

# Middle-Actor Contestation on Twitter Ahead of the 2024 Presidential Election

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**Abstract.** Changes in candidate formations and coalitions in the 2024 presidential election provide a political field and discourse field that is completely different from the 2019 presidential election. By dissecting data from social network analysis through the concepts of political opportunity and discursive opportunity, this research finds that the contestation of candidates in the political structure also influences the availability of the field. discursive for actors in contesting in public spaces, especially social media.

**Keywords:** Buzzer, political campaign, Twitter Discourse, 2024 Presidential Election.

## 1 Introduction

The 2024 presidential election (Pilpres 2024) displays a completely different constellation and contestation from the 2019 presidential election. The strength of traditionalist and right-wing Muslim groups is no longer the main motor for gaining votes. Apart from the configuration factor of candidate availability, namely three pairs, another factor is because the patron-client relationship between group leaders and certain candidate pairs in the 2019 presidential election no longer exists. Some observers are of the opinion that the period of President Jokowi's leadership in 2019 was a period of oligarchic consolidation marked by the emergence of several investment-friendly laws, repression of protests, and weakening of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), and recently intervention in institutions constitutional institutions [1].

This illustrates that there is no longer any political-sociological reason for the political elite to continue to need the mobilization of Muslim groups. The composition of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates for the 2024 election also shows a pattern that the old alliance structure formed in the 2019 presidential election has completely changed. The pair Anis Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar represent two Muslim forces that were at odds with each other in the 2019 presidential election, especially when the Ahok case was at its height in 2016-2018. The pair Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rabuming Raka, and the pair Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfudz MD, both come from the incumbent Jokowi government. The difference is,

Prabowo - Gibran claim to continue President Jokowi's development and political vision, while Ganjar - Mahfudz offer changes according to another version.

Changes in the structure of political relations enable changes in the patterns of discourse contestation between actors. As stated by Engesser [2], discussion opportunities (discursive opportunity structure) always follow the political opportunity structure (political opportunity structure). The changes in both of them in the period leading up to the 2024 presidential election cannot be compared to what happened in the 2019 presidential election. In the 2019 presidential election, linguistic-based discourse analysis could be carried out because of the stability and symmetry between each camp within the framework of populist antagonism. In the 2024 presidential election, this establishment and symmetry will transform into a completely different relationship and move towards a completely different populism.

Several studies on the discursive situation leading up to the 2024 presidential election have emerged, but they are still limited to microscopic and historical perspectives. Azmah [3] for example, highlights netizens' acceptance of the 2024 presidential election discourse displayed by the Pinter Politik account on Instagram. Sujito re-examines how the residue of identity politics left over from the 2019 Presidential Election and the interpretation of the meaning of Pancasila changed in the days leading up to the 2024 Presidential Election. Sujito concluded that the neoliberal interpretation of Pancasila was able to blur economic-political citizenship politics into mere multicultural identity politics [4]. Rahmat and Marut outline how each candidate build branding on social media [5]. Rahmat and Marut concluded the importance of politeness in campaigning [6].

Since the period leading up to the 2024 presidential election is characterized by transformation of relations, the concepts of political opportunity and discursive opportunity will be used to understand networks of power and group fragmentation, and how these political structures influence contestation between actors in the public sphere. These two concepts provide a scalpel that synchronizes institutional and discursive aspects. This dissection will provide an idea of the possible range of motion explored by each actor.

This article argues that, in contrast to the contestation in the 2019 Presidential Election which focused on the topics of ideas and narratives brought by each candidate pair, the circulation of discourse in the period leading up to the 2024 Presidential Election was divided between the discourse raised by each candidate pair regarding work programs and political visions, and discourse raised by the public regarding the meta-conditions of the dynamics of the nomination process for each presidential candidate. In the 2019 presidential election, discourse dynamics occurred mainly because of the prominent role of Islamic community organizations in controlling the votes of each candidate pair. The mass base, group leaders and politicians then become the central actors producing discourse [7]. In the period leading up to the 2024 presidential election, the dynamics of discourse are coloured by presidential candidates, civil society organizations, judicial institutions, and not least party leaders.

This article is divided into three parts. The first part reveals how the process of transformation of relations in the period leading up to the 2024 presidential election occurred and where these changes in relations are leading. The second part discusses the forms of contestation between actors that occur because of changes in political relations. Since the concepts of political opportunity and discursive opportunity include aspects of institutional relations and aspects of discourse distribution, this research combines data from social network analysis, screenshots of the actual picture of contestation in the virtual world, and secondary data from a number of

reports regarding changes in relations and the fragmentation of power respectively each candidate.

## **2 Research Methods**

This research combines data from web crawlers, social network analysis, screenshots of the actual picture of contestation in the virtual world, and secondary data from a number of reports regarding changes in relations and the fragmentation of power respectively each candidate. This research uses web crawler and social network analysis (SNA) methods. The first stage is determining the keyword "presidential election" for the data crawling process. The data was taken in the period August-November 2023. This period was chosen with the consideration that this period was a period of increasing online conversation data due to the many issues that emerged related to presidential candidates. Next, reduce the data from the web crawler. Then find the articulations, discourses, and actors in the virtual space. Finally, carry out analysis, discussion, and conclusions from the findings and analysis of research results. To see actor contestation, this research uses the SNA (social network analysis) method.

## **3 Result and Discussion**

### **Political and Discourse Opportunity Structure**

Success in political practice depends on two things. First, the political opportunity structure, or the actor's expertise in utilizing his or her internal resources to form social movements. The political opportunity structure can be an awareness of opportunities or weaknesses regarding one's position and the position of one's opponents in a larger constellation [8]. The political opportunity structure has at least four key elements, namely consideration and awareness of the institutions of the political system, the stability and instability that regulate elite patronage movements, the presence or absence of elite allies, and the ability or not of the state to enforce order and repression [9]. The political opportunity structure applies to social activists, politicians, and officials who want to test or maintain their power.

Second, discursive opportunity, or a condition that allows certain political statements or claims to have discursive value and resonate with the public [8]. Discursive opportunity is composed of two sides of the coin namely visibility and resonance. Koopman and Olzak define visibility as exposure opportunities that may be created from media channels. Koopman and Olzak give special consideration to the role of media gatekeepers and the role of editorial curation [10]. However, this is a typical postulation when the media climate has not yet entered the digital spring, where liberalization of information and distribution without gatekeepers is still not commonplace. In order for a message to change public thoughts or behavior, a message needs resonance, namely the message's ability to attract attention, emotions, rationalization in the exchange of discourse that spreads in the public space [11].

The concepts of political opportunity and discursive opportunity are complementary concepts to understand how discourse games can gain their efficacy, especially in the context of the ongoing political opportunity structure in a society. This research uses these two concepts to dissect the ongoing political structure in the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia and the dynamics of contestation between actors in the discourse exchange.

### **Transformation of Power Relations Ahead of the 2024 Presidential Election**

The rule of two pairs of presidential candidates in the 2019 presidential election has had an impact on the emergence of polarization in society [12]. From a behavioral perspective, this scheme indirectly encourages the instrumentalization of certain sociological aspects of society which may be able to boost the electoral chances of each candidate pair. What a number of studies call identity politics has been confirmed to occur from the strategic level [13] to the rhetorical level [14]. The election of Ma'ruf Amin as Jokowi's vice presidential candidate, and the amplification of religious issues by Prabowo's supporters in the 2019 presidential election are two real examples of identity politics [15].

Supporters from both parties see that the 2019 presidential election contestation is a bet on whether Indonesia will become a theocratic country or not. The election of Ma'ruf Amin as Jokowi's vice presidential candidate is aimed at competing with the strategy of the Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno pair which has gained resonance from right-wing Islam consisting of Habib Rizieq Shihab, a network of former Indonesian Hizbut Tahrir leaders, and a number of urban Muslim groups [16]. Support for Prabowo-Sandi gained consolidation when in the period leading up to the 2019 presidential election, the Governor of DKI Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaya Purnama (Ahok) was involved in a case of religious blasphemy, due to criticism he expressed regarding the politicization of verses from the Koran when he visited Thousand Islands.

The chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council, Ma'ruf Amin, at that time also served as Ra'is 'Aam Syuriah of the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board. The NU group's resonance and support then poured out on the Jokowi-Ma'ruf pair. The dichotomy of presidential candidates then forms a dichotomy of discourse that spreads to the public [17]. Since the Prabowo-Sandi camp was founded on the current discourse about the caliphate, this discourse invited resistance from the NU group so that the polarization of society was at least centered on two core discourses, namely the issue of the caliphate and the issue of the Republic of Indonesia being dead. However, this does not mean that Jokowi and Prabowo do not have strategic issues that are contesting between them.

Development issues and foreign policy issues are two issues with contrasting debates between them. Jokowi focuses development on the issues of accelerating infrastructure, the environment, energy, food and terrorism with a religious technocratic-nationalistic style, while Prabowo presents anti-import, anti-China, strengthening security and anti-foreign issues with a patriotic-nationalist style [18]. Jokowi and Prabowo's contestation in this discourse provides the foundation for populist politics. Prabowo practices populism in the rhetorical realm, especially his emphasis on dictions that form the dichotomy of in-group and out-group. Meanwhile, Jokowi's populist politics is carried out through middle actors so that accusations of populism against Jokowi are often limited to his habit of doing blusukan [14].

Panic in the real world received a catalyst from the digital world since digital propaganda actors played a role in the Jokowi and Prabowo contestation [19]. As the incumbent who is running for re-election in the 2019 presidential election, Jokowi appealed to voters not to fall for hoaxes [20]. Prabowo also emphasized the same thing [21]. However, not long after that, an army of buzzers flocked to Twitter to boost conversations about Jokowi, and several influencers affiliated with Prabowo echoed content for the same purpose [22]. In this phase, computational propaganda has become a shadowy actor that is free from the traces and transparency of each candidate's campaign team, however, the growth of computational propaganda services has

become important since these services are indicated to be connected to political parties and companies owned by political elites [19].

After Jokowi won the 2019 presidential election, Prabowo was appointed Minister of Defense and Sandiaga Uno filled the position of Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy [23]. The dichotomous opposition that previously occurred at the elite level has now dissolved into one body of power, leaving polarization at the societal level lost direction. The peak of public disappointment with this relationship structure then emerged when the Jokowi government regime passed the Omnibus Law on the Job Creation Law (UU Ciptaker). Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama are disappointed with President Jokowi's steps [24], while Prabowo's supporters now feel betrayed by Prabowo's inclusion as incumbent [25]. The second period of Jokowi's government was identified as a period of oligarchic consolidation, where a number of cabinet restructurings, pro-investment laws, and official violence around development projects were connected [26]

The term 'period of oligarchic consolidation' for the post-2019 Jokowi government seems to confirm initial suspicions in the period leading up to the 2019 election when an investigation found that there was a flow of funds from extractive industry oligarchs for the campaign costs of each candidate [27]. In other words, oligarchic consolidation is a form of way to make up for the usual high costs of the 2019 election. As stated by Winters, electoral moments are often betting and transactional moments, where pre-electoral victory political services and post-electoral policy products are exchanged [28]

The history of pre-2019 election contestation and the relationship structure afterward provides a picture of the political opportunity structure for the period leading up to the 2024 election. Even though the pairs Anies Baswedan - Muhaimin Iskandar, Prabowo Subianto - Gibran Rakabuming Raka, and Ganjar Pranowo - Mahfud MD are both both come from the incumbent, but the three represent different group factions. Since Gibran's name was involved in the case of ethical violations by judge Anwar Usman, who is also Gibran's uncle, at the Constitutional Court (MK) regarding determining the age limit for presidential and vice presidential candidates, the Prabowo - Gibran pair was known to the public as an extension of the Jokowi regime [29].

The support of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) as President Jokowi's home party and as the dominant party for the last 10 years then poured out on the pair Ganjar Pranowo - Mahfud MD [30]. Megawati Sukarnoputri, General Chair of PDIP, believes that Jokowi has endangered democracy in Indonesia by interfering in the Constitutional Court [31]. Prabowo - Gibran promised that they would continue building the legacy of the Jokowi government [29]. Several groups see that this vision is a synonym for the actual extension of oligarchic consolidation, as on June 6, 2023, Jokowi said that he would not allow the political vision to change after the 2024 elections [32].

This electoral constellation benefits the pair Anies Baswedan - Muhaimin Iskandar, because on the one hand, Prabowo - Gibran has been flooded with negative news since their registration with the KPU was connected to an ethics case at the Constitutional Court, and on the other hand, PDI-P's support for Ganjar - Mahfud directly plays a role in weakening Prabowo - Gibran. But this does not mean Anis - Muhaimin is the only pair with solid grassroots support. Some circles believe that the coalition of parties supporting Anis - Muhaimin is vulnerable to friction

if they win the election because their supporters consist of two Islamic groups which in 2019 were at odds [33].

Apart from that, the strong collective memory among Nahdlatul Ulama regarding the political history between Muhaimin Iskandar and the late Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) also influenced the division of support among Nahdlatul Ulama members for the 2024 presidential election. The inclusion of Yenni Wahid, Gus Dur's daughter, on the Ganjar - Mahfud winning team [19] directly attracted the support of Gus Dur's supporters to side with Ganjar - Mahfud, even though Muhaimin was the leader of the National Awakening Party, a political vehicle that was identical to NU. In other words, even though Anis - Muhaimin was the only pair with a NU-based party background, they still failed to fully capture the votes of NU voters.

The development of political relations between the three presidential and vice-presidential candidates makes contestation in the 2024 presidential election difficult to predict because each pair has fragmentation among the supporting parties and among their supporters. The structure of political relations in the 2024 presidential election is different from the structure of relations that occurred in the 2019 presidential election, where discourse contestation can be carried out more easily because political boundaries, partisanship boundaries and aspiration boundaries at that time were clearly separated between candidates. Meanwhile, in the 2024 presidential election, the fragmentation of party coalitions and the fragmentation of groups supporting each candidate have the potential to open opportunities for discourse contestation between one candidate pair and another [7].

### **Middle-Actor Contestation**

In contrast to the 2019 presidential election, where contestation occurred because each candidate candidate launched a discourse that resonated with the aspirations of each supporter, contestation in the 2024 presidential election occurred because pre-campaign and pre-electoral events attracted debate and questions at the level of On the surface it concerns the credibility and capacity of Prabowo - Gibran, but behind it it is connected to constitutional issues, nepotism issues and youth issues. These three issues have become a discourse with interesting conversational value for actors on Twitter for two reasons.

First, the Constitutional Court's scandal in appointing Gibran as Prabowo's vice presidential candidate left a special impression on the public. Tempo Magazine successively published two editions regarding this scandal (Figure 1). The first issue (Ugal-Ugalan Uncle Gibran, Tempo, 13 November 2023) highlighted the involvement of Gibran's uncle, Anwar Usman, in engineering laws through constitutional channels. The second issue (Quiet Ibu is Here, Tempo, 20 November 2023) mentions the involvement of Iriana Jokowi, Gibran's mother, in political lobbying regarding Gibran's fate in the 2024 election market. The public believes that Gibran is not competent enough to run as vice presidential candidate [34]. Gibran's entry into Prabowo's camp, which consists of a coalition of parties that are identical to the older group, directly invited public skepticism that Gibran was not representative in representing the voices of young people [35].

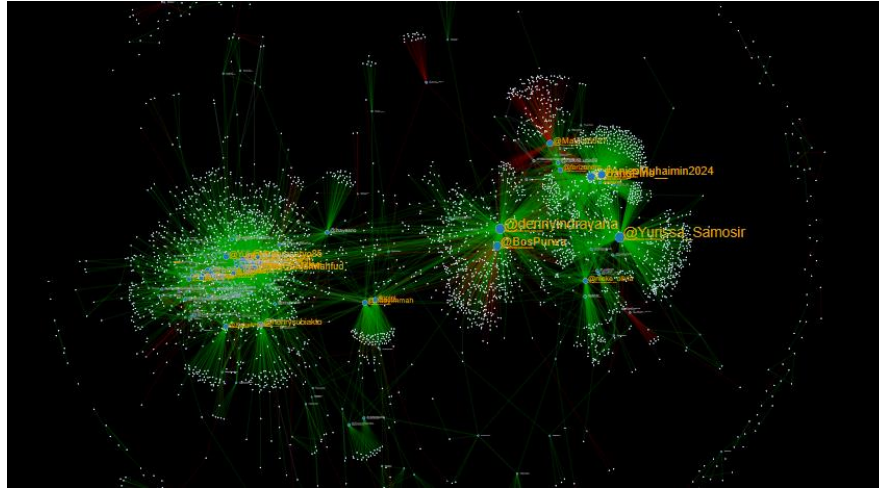


**Figure 1** Tempo Magazine Cover, right (13 November 2023) and left (20 November 2023)

Second, the spotlight on youth issues and the New Order issue increased after Jokowi's children entered the political arena ahead of the 2024 presidential election. Gibran's younger brother, Kaesang Pangarep, was suddenly elected as General Chair of the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) [36], after previously this party almost never had contact with Kaesang during the days when he was involved in podcasting and the fried banana business. The issue of young people and the New Order issue then became intertwined after Kaesang responded to Megawati Soekarnoputri's accusation that the current government was similar to the New Order. At a public meeting, Kaesang said, "I don't know what the definition of the New Order is. Because I didn't experience it myself, because I still a child at that time. I didn't live in that era. So I have to ask, what is the definition?" [37]. Kaesang's response went viral on Twitter and in it the image emerged that Kaesang was an ahistorical young man.

The coincidence of Gibran and Kaesang's political steps has encouraged public perception regarding the possible risks that could arise when state leadership is in the hands of young people without broad insight. These three things, namely youth, insight and political ethics, are the main focus in the period leading up to the 2024 presidential election and are the main catalyst for discourse contestation in it. Since the Prabowo - Gibran pair represented an extension of Jokowi's power and also included some of Jokowi's former supporters in 2019, Prabowo - Gibran received significant attacks from the Anies - Muhaimin and Ganjar - Mahfud camps.

However, in contrast to the Anies - Muhaimin and Ganjar - Mahfud campaign techniques, which mostly still rely on content production in the form of testimonials and cropping events, the Prabowo - Gibran campaign technique relies on forms of image content resulting from artificial intelligence, displaying the figures of the two in an animated version. Disney. This provides a hypothesis to weigh the truth of Muhtadi & Muslim's findings that Prabowo - Gibran's electability remains high for Gen Z under 26 years of age even though negative news about them floods the mainstream media [38]. The results of our Social Network Analysis research show that there are only the Anies - Muhaimin camp and the Ganjar - Mahfud camp in the dynamics of conversations on Twitter (Figure 2). Is it possible that Prabowo - Gibran's electability among Gen Z is entirely due to differences in campaign techniques and platforms? This question can be answered with other research agendas.



**Figure 2** Social Network Analysis on Twitter from 16 October 2023 to 30 November 2023.

In contrast to the dynamics of the 2019 Presidential Election which was characterized by negative and positive sentiments from the Jokowi camp and the Prabowo camp [39], the dynamics of the 2024 Presidential Election on Twitter can be said to be positive rivalry where Anies - Muhaimin supporters and Ganjar - Mahfud supporters are the same. There is a complementary relationship which leads to a weakening of Prabowo - Gibran's electability (see Figure 2 and Figure 5). Figure 2 shows that the absence of negative sentiment between the two camps is because the subject they are targeting is not available in the discourse arena, so only a positive sentiment network is formed.

The five most influential influencers are all in the same position, namely defending their respective candidates while discussing youth issues, constitutional issues and New Order issues. These actors come from various backgrounds, but the five of them imply that populism and the passion to save the nation actually emerged from middle actors without a divisive political style. They see that Gibran's violation of political ethics could threaten the prospects for democracy in Indonesia if he continues to win the 2024 presidential election. Among the five most influential influencers, only @Aryaprasetyo85 is in the Ganjar - Mahfud camp, while the rest are in the Anies - Muhaimin camp.



### Top Influencers

By Collected Mentions - By Total Retweets

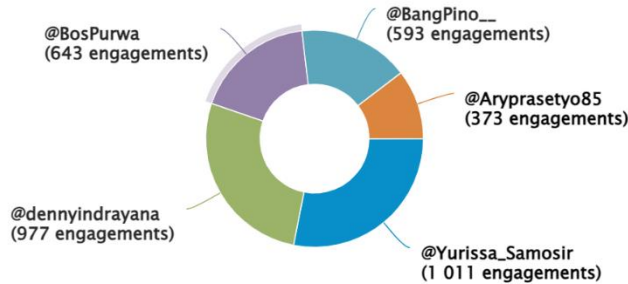


Figure 3 Five most influential influencers

In the Anies - Muhaimin camp, there are Denny Indrayana (997 engagements) and Yurissa Samosir (1,011 engagements) as the most influential influencers. Denny Indrayana is a Professor of Constitutional Law and also a lawyer. Denny Indrayana is included in the celebrity intellectual category, which is a social category that has just emerged in the era of free media (Nichols, 2018). Denny has 625,000 followers on Twitter, indicating the high exposure and influence of Denny's voice in the social media world. As a figure with intellectual capital and academic authority, Denny is paying attention to the risk of democratic corrosion that might arise from the extension of the Constitutional Court ethics scandal by the Jokowi family (Figure 4). Denny's tweet shows his siding with civil society groups, implying that the 2024 presidential election is in the shadow of a crisis and must be saved. By siding with civil society, Denny indirectly emphasized that there are certain parties who want to turn their backs on the virtues of society.



Figure 4 Denny Indrayana's tweet about the MK - Jokowi scandal (left) and the corrosion of democracy (right)

In contrast to Denny, where the origins of his influence can be traced based on academic expertise, Yurissa Samosir is a human account with a mysterious biodata but has 19,600 followers on Twitter. Among the various discourses that Yurissa raised, she highlighted a

portrait of the complementary relationship between Anies - Muhaimin supporters and Ganjar - Mahfud supporters (Figure 5). Another issue that Yurissa raised in her tweet was regarding the discourse on 'children' and 'attitude'. Through a tweet about the visit of Anies' son, Mikail Baswedan, to the former Governor of North Sumatra, Edy Rahmayadi, Yurissa wanted to say that Gibran was not an equal comparison to Anies Baswedan's son in terms of attitude and intellectuality. Yurissa is very aware of the discursive opportunities of these two discourses since Gibran was several times found absent from invitations to public discussions and received a negative image regarding his political gestures and communication style.



**Figure 5** Yurissa Samosir's tweet about positive rivalry (left) and Mikail Baswedan's visit (right)

In the Ganjar - Mahfud camp, @IslahBahrawi and @KakekHalal are two accounts with influential conversation networks, apart from the official PDI-P account. Islah Bahrawi serves as Director of the Moderate Islamic Network. He comes from a Nahdlatul Ulama background. Islah has 56,500 followers on Twitter. Sociologically, his support for Ganjar - Mahfud is a coat-tail effect after one of the well-known NU figures, Yenny Wahid, declared himself supporting Ganjar - Mahfud. Islah's tweets include highlighting matters related to religious ethics and concerns about rationalization in selecting presidential candidates. Both aim to provide a basis for reasons not to vote for Prabowo.



**Figure 6** Ishlah Bahrawi tweet

Just like Yurissa Samosir, Grandpa Halal is an account without biodata. The difference is, if Yurissa Samosir manifests in the form of a human personification and is managed by humans, then Grandpa Halal manifests in the form of an official account which may be managed by a special team. On Twitter, Grandpa Halal is followed by 116,000 followers. This is quite a large amount for an account that does not display social capital or expert authority capital. However, the appeal of the Grandfather Halal account lies in its content which displays developments in Ganjar Pranowo's activities and information related to the contestation between candidates. Among other things, Grandpa Halal raised the issue of honesty through the symbolism of Ganjar's visit to the late Hoegeng's wife. Grandpa Halal realized that the discourse on honesty had resonance with the MK polemic which was currently developing. A video of Megawati discussing the New Order is also the content uploaded by Grandpa Halal. This post received quite high exposure (2900 reaches).



**Figure 7** Kakek Halal's tweets about the New Order (left) and about honesty (right)

However, even though the Prabowo - Gibran camp accounts were not detected in Social Network Analysis monitoring, this does not mean that Twitter does not contain accounts supporting Prabowo - Gibran. Two Twitter accounts supporting Prabowo - Gibran with more than 100 thousand followers are @negativism and @PartaiSocmed. Negativism manifests itself in the form of an official account with a bio that reads "a little sarcastic, a lot of giggling. "I'm not good at singing, but at most sarcastic." Negativism has been on Twitter since 2009. Initially it presented content about socio-political information, but now after having 143,900 followers, Negativism presents content about Prabowo's ins and outs. Joget gemoy is one of the contents with high exposure.



**Figure 8** Negativism's tweet and Partai Socmed's tweet

In contrast to Negativism, the Socmed Party, even though it only joined Twitter in 2012, decided not to formalize its account. Socmed parties remain anonymous accounts that may be managed collectively with coordinated resources. The Socmed Party was an account with high campaign intensity during the 2019 presidential election. At that time, the Socmed Party supported Jokowi. After the 2019 Presidential Election, the Socmed Party became an account for uploading socio-political information. However, starting from December 1 2023 and with a number of followers of 556,000, the Socmed Party entered the contestation arena for the 2024 Presidential Election as supporters of Prabowo – Gibran (Figure 8).

The dynamics of the accounts from the three camps move according to the political opportunity structure position of their respective patrons. Each account utilizes what is their capital base and what personality base they have in assembling and directing discourse to compete with each other. Similar to what happened in the 2019 presidential election, where middle actors played a catalyst role in increasing the electability of each candidate, the condition of contestation between actors in cyberspace during the 2024 presidential election was also driven by middle actors, both in the form of individuals with credibility, official accounts without biodata, or anonymous accounts with high social trust.

#### 4 Conclusion

The reconfiguration of power in the 2024 presidential election not only changes the political opportunity structure to a completely different scheme from the 2019 presidential election, but also creates discursive opportunities that enable competitors to connect with each other in a mutualistic way, especially among middle actors. In terms of political base, Anies Baswedan – Muhaimin Iskandar and Ganjar Pranowo – Mahfud MD have different bases, namely Anies – Muhaimin comes from the political base of the Islamic group, while Ganjar – Mahfud comes from PDI-P. However, the two were able to exchange discourse products that strengthened each other because of the fragmentation of support between the PDI-P for Ganjar - Mahfud and the support of former Jokowi supporters for Prabowo - Gibran.

Since the journey to the 2024 presidential election began with the premise of oligarchic consolidation and the scandal of the Jokowi family's involvement in the Constitutional Court in

making Gibran the candidate for Prabowo's vice presidential candidate, discourse contestation has erupted not only regarding the ideas put forward by each candidate, but has also expanded to issues surrounding credibility youth, the New Order and the meta-conditions of the current development of the 2024 presidential election. At the surface level, each candidate is presenting their own trademark, but this strategy is then linked to the three issues mentioned by the central actor, claiming that the trademark only covers something bigger behind it.

If in the 2019 presidential election Indonesia was linked as part of the spring trend of world populism, then in the 2024 presidential election this pattern will not appear significantly. Populism still exists, because democracy will always be populist [40]. However, populism in the 2024 presidential election only appears at the level of the rhetoric of ideas and program plans of each candidate, rather than appearing as a driving force for extra-parliamentary movements. At the meso level, this has led to a change in the role of the middle actor, who initially in the 2019 presidential election was an agitator, but now in the 2024 presidential election he has become a catalyst who targets competitors' symbolic and substantive discourses. It is through this middle actor that the portion of contestation between actors gains significant space.

This research shows that contestation between actors is not always carried out by the main actor. In the context of the period leading up to the 2024 presidential election, the main actors are contesting to reach and provide political opportunities that are profitable for their electability, while the middle actors are working on discursive opportunities to boost the electability of their supporting candidates. As an electoral moment characterized by network transformation and fragmentation of political camps, the 2024 presidential election provides an illustration of how middle actors who were previously involved in previous elections also transformed their roles in managing issues and in practicing their communication strategies.

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