

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION OF ACEH GOVERNOR'S CANDIDATE IN INDONESIAN LOCAL LEADERS' ELECTION IN 2017

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the political communication of the Aceh governors' candidate during the Indonesian local leaders' election in 2017. The focus of the study is to analyze the political communication of the candidates and the effectiveness of acandidates used propaganda political communication, communication techniques, and various political campaign strategies. The political propaganda strategy and campaign the governor candidate of Irwandi-Nova were far more intense, effective, widespread and comprehensive in quality and quantity compare to Muzakkir-TA. Although the candidate of Irwandi-Nova cannot predict their supporters for granted, apparently their political communication strategy, propaganda and political approach have effectively anesthetized Acehnese voters and placed them as the winner of the Aceh Governor's Election that counted for 898,710 votes while Muzakkir-TA only gained 766,427 votes.

Keywords: *Political Communication, Governor and Election*

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa komunikasi politik calon Gubernur Aceh pada Pemilihan Kepala Daerah (Pilkada) 2017. Fokus permasalahannya adalah untuk mengetahui bagaimana komunikasi politik calon Gubernur Aceh pada Pilkada 2017 dan efektifitas kampanye. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Hasil penelitiannya menunjukkan bahwa kedua pasangan kandidat menggunakan komunikasi politik propaganda, teknik komunikasi, serta berbagai strategi kampanye politik. Dibandingkan Muzakkir-TA, strategi propaganda politik dan kampanye politik pasangan Irwandi-Nova jauh lebih gencar, efektif, meluas dan menyeluruh secara kualitas maupun kuantitasnya, sementara kandidat Irwandi-Nova berangkat dari sulitnya memprediksi dukungannya. Ternyata, strategi komunikasi politik, propaganda dan pendekatan politik mereka efektif mampu mengambil hati pemilih Aceh dan menempatkan mereka sebagai pemenang Pemilu Gubernur Aceh yang mana meraih 898.710 suara jauh unggul di atas Muzakkir-TA yang hanya memperoleh 766.427 suara.

Kata Kunci: *Komunikasi Politik, Gubernur dan Pemilukada*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian local leaders' election to choose for a governor is a political celebration of democratic government system every five year. This also happens to other elections including legislative and presidential election after they accomplished a five-year period. The local leaders' election such as in Aceh consists of choosing the Governor and Vice Governor, Regent and Vice Regent, and Mayor and Vice Mayor in the whole regions of Aceh. The vote recapitulation reported by the Independent Election Committee (KIP) in Aceh determined that the pair candidate Irwandi Yusuf - Nova Iriansyah has chosen to be Governor and Vice Governor of Aceh as the election result counted for 809,693 votes while his rival was Muzakkir Manaf (Mualem) - T.A. Khalid with 671,390 votes in 2017.

The local leaders' election has been conducted on 15 February 2017 which was running safely and smoothly without obstacles. One thing that should be noted that this year's Aceh political election took place without violence, riots and intimidation, not like in 2012 Aceh's election. Weapon terror was only twice against the house of governor candidate Tarmizi Karim in Banda Aceh and strafing to Irwandi – Nova's election winning team in Peunaron, East Aceh after the vote counted.

Although the Aceh Party, the bearer of the Mualem-TA pair was constrained to accept the results of the Aceh KIP vote recapitulation and even had time to file a lawsuit to the Constitutional Assembly (MK), but those all happened based on the legal corridors and applicable provisions. The uncertainty of the PA, when this lost in the election vote this time particularly PA is the largest local party in Aceh established by the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) combatants and led by its former commander H. Muzakkir Manaf, with the Aceh National Party (PNA) who carried the candidate Irwandi Yusuf - Nova Iriansyah who was still crawling. Not only here, PA has broad support among the people to remote villages

throughout Aceh. The management is evenly distributed at all levels from the provincial to sub-district and village levels - until the remote area the party's internal cadre system takes place ideally since 2006.

This study focused on two research questions, as follows 1) what is the political propaganda strategy of the Aceh governor candidate in the 2017 local leaders' election, and 2) how the effectiveness of the political campaign for the Aceh governor candidate in the 2017 local leaders' election.

Meanwhile the benefits of this study can be seen from two aspects, first; academic aspects for the development of social science, theory and academics scope, second; practical aspects; this is beneficial for political practitioners particularly in winning political feud at the context of local leader, legislative and presidential elections.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was designed by using qualitative approach with the key informants as interviewees who were interviewed and observed carefully to find out the elements of the research data. Data collection through interviews was conducted repeatedly from each informant in response to research problems. Data were analyzed by using the procedure of analysis and processing of qualitative data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theories used in analyzing the findings of this study consist of 1) two-step flow theory which discusses the process of absorption of mass media information - including campaign information for public audience throughout *opinion leader*, 2) propaganda theory used to analyze the process of influencing audiences with issues and information in order to choose targeted candidates.

Political Communication

Etymologically, political communication derives from two words; communication and politics which can be interpreted as message exchanges (interactions) related to political activities particularly in confronting local leaders and legislative candidates' election. Further, political communication is a technique and strategy to achieve the goal (seize power) collectively and depart from the different collective missions.

Saili Emruli and Miroslav (2011) defined that political communication means,

“Political communication is a new and exciting area of research and teaching that is located at the crossroads of the study of communication, political parties and electoral behavior. As well as profiling the changing nature of the media system such an approach invariably leads us onto what we term the ‘new political communication’-that based around the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs),” (p. 155).

In addition, Nimmo demonstrated the political communication as “communication (activity) considered political by virtue of its consequences (actual and potential) which regulated human conduct under the condition of conflict”. As mentioned above, the components of “political communication comprising political communicator, political message, political persuasion, communication media, public and political communicative implication,” (Nimmo, 2011, p. 31).

Campaign Strategy and Propaganda

Strategy can be defined as “a comprehensive plan for achieving communication effectiveness, so that the messages give the effect as it is expected, particularly in changes of attitudes, behaviors, mindsets and views of communicants towards something,” (Yusup, 1990, p. 73).

Strategies consist of planning, organizing, actuating, accounting, and controlling as the elements of management. This is likely in the context of communication strategy that determines whether the purpose

of communication effective or not. The effectiveness of communication can be measured by the communication objectives such as changes of attitudes, behaviors, mindsets and the communicator's view of something as the target of the communicator.

In the current context, the political campaign carried out by the campaigners during the election takes various ways, strategies and approaches depending on the communicators, target audience, local culture and context. In fact, the candidates frequently take unique ways in their campaigns to approach and gain sympathy from the public.

Nowadays in the modern development, campaign strategies will be more effective when using social media in spreading the positive image and sympathy to the community to support their voice for the wanted leaders. Social media are two elements that are united in one application that supports the socialization as well as a medium of information, both limited and unlimited. At the recent time, most people use various applications such as facebook, whatsapp, line, path, instagram, LinkedIn, flicker, twitter, google plus, and so on. Further, there are several social media that are netted in personal sites such as blogs and some mainstream media that provide social networking content such as kompasiana, jpnn, tribunners, etc. (Aflaha, 2017, p. 254).

Those various applications on social media may be important to be used in order to be able to absorb the aspirations and support from the community. Afterwards, they vote voluntarily regarding the choice of their leaders. Campaign strategies and propaganda in practice must pay attention to applicable rules and ethics. For instance, the content should not spread hoax in fighting against their opponent for achieving their goal in election. Social media must be used appropriately as the means of communication in the selection of prospective leaders throughout the community.

It is like communication, propaganda is also part of a campaign that is intended to achieve the effectiveness of changing attitudes and

behavior of communities. Today we are familiar with various propaganda techniques in the field of public relations, political campaigns, advertising and others (Severin & Tankard, 2008, p. 9).

Propaganda has several definitions, for instance international encyclopedia defined that *“propaganda is a type of communication that seeks to influence views and reactions, regardless of whether the values are true or not.”* Meanwhile, in Encyclopedia stated that propaganda is an art for disseminating and convincing belief including religion or politics. Harold D. Laswell demonstrated that propaganda is a technique that affecting human activities through manipulating representations. In broader sense, propaganda is the technique of influencing human by the manipulation of representations. Early in the history propaganda was used in developing Christianity that could be reviewed from Pope Gregory XV in 1622 and Pope Urban VIII in 1633. However, that does not mean he was free from the practice of manipulation and intervention of meaning, proof, when propaganda was used in political campaigns and advertising was difficult to find objectivity, other than engineering facts to convince the public according to the propagandist goals.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Either campaign or political propaganda of the 2017 Governor's candidates in Aceh includes various approaches and strategies. From the six existing pair candidate, the researcher only focus on two pairs of candidates to study intensively, they are Irwandi Yusuf - Nova Iriansyah and Muzakkir Manaf - TA. Khalid. The reasons are these two pairs were so competitive and had high electability in the 2017 Aceh local leaders' election. The campaign strategy used by the Aceh governor candidates is explained bellow.

Political Propaganda Strategy

The political strategy of the pair candidate Irwandi Yusuf - Nova Iriansyah was considered better, more intensive and effective than the Muzakkir Manaf – TA. The former Governor of Aceh for the 2006-2012 period; Khalid and GAM propagandist have known more strategic in developing work programs and effective communication strategies in confronting the elections. They have mastered in framing communication techniques and styles both individual and organization.

In addition, Irwandi reinitiated the previous program such as scholarships in the form of Aceh Health Insurance (JKA), Village Development Finance Assistance (BKPG), *Dayah* Body Program, Aceh Carong (Aceh Education) and Aceh Meugoe (Aceh Agriculture), the so-called “pending program”, due to interrupted periods of 2006-2012.

Irwandi also offered three public campaign mottos namely: 1) “*Kon Janji nyang Kamoe Meukat, tapi Bukti yang Kamoe Intat*” (not promises promoted but evidences offered). This means that Irwandi has worked a lot in the past period (2006 - 2012), not just indulging in empty promises, 2) “Halal Pilkada” (An election without blemish) which implicitly means inviting all parties to apply sportive election without fraud, violence, intimidation and conspiracy to enhance clean, honest, fair and spotless election; 3) *Satu hati Bersama Rakyat* (one heart with community), in other words an advice to always be in line and along with the community - every program designed from the people, together with the people and for the benefit of the Aceh people.

Irwandi has run optimally the propaganda techniques and political campaign strategies in every occasion, region, moment, and to any people during the Election. The political communication has been conducted individually, small groups and mass groups including strengthening the relations with *ulama* (Islamic preachers) and the leaders of *dayah*. Irwandi himself directly took to the field to remote areas without burdening his success team.

Yet Irwandi had pessimistic attitude and a losing prediction – he still tried his best for the campaign effort to the last day. This worked well as could be known that Irwandi's personal communication with various age groups during his visits to lower-class communities throughout Aceh was really touching. Personal communication approach and religious approach had become the most effective in persuading supporters for the election.

In contrast to Mualem-TA that did not specify a detailed work program such as the candidate Irwandi, but globally was determined to realize the points in the Helsinki MoU and UUPA No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Government of Aceh. Muzakkir claimed that only those who were consistent and committed to realizing government and community welfare in accordance with the MoU's will while others were just empty promises, including realizing the establishment of the *ahlus sunnah wal jama'ah* flow throughout the Aceh region.

Muzakkir's political communication - TA Khalid has been done only with the PA and GAM party elites while they did not give full attention to the grassroots voters. Several internal conflicts have appeared with Dr. Zaini Abdullah - his former pair from 2012 to 2017 and the party, Zakarya Saman (also the 2017 another governor candidate), and Ridwan Abubakar (member of the legislative board (DPRA) from East Aceh). This condition had become a block for Muzakkir to become Number 1 in Aceh. The party's internal conflict is actually appeared from a small dispute because they all are former GAM political elites, but then they become political rivals in the elections.

Campaign Effectiveness

The strategy of propaganda and political campaigns run by the candidates of the the 2017 Aceh's governor during the election campaign period, in this case Irwandi Yusuf - Nova Iriansyah must be admitted to be more diligent, intensive, thorough and maximum. Its political

campaigns and communications include various forms, methods, techniques and approaches to all levels from the elite academics to the grassroots. The campaign was ranging from personal communication, groups and organizations to religious communication were effective. Also the result could be seen until the day of election, they vote counting was still enthusiasm.

Based on the intensity and quantity of political campaigns, the pair candidate of Irwandi Yusuf - Nova Iriansyah excelled in voting for the 2017 Aceh's governor election. The table of votes made by the Independent Election Commission (KIP) in Aceh, placed the Irwandi - Nova won 898,710 votes while Muallem - TA got 766,427 votes - out of 2,414,801 voters that presented at the polling station (TPS). This means that all the propaganda and campaign strategies and political communications which run by Irwandi Yusuf - Nova were considered more effective than Muzakkir - TA. Khalid.

Irwandi's campaign strategy and political communication became more successful because all successful teams changed their function to be opinion leaders in interpersonal communication. It was this operational opinion leader during the calm period that succeeded in inviting voters to win Irwandi - Nova, who had previously built his political image in the campaign period.

The two-step flow theory and propaganda theory discussed previously is believed that Irwandi Yusuf-Nova's group has proved the effectiveness of a campaign strategy during the 2017 Aceh's governor election.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded as follows:
1) the political communication of the Aceh's governor candidates in the 2017 election has been run with various strategies, methods and

approaches to influence and convince the Acehese public. By using propaganda techniques and communication and political campaigns from the people in remote areas until approaches to the charismatic *ulama* (Islamic preachers) in Aceh, the figure of Irwandi has become well known to the public. Meanwhile, the candidate of Mualem - TA also has done propaganda like the Irwandi-Nova but this was not as intense as Irwandi - Nova and this pair felt more optimistic and heartened in winning the election, 2) in terms of the effectiveness of political campaigns, the candidate of Irwandi - Nova were far more effective than Muzakkir - TA. Khalid as could be seen on the results of the Aceh's governor election.

Table 1 – Comparison of Voting Candidates for the 2017 Aceh's Governor Election

No.	District/ City	Name		Other Candidate
		Mualem-TA	Pair Candidate Irwandi-Nova	
1.	Aceh Barat	41.413	30.134	31.524
2.	Aceh Barat Daya	25.570	23.517	32.644
3.	Aceh Besar	42.890	88.511	58.496
4.	Aceh Jaya	27.897	14.422	7.332
5.	Aceh Selatan	35.507	33.118	37.927
6.	Aceh Singkil	16.247	26.772	16.339
7.	Aceh Tamiang	30.040	53.086	37.911
8.	Aceh Tengah	13.227	57.425	36.409
9.	Aceh Tenggara	17.805	48.078	48.777
10	Aceh Timur	77.954	60.892	36.492
11	Aceh Utara	119.084	35.950	103.767
12	Benar Meriah	10.506	41.730	26.296
13	Bireuen	71.438	107.295	33.326
14	Gayo Lues	16.209	21.678	15.523
15	Banda Aceh	10.074	54.105	30.386
16	Kota Langsa	18.378	35.299	17.402
17	Kota Lhokseumawe	27.068	17.235	28.855
18	Kota Sabang	7.693	7.885	4.371
19	Subulussalam	9.116	14.124	9.093

No.	District/ City	Name		Other Candidate
		Mualem–TA	Irwandi–Nova	
20	Nagan Raya	35.529	38.236	22.307
21	Pidie	60.484	46.907	88.895
22	Pidie Jaya	35.507	23.206	14.308
23	Simeulu	16.791	19.105	11.281
J U M L A H		766.427	898.710	749.664

Source: Independent Election Commission (KIP) of Aceh, the Recap of Voter Counting Result in the Aceh's Governor Election 2017

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