

# Negative Campaigns: The Cause of National Disintegration

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**Abstract.** The 2019 Indonesia's presidential election is a critical period for the democracy in Indonesia. The event gives people chances to participate in national democracy by voting their desired candidate actively. To gain votes, the candidates conducted a campaign to introduce themselves and promote their vision. There are many ways in the presidential campaign, including dialogues, face-to-face interaction, and direct political education to the public. However, in the last election, there were many cases of negative campaigns from both candidates, which delivers negative and provocative messages affecting the candidates and society. Reports also proved that the campaign included profanity.

**Keywords:** national integration, negative campaigns, presidential election.

## 1. Introduction

Democracy comes from Greek words, which are “demos” for people, and “cratein” for governance. From the definition, democracy means a governance system which upholds people’s power as the supreme power in the nation in direct or indirect systems of representation.[1] In English, democracy means "people's power", which means "government or rule by the people".[2] Democracy is a term used in the governance system. The system has the dividing labels, such as people's democracy, guided democracy, liberal democracy, proletarian democracy, and democracy of Pancasila. These terms have different theories and mechanisms.[3]

An essential element of democracy is the election. Freedom of voting in election is a vital requirement of a democratic nation. From Article 1 Section 1 Act Number 7 Year 2017 regarding General Election, election is the medium of people's sovereignty to choose their representatives in the House of Representative, Regional Representative Council, President and Vice President, and Regional People's Representative Assembly in a direct, public, free, secretive, honest, and just system in Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia.

An election is a step for starting a leadership. The stage begins with people's votes. To gain votes, the candidates conducted campaigns to promote themselves and attract people on their side. In this context, there are many ways of electoral campaigns, which are the dialogical approach, face-to-face campaign, and political education to society. The methods aim to enlighten the community regarding democratic participation. The efforts also have purposes of avoiding horizontal conflict in the future. Also, the ways aim to avoid persecution within the nations. The committee of the general election embraces the creativity of the political parties to do the campaigns.

In the general election period, the Presidential candidates usually showcase their rhetorical skills. They use that in the political campaigns to attract the public's attention. Many political party's teams formulated the rhetorical speech with attractive words, especially in the promotion of vision and mission or even in the proposals of their working programs. In the campaign, there are many cases of negative campaigns in different ways, including the use of sensitive political statements which are provocative, underestimating, and profane. Those actions aim to drop the opposing candidates to gain people's vote. These negative campaigns are not elegant and civilized. The campaign can ruin the harmony and peace within society.

## **2. The Forms of Negative Campaign in Indonesia's 2019 Presidential Election**

A democratic election is honest and just. A nation can achieve these aims if the legal apparatuses can control and enforce the electoral law during the election. They should also protect the committees, candidates, participants, voters, observers, and society in general from fears, intimidation, violence, collusion, fraud, and other cheating acts which later affect the results.

During the election, the candidates will conduct the electoral campaigns. The word campaign came from French, which means field of a military operation. Rogers and Storey define campaign as a set of communicative action in continuous and massive procedures. Campaign can also happen not according to the regulation from the committee of the election.[4]

In Article 275 Section 1 of Indonesia's General Election Act, the following methods are the procedures of an election:

1. Limited meeting.
2. Face-to-face meeting.
3. The distribution of campaign materials to the public.
4. The installation of demonstrating properties in public.
5. Advertisement in mass media, electronic media, and internet.
6. General meeting.
7. Debates regarding opposing candidate's campaign materials.
8. Other activities which do not violate the regulation regarding the electoral campaign.

Along with modernity, the electoral campaign is developing. The creativity of each party becomes unique and more various, whether in using properties or rhetoric speech. Political parties also use the internet as the medium for the campaign. In an electoral contest, people will do what it takes to win. The party will organize a positive and negative campaign. The positive campaign is a set of campaigns where the candidate focuses on relevant issues reflecting from their political experiences and for the sake of the public without attacking the personality of their opponents.[5]

The negative campaign is common in Indonesia. The campaign includes rhetorical and advertorial attacks to the opposing candidates, such as showing they are incompetence, inexperienced, and irresponsible as a mean drop their opponents' images. Political contestants use negative campaign to undermine their opponents' positive side and to demobilize the voice from other parties. This strategy has the potentials to be a boomerang for the offenders concerning that the voters see the action as a bad trait from the contestant.[6] Negative campaign is considered by many political experts as the best way to win the election. The campaign provides an underestimating reason of why people should not vote the targeted

candidate from the offender's perspective. This following explanation shows the three categories of negative campaigns:[7]

1. Fair campaign  
The campaign involves all statements, including factual actions which show negative attributes of the opponents to embarrass the candidate in front of the public. The operation can be done in words, phrases, or abrasive and underestimating pictures.
2. False campaign  
The campaign includes any fake statement to drop the opponents' image. The statement can be tackled with factual information. False campaign is prohibited in many states, and defamation suits often arise when such advertising is used. However, because defamation suits usually oulast campaigns, they are generally ineffective in providing an adequate remedy before the election.
3. Deceptive campaign  
The campaign includes any deception and distortion of truth regarding the opponents so that the society will see the candidate as an evil individual. The candidate can handle this by proving the real evidence.

The number two and three in the category is also called a black campaign. Black campaign is prohibited in Indonesia. During the 2019 Indonesia's General Election, there are many practices of negative campaigns, which are as follows:

- a. Negative campaigns addressed to Jokowi-Ma'ruf:
  - 1) The propaganda that Jokowi is anti-Islam and pro-foreign parties;
  - 2) Videos of three women who mention that during Jokowi's reign, there is no adzan, and no one wearing hijab; also, there is a possibility that Jokowi is pro-LGBT;
  - 3) The picture of Jokowi-Ma'ruf on a contraception product which is still relevant to the issue that they are pro-LGBT;
  - 4) Ratna Sarumpaet organized hoax that she became a victim of assault conducted by Jokowi-Ma'ruf's supporter;
  - 5) A brochure saying "Say No Jokowi-Ma'ruf" with the caption stating that "Promises are similar to debts; Jokowi's reign left a lot of promises and debts" followed by a hashtag #2019gantipresiden (change the president in 2019);
  - 6) Prabowo mentions that the nation can be destroyed if he does not lead it.
- b. Negative Campaign addressed to Prabowo-Sandi:
  - 1) A video showing that Prabowo said "Tampang Boyolali" or Boyolali's people face during his campaign in the National Winning team of Prabowo-Sandi which is a stereotype to Boyolali people that they look miserable and incapable of affording to stay in an elite hotel;
  - 2) A video of Sandiaga Uno stepped on the graveyard of Nahdatul Ulama (NU)'s founding father, KH. Bisri Syansuri. The video addressed that Sandi does not deserve the title of "santri post-Islamisme" or Muslim student in the post-Islamic era;
  - 3) A meme of Prabowo as a divorced man. The picture reflects his incapability of leading the nation from his inability to maintain his family;
  - 4) Prabowo is deemed as the agent of the New Order since his ex-wife is the daughter of the dictator, Soeharto;
  - 5) A video shows that Prabowo has ever been dismissed as a member of the army due to his crime of kidnapping and violating human rights to the activists of democracy in 1998;

- 6) A video underestimating Prabowo's image as an emotional person from his way of speaking;
- 7) A video shows that Prabowo wants to control the religion through his vision and mission about Habib Rizieq and December 2016 Jakarta protests. However, Prabowo is not a practising Muslim;
- 8) Indonesia Barokah magazine posted a headline entitled "Reuni 212: Kepentingan Umat atau Kepentingan Politik" or "the Reunion of December 2016 Jakarta protest: For the Public or the Party" which contains much news discrediting Prabowo as an individual.

The negative campaign is always be related to attacking opponents' personality.[8] The above cases are the lists of negative campaigns by the political parties. The campaigns are listed as attacks in the forms of criticism, hate speech, and hoaxes. The attacks emphasize the weak spots of the opponent is arguing, acting, and their ability to govern the nation in the future. The actions also include the terrible reflections upon the candidate from past wrongdoings.

Negative campaigns commonly exist in social media. The campaign is difficult to block and avoid due to anonymity. The data on the internet is also difficult to prove since they are manipulative and easy to be falsified. People can easily get influenced by the campaign. The government should cooperate with many parties to control and monitor the contents in social media to minimize the effect of negative campaign's distribution.

### **3. The Impacts of Negative Campaign on Indonesia's National Integration**

The irregularities of the campaign might cause conflict amongst the government and society. In the governmental level, the conflict happens because they are the leading creator of it. As politicians, the government is included as the winning team of the candidate. They can mock and argue to each other about the vision, mission, and the programs of their opponents' party. Aside from that, they will include the past wrongdoings conducted by the candidate to knock their rivals down. In the 2019 election, the CGE of Indonesia received a lot of hoaxes in social media regarding the independence of their institution as follows:

1. There is an issue of 7 containers which contains voting ballots from China which has been printed and voted from China. The polls voted to Jokowi-Ma'ruf. The case happened before the printing of the votes started;
2. The server of CGE has been set to win Jokowi-Ma'ruf in 57% over his contender.

Negative campaigns make politicians irresponsible. In this case, they have neglected responsibilities of bringing positive dialogues in the election. However, bringing the political war into the public sphere only creates further conflict. The conflict will only bring a vote to fulfil parties necessity rather than the whole nation's future. The issue will harm national integration.

The changes of conflict from internal (between politicians) to horizontal (to the society) will only create further chaos in the country. The case happens since the public is divided into two supporters, which support the reigning president and the losing one. Moreover, the division will extend to the different values of people who wanted to be promoted. The difference will not unite the society's political and social point of view.

Societal conflict can destroy national unity and integration. The fanaticism to a political candidate will create an unfinished random debate within the society. Moreover, the existence of a negative campaign will only worsen the condition. The conflict which started from

different political views can spread into various issues, like races, religions, and ethnics. In reality, the conflict happens from social media can develop to be a real-world conflict in the time close to the election. As in April 2nd, 2019, or 15 days before the election, a man is persecuted and hit by a group of Prabowo-Sandi supporter in Purworejo because he wore a t-shirt with Jokowi-Ma'ruf's picture on it. Therefore, the negative campaign creates polarization which causes the disintegration of the nation.

The impacts of national disintegration vary and substantially dependent on society. The more different the community is, the more complex the conflict will be. The dispute will get worse if hoaxes easily influence society due to their lack of political education.[9]

Some experts of the election show that negative campaign might happen if it is only fair. The fair campaign will only give people comparison points from the explanation of politicians opponents weakness from the real facts. False and deceptive negative campaign is terrible because it is supported with invalid fact in society. On the other hand, other experts prohibit all form of negative campaign and only recommend the positive ones. The positive campaign can be a pedagogical tool for society to make them understand regarding politics. There are many debates regarding the possibility of a negative campaign because there is no law which prohibits the campaign or which campaign is allowed or not.

The absence of legal enforcement to negative campaign causes the uncertainty on the implementation and monitoring in the election. The statement of experts of law and election is utilized by politicians to beat their contenders unethically with the negative campaign. The case causes a new tradition of politics of imagery and character's assassination.[11] Politicians will tend to beat each other based on their issues to get people's vote. From this point, society will be harmed and polarised. Later, the polarization will only create conflict within the community.

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