Various expressions of disbelief such as demonstrations, dissent, and other protest actions will continue to be held which essentially contains the message that if this critical condition persists, it could give rise to a political solid mass movement.

After the channel of reform was opened on 1998, a variety of mass movement began to bloom in the country. However, with the exception of a few cases, in general, the movement carried out by the forces of political liquid mass. Eep Saifulloh Fatah gave typology that they really do not strongly united by the awareness and their own inherent interest. Emotional affinity with the collectivity of individual masses around them is very diverse, volatile and varied. Likewise the level of awareness of every individual in it, also has a variety of forms, so that they could just as easily be moved only with abstract issues are far from their interests.

In degrees of intensity, movement of liquid mass is only temporal, local and without a clear agenda. Elsewhere if there is a similar movement was merely a coincidence. Their action is essentially just a collection or a crowd, not a solid unity of action. Therefore be easy to hit their

radicalism or-otherwise-driven simply by the lure of rewards meager. Mass mobilization in the presidential election or the election campaign can become a concrete example of this liquid mass. In short, liquid mass can only give birth to a half-hearted gesture that does not have a high bargaining value.

Facebook users is not including the group.[8] If they move, their motivation is personal consciousness with no other scenario. Their movements is coherent unity, not a crowd. The organizing and the agenda was clear and had a concrete demands. Psychologically, they will move represents the conscience that it seems as true Believers. The prototype for this kind of political mass is usually followed by the obsessed behavior of what voiced, which in this case is the support to the KPK, law enforcement and eradication of corruption. To achieve that, they have a sense of mission imposed to succeed, whatever the consequences.[9]

The existence of a political solid mass of Facebook is certainly not appear all of a sudden without any deposit of engineering problems. That is the criminalization of the KPK has long been blocked. Then, the problem is exploded after preceded a case that serves as a trigger. In the context of the KPK, the detention of Bibit and Chandra could be called the triger.

Thus, with these conditions, all parties should engage in an objective dialogue. Equally important is the transparency of law enforcement process. From here can be expected to arise long-term solution that not only dwell on how to reduce the mass action in a few days. Dialogue and transparency needs to be raised to the surface because of the tendency that the action now started carrying a clear agenda with reference to various rules and a number of figures as the culprits.

On the one hand, phenomenon of support through the Facebook is certainly exciting for a voiced aspirations more rational and motion carried more elegant. But from the side of the conflict management, this phenomenon challenges for the state to deal intelligently and carefully. Error handling not only hurt feelings of humanity and justice, but also can be energy for Facebook users to make a political solid mass movement that exceeds the limit.

Government must be careful in dealing with this possibility. The voices in Facebook not be underestimated. However, the facebooker also be able to control themselves and be

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[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Dean G. Pruitt and Jeffrey Z. Rubin, *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate and Settlement*, Random House, New York, 1986, p. 196.

responsible. Each of the democratic pillars should keep the others accountable. No one pillar, i.e. Facebook as part of the virtual world, should act as the determinant of policy for a democratic Indonesia. If this happens, our democracy may eventually turn into poor form of government: anarchy.***

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