Written Representation 82

Name: Jennifer Yang Hui
        Associate Research Fellow, Centre of Excellence for National Security

Received: 28 Feb 2018

Fake News as Shared Challenge: Mutual Learning through Case Study of Indonesia

Jennifer Yang Hui[1]

INTRODUCTION

1. 2017 saw the celebration of 50 years of diplomatic relations between Singapore and Indonesia. As the two nations embark on the next phase of bilateral ties, promising greater transnational cooperation in various areas such as the economy, security, disaster risk management and education, fake news is an issue that impacts the stability of both nations and potentially present an area of mutual learning. Tackling fake news for both countries is ultimately the challenge of effective governance.

2. Recent elections in Indonesia has seen an escalation of identity politics (politics in which particular racial, religious, ethnic, social, or cultural groups promote their own specific interests or concerns without regard to the interests or concerns of any larger political group), aided by the internet. There is evidence that some of these politically motivated online smear campaigns have been aided by well organised "fake news factories." Citizens themselves also have a hand in creating and disseminating much of the so-called "e-hoax". Most recently, mobile-based private chat apps came under spotlight as the police uncover WhatsApp-based syndicate disseminating fake news. Regardless of their origins and motivations, rumours and conspiracy theories clearly reduced trust between Indonesian citizens of different political, cultural and religious affiliations, as well as between the government and its constituents. It may even go so far as to impact international relations.

3. This submission takes a close look at the fake news phenomenon in one of Singapore's closest neighbours, Indonesia.
It will set out:

(a) Definition of fake news;

(b) Trajectory of recent fake news phenomenon in Indonesia;

(c) Measures taken by Indonesia in tackling the challenges of fake news, both via government apparatus and via the civil society;

(d) Recommendations on how Singapore could address the challenges of fake news;

I. DEFINITIONS

4. It is difficult, yet imperative to arrive at a sound definition of fake news. According to a report by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), fake news is a spectrum of phenomena comprising disinformation, misinformation (with or without political agenda), fabricated content disseminated for entertainment and/or financial gain[2]. Hence, it can range from online disinformation campaign by foreign states to other more benign, but still fictitious content circulating on social media. Far from being static categories, therefore, the fact that fake news represent a range of phenomena means that the categories can and do conflate with one another.

5. Historically, disinformation campaign involving other nations did take place in Indonesia, such as the stirring up of anti- American sentiment by the Czechs and Soviets in the 1960s[3]. While it is difficult to verify if a particular piece of fake news is part of a deliberate attempt at disinformation campaign, "massive digital misinformation" is clearly a major challenge that weakens public trust in governance and has implications on security challenges such as terrorism and cybersecurity[4].

6. In Indonesia's case politically motivated domestic misinformation campaigns (termed "online hoax campaigns"/ "black campaigns"/ "e-hoax campaigns" throughout this submission) present the greatest concern to the nation's stability. The involvement of "fake news factories" such as the Saracen Cyber Team, an online-based syndicate that created many social media accounts to spread hate speech for clients willing to pay for them[5] means that financial gain do converge with political motivation in the creation of false content that affects national stability.

7. Robust definition of fake news is therefore crucial to construct relevant policy responses to target the variety of phenomena fake news entail. Some forms of fake news, such as disinformation campaigns, deserve full attention in terms of national security. On the other hand, it is possible to hold other types of fake news, such as dissemination of misinformation for domestic political agenda and false content disseminated for financial gain, liable through existing legal provisions. Addressing fake news that citizens themselves share without political agenda, on the other hand, requires responses focusing on media and digital literacy.

8. Addressing the full spectrum of fake news therefore requires a variety of approaches that encompass the whole of society.

II. ONLINE HOAX CAMPAIGNS IN INDONESIA
3.1 Recent History and Motivations of E-Hoax Campaigns in Indonesia

---

[2] Norman Vasu, Benjamin Ang, Terri-Anne-Teo, Shashi Jayakumar, Muhammad Faizal, and Juhi Ahuja, "Fake News: National Security in the Post-Truth Era", *RSIS Policy Report*, January 2018.

3 Elizabeth Pond, "CASE STUDY: Jakarta -- A Communist campaign that backfired," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 27, 1985, https://www.csmonitor.com/1985/0227/zdis2c.html

4 "Digital Wildfires in a Hyperconnected World", *World Economic Forum Global Risks 2013,* accessed February 19, 2018, http://reports.weforum.org/global-risks-2013/risk-case-1/digital-wildfires-in-a-hyperconnected-world/

5 Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja, "Indonesian police probe alleged fake news factory's protest links," *The Straits Times*, August 26, 2017, http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesian-police-probe-alleged-fake-news-factorys-protest-links.

9. Political motivation lies behind online hoax campaigns in Indonesia[6]. Online hoax campaigns had affected electoral candidates' standing in several high-profile national and regional elections since 2012. The lead-up to the 2012 gubernatorial election in Jakarta, which saw former Solo mayor Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Chinese Christian former regent of East Belitung Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) running for office, was met with so-called "black campaigns" that sought to paint them as communists, foreigners, proselytisers and so on[7]. Black campaigns intensified during the 2014 presidential election that pitted Jokowi against former army general Prabowo Subianto. More recently, online hoax campaign had polarised public opinion in the lead-up to the Jakarta gubernatorial elections in February and April 2017 that saw the defeat of former governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), a Chinese Christian[8].

10. Online hoax campaigns utilise sectarian and racist narratives that play on ethnic and religious sentiments. Growing Islamism in Indonesian domestic politics has been accompanied by the rise of e-hoax. For instance, during the 2017 governor elections in Jakarta, posters of a sword-wielding man in white religious garb with the message: "If Anies Baswedan (current governor of Jakarta who was then contending for election) lost, there will be an Islamic Revolution."[9] During election campaign periods in 2012 and 2014, the campaigns had sought to put Jokowi's Javanese Muslim identity into question, casting him and members of his family as Chinese and Christians[10], labels that carry connotations of ethnic and religious minority statuses in Indonesia. In a country where Chinese and Christian population have been prevented from holding the highest public office, online hoax campaigns could have an effect of dissuading some voters from voting for the targeted candidates.

11. Online hoax campaigns conflate long-standing domestic inter-ethnic issues with international affairs, creating tension both locally as well as abroad. For example, Indonesia's Islamists converge "the issue of China's economic and political rise with the position of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, producing a toxic mash that threatens to undermine social stability in the country[11]." In December 2016, for instance, the Chinese embassy in Indonesia expressed concern over online anti-Chinese sentiment following media reports accusing China of deploying biological weapon against

---

[6] Bimo Wiwoho, "Politica Wave Sebut Hoax Kebangkitan PKI Dominan di Medsos (Politica Wave said hoax about the resurgence of PKI dominant on social media), *CNN Indonesia*, February 10, 2018, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20180209194859-32-275187/politica-wave-sebut-hoax-kebangkitan-pki-dominan-di-medsos

[7] Saracen Hanya Satu dari Ribuan Kelompok Penyebar Hate Speech (Saracen is only one among thousands of hate speech groups), *Kompasiana*, August 28, 2017, https://www.kompasiana.com/opajappy/saracen-hanya-satu-dari-ribuan-kelompok-penyebar-hate-speech_59a41c18d59a26574176a002

[8] Merlyna Lim, "Beyond fake news: social media and market-driven political campaigns," *The Conversation*, September 05, 2017, https://theconversation.com/beyond-fake-news-social-media-and-market-driven-political-campaigns-78346.

[9] Christine Franciska, "Tentang Ahok, Anies, dan Pilkada Jakarta yang dibumbui 'seribu hoax' (Regarding Ahok, Anies and Jakarta Gubernatorial Election that was plagued by a thousand hoaxes)", *BBC Indonesia*, April 18, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/trensosial-39618703

[10] "Video: Jokowi Cina-Kristen? Ini Buktinya (Video: Jokowi is Chinese-Christian? Here's proof)," *Tribun News*, June 12, 2014, http://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2014/06/12/video-jokowi-cina-kristen-ini-buktinya

[11] Bhavan Jaipragas, "How Indonesia's anti-Chinese fake news problem spun out of control," *South China Morning Post*, December 22, 2016, http://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/2056627/how-indonesias-anti-chinese-fake-news-problem-spun-out-control

Indonesia, after four Chinese nationals were arrested for planting bacteria-contaminated chili seeds[12].

12. E-hoax campaigns also seek to discredit political affiliations of public figures and organisations. Labelling opponents as communist, for instance, have been a go-to method for political gain for decades in Indonesia[13]. For example, the term has been levelled against a Chinese lady mayoral candidate during regional elections in West Kalimantan in February 2017[14]. The communist label also became part of the arsenal of slurs directed at Ahok and Jokowi[15].

13. Targeting political connection will be the tactic of choice by fake news mill in future elections in Indonesia. A survey by consulting firm Monitor Indonesia, for instance, observed that although Jokowi is currently dominating online conversation as the most high-profile candidate for the 2019 presidential election, his name is also negatively linked to communism[16]. In fact, a survey by social media analysis company, PoliticaWave, reported that rumours of resurgence of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was the top topic on social media between August and December 2017[17].

3.2 E-Hoax Ecosystem in Indonesia

14. Some of these politically motivated smear campaigns have been aided by well-organised "fake news factories" such as the Saracen Cyber Team, an online-based syndicate that created many social media accounts to spread hate speech for clients willing to pay for them[18]. The Indonesian Centre for the Reporting and Analysis of Financial Transaction (PPATK) reported that a number of undisclosed "high profile individuals" have been found to have transferred money to Saracen[19]. The Indonesian Cybercrime Directorate had also arrested organisers of the 02 December 2016 anti

[12] China alarmed as chili 'conspiracy' heats up Indonesians," *Reuters*, December 16, 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-indonesia-china-chili/china-alarmed-as-chili-conspiracy-heats-up-indonesians-idUSKBN1451G4

[13] Kathleen Azali, "Fake News and Increased Persecution in Indonesia," *ISEAS Perspective No. 61*, August 07, 2017, p. 5. See also Vincent Bevins, "In Indonesia, the 'fake news' that fueled a Cold War massacre is still potent five decades later," *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/09/30/in-indonesia-the-fake-news-that-fueled-a-cold-war-massacre-is-still-potent-five-decades-later/?utm_term=.f67018db33f7

[14] Hui Yew-Foong, "Decentralization and Chinese Indonesian Politics: The Case of Singkawang, West Kalimantan," *ISEAS Perspective no. 19*, 27 March 2017.

[15] "Jokowi, Antara Hantu Komunisme dan Vonis si 'Nemo' Ahok (Jokowi, between the spectre of communism and Ahok's verdict)," *CNN Indonesia*, May 10, 2017, http://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20170430150901-20-211255/jokowi-antara-hantukomunisme-dan-vonis-si-nemo-ahok/

[16] "Kuasai Berita Capres 2019, Jokowi Dibayangi Isu Komunisme (Leading in news on presidential candidacy for 2019, Jokowi is linked to rumours of communism)," *Monitor Indonesia*, December 21, 2017, https://monitor-indonesia.com/2017/12/21/kuasai-berita-capres-2019-jokowi-dibayangi-isu-komunisme/

[17] Bimo Wiwoho, "Politica Wave Sebut Hoax Kebangkitan PKI Dominan di Medsos (Politica Wave said hoax about the resurgence of PKI dominant on social media), *CNN Indonesia*, February 10, 2018, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20180209194859-32-275187/politica-wave-sebut-hoax-kebangkitan-pki-dominan-di-medsos

[18] Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja, "Indonesian police probe alleged fake news factory's protest links," *The Straits Times*, August 26, 2017, http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesian-police-probe-alleged-fake-news-factorys-protest-links.

[19] Martahan Sohuturon, "PPATK Temukan 'Tokoh Terkenal' Alirkan Dana ke Saracen (PPATK found 'famous individuals' transferring funds to Saracen)", *CNN Indonesia*, September 19, 2018, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20170919173543-12-242777/ppatk-temukan-tokoh-terkenal-alirkan-dana-ke-saracen

Ahok demonstration suspected of paying Saracen to create and disseminate fake news[20].

15. The fake news landscape in Indonesia is complex, however. The Indonesian National Police had said that Saracen Cyber Team was simply one among many such organisations that sought monetary gains in exchange for creating online fake news[21].In fact, the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information reported as many as 800 thousand websites have been found to have disseminated fake news[22], most of which have not been reported to the ministry[23].

16. In February 2018, the Indonesia Cybercrime Directorate uncovered a WhatsApp-based syndicate that disseminate provocative issues and even computer viruses via social media[24]. The group, which calls itself The Muslim Cyber Army (MCA), is an unorganised network of individuals, most likely linked to the Facebook-based group of the same name that conducted a series of vigilante acts against pro-Ahok social media users in 2017[25].

19. Smartphone-based private chat groups are becoming important source of information[26], and by extension, fake news, for many ordinary Indonesians[27]. This corroborates to the findings of a study of 36 countries by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism that WhatsApp has become one of the prevailing ways people discover and discuss news[28]. In a complex landscape where politicians, mass media and even "open" forms social media (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) are partisan, many Indonesian citizens increasingly prefer the views and opinions from personal networks, seeing communication from the government and mainstream media as less trustworthy[29]. In this environment, mobile-based private chat groups flourish. Although social network site Facebook is the most commonly used social media platform to

[20] Muhammad Andika Putra, "Polisi Tangkap 'Emak-Emak' Alumni 212 terkait Saracen" (Police arrest alumni 'mothers' of 212 demonstrations linked to Saracen), *BBC Indonesia*, September 11, 2017, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20170911140623-12-240923/polisi-tangkap-emak-emak-alumni-212-terkait-saracen

[21] Yuli Yanna Fauzie, "Wakapolri Sebut Ada Grup Penyebar Kebencian Selain Saracen (Deputy Chief of Police said that there are other groups spreading hate speech besides Saracen)," *CNN Indonesia*, September 01, 2017, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20170901093440-12-238821/wakapolri-sebut-ada-grup-penyebar-kebencian-selain-saracen

[22] Aulia Bintang Pratama, "Ada 800 Ribu Situs Penyebar Hoax di Indonesia (There are 800 thousand hoax-disseminating websites in Indonesia", *CNN Indonesia*, December 29, 2017, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/teknologi/20161229170130-185-182956/ada-800-ribu-situs-penyebar-hoax-di-indonesia/

[23] Adi Renaldi, "Saracen Is Shut Down. But Can We Ever Really Beat Fake News?", *VICE*, August 26, 2017, https://www.vice.com/en_id/article/3kk7v5/saracen-has-been-shut-down-but-can-we-ever-really-beat-fake-news

[24] "Police uncover provocative issues syndicate," *The Jakarta Post*, February 27, 2018, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/02/27/police-uncover-provocative-issues-syndicate.html

[25] Felix Nathaniel, "MCA: dari Anti Ahok ke Isu Kebangkitan PKI (MCA: From Anti-Ahok to Rumours of the Rise of PKI)," *Tirto.id*, February 28, 2018, https://tirto.id/mca-dari-anti-ahok-ke-isu-kebangkitan-pki-cFq2

[26] Bhavan Jaipragas, "How Indonesia's anti-Chinese fake news problem spun out of control," *South China Morning Post*, December 22, 2016, http://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/2056627/how-indonesias-anti-chinese-fake-news-problem-spun-out-control

[27] Ibid

[28] Nic Newman, Richard Fletcher, Antonis Kalogeropoulos, David A. L. Levy and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen "Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017," Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2017.

[29] According to ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute's survey, only 67.2% of Indonesians surveyed trust the mass media. See Diego Fossati, Hui Yew-Foong, and Siwage Dharma Negara, "The Indonesia National Survey Project: Economy, Society and Politics," *Trends in Southeast Asia No. 10*, 2017. Bhavan Jaipragas, "How Indonesia's anti-Chinese fake news problem spun out of control," South China Morning Post, December 22, 2016, http://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/2056627/how-indonesias-anti-chinese-fake-news-problem-spun-out-control

spread hoaxes, followed by microblogging site Twitter and photo-sharing app Instagram[30], the role of closed chat groups in disseminating false content is an important yet under-explored one.

20. It is notable that private actors do repost false content for motives other than profit. Mass media scholar Ross Tapsell observed, for example that "ordinary [Indonesian] citizens themselves" share much of the fake content[31]. Intrinsic motivation such as genuine belief in as well as enjoyment of the content quality could thus be plausible motives for fake news sharing[32].

21. In Indonesia, using online influencers to promote businesses and political causes is common and indirectly contributes to sensationalised information. Online influencers fall into two categories:

(a) 'Buzzers': Twitter users with more than 2000 followers paid to send short, personalised messages to potential customers during rush hours, when potential customers will be caught in traffic gridlock and thus become captive audience to their smartphones[33];
(b) Micro-celebrities: social media celebrities who use online platforms to attract attention to their political causes.

22. Both buzzers and micro-celebrities were hired by candidates during the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial elections[34]. They tend to promote messages that benefit their paymasters rather than factually accurate information.

23. In addition, the Indonesian Press Council reported that more than 40,000 websites claim to be news sites, but did not register their domain with the Council[35]. These unauthorised news sites may not apply professional standards of journalism to their postings, therefore resulting in articles that are inaccurate factually.

---

[30] Bimo Wiwoho, "Polisi sebut pemerintah korban hoax terbanyak di media social (Police says that the government is the biggest victim of social media hoax)," *CNN Indonesia*, February 09, 2018, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20180209215817-12-275206/polisi-sebut-pemerintah-korban-hoax-terbanyak-di-media-sosial

[31] Ross Tapsell, "Disinformation and democracy in Indonesia", *New Mandala*, January 12, 2018, http://www.newmandala.org/disinformation-democracy-indonesia

[32] Merhdad Koohikamali and Anna Sidorova, "Information re-sharing on social network sites in the age of fake news," *Informing Science: the International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline*, Vol 20, 215-235. Retrieved from http://www.informingscience.org/Publications/3871

[33] Andjarsari Paramaditha, "In Indonesia, buzzers are not heard, but tweet for money," *Reuter*s, August 23, 2013, https://www.reuters.com/article/net-us-indonesia-twitter/in-indonesia-buzzers-are-not-heard-but-tweet-for-money-idUSBRE97L14T20130822

[34] Merlyna Lim, "Beyond fake news: social media and market-driven political campaigns," *The Conversation*, September 05, 2017, https://theconversation.com/beyond-fake-news-social-media-and-market-driven-political-campaigns-78346

[35] Christine Franciska, "Tentang Ahok, Anies, dan Pilkada Jakarta yang dibumbui 'seribu hoax' (Regarding Ahok, Anies and Jakarta Gubernatorial Election that was plagued by a thousand hoaxes)", *BBC Indonesia*, April 18, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/trensosial-39618703

III.   MEASURES AGAINST ONLINE HOAX CAMPAIGNS

4.1 Government-led Initiatives against E-Hoax Campaigns

24. The Indonesian National Cyber and Encryption Agency (BSSN) was established in January 2018 to address the challenges of online hoax campaigns[36]. Reporting directly to the Indonesian President, the BSSN will coordinate all existing government cyber units, including those in the armed forces and police[37]. One of its immediate priorities is to tackle the challenges of online hoax campaigns during the simultaneous regional elections across Indonesia this year[38].

25. The existing National Police cybercrime unit was also expanded and a special branch created to specifically target hoax creators since February 2017[39]. In 2015, the Indonesian National Police issued Circular SE/06/X/2015 to guide law enforcement in implementing existing legislation against hoaxes that constitute hate speech[40]. In 2017, the police also formed the Multimedia Bureau to hunt for hoaxes in social media[41] and seek to provide correct information in order to counter online hoaxes[42].

26. Overall, the Indonesian government has opted to enforce existing legislation such as Article 156 and 156(a) of the Criminal Code (KUHP)[43] and in 2016 introduced new provisions to the Electronic Information and Transactions Act (ITE)[44] which governs norms and behaviour online.

27. The Indonesian government has also incorporated inter-agency approach to dealing with online hoax campaign. The National Human Rights Commission had

[36] Kanupriya Kapoor, "Indonesia's new cyber agency looks to recruit staff of hundreds," *Reuters*, January 05, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-indonesia-cyber/indonesias-new-cyber-agency-looks-to-recruit-staff-of-hundreds-idUSKBN1EU15X

[37] Resty Woro Yuniar, "Can Indonesia's new cybercrime unit win its war on fake news?", *South China Morning Post*, February 18, 2018, http://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/2132683/can-indonesias-new-cybercrime-unit-win-its-war-fake-news

[38] Anton Hermansyah, Jokowi swears in new chief of national cyber agency," *The Jakarta Post*, January 03, 2018, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/01/03/jokowi-swears-in-new-chief-of-national-cyber-agency.html

[39] Erin Cook, "Saracen may have been shut down but Indonesia still needs a plan to take down other fake news generators," *The Splice Newsroom*, November 02, 2017, https://www.thesplicenewsroom.com/saracen-indonesia-fake-news/

[40] Azyumardi Azra, "Hate Speech and Freedom," *Republika*, November 05, 2015, http://www.republika.co.id/berita/en/resonance/15/11/05/nxc6o1317-hate-speech-and-freedom. See also Abubakar, "Managing hate speech or muzzling freedom of expression?".

[41] Farouk Arnaz, "National Police Form New Unit to Tackle 'Fake News' on Social Media," *Jakarta Globe*, February 22, 2017, http://jakartaglobe.id/news/national-police-form-new-unit-to-tackle-fake-news-on-social-media/. See also Margareth S. Aritonang, "National Police to enlarge institution focusing on cybercrimes," *The Jakarta Post*, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/01/06/national-police-to-enlarge-institution-focusing-on-cybercrimes.html.

[42] Bimo Wiwoho, "Polisi sebut pemerintah korban hoax terbanyak di media social (Police said that the government is the biggest victim of social media hoaxes)," *CNN Indonesia*, February 09, 2018, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20180209215817-12-275206/polisi-sebut-pemerintah-korban-hoax-terbanyak-di-media-sosial

[43] Irfan Abubakar, "Managing hate speech or muzzling freedom of expression?," *Indonesia at Melbourne*, November 20, 2015, http://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/surat-edaran-hate-speech-freedom-expression/.

[44] Kristo Molina, "Indonesian Electronic Information and Transactions Law Amended," *White & Case*, December 15, 2016, https://www.whitecase.com/publications/alert/indonesian-electronic-information-and-transactions-law-amended

formed a special team comprising of various government bodies such as the General Election Commission (KPU), Election Monitoring Body (Bawaslu), Ministry of Interior, the National Police to monitor eight regional elections for hoax campaigns[45]. The KPU also ruled that the campaign team for the regional elections could only use one account from each social media platforms during the campaigning period[46].

28. Separately, the Indonesian Press Council has implemented a verification system for professional online news sources[47]. Those found to publish consistently reliable news were awarded barcode that indicate their reputation for credibility[48]. As of February 2018, the Press Council has verified 250 reliable news sites[49].

29. In terms of media literacy, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture launched the National Literacy Movement (NLM), targeted at schools, families and the Indonesian society as a whole, in October 2017[50]. Inculcating civility online through digital literacy is one pillar that the NLM focuses on[51].

30. The Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), a government-funded top clerical body, announced a religious ruling (fatwa) that urges pro-social behaviour when using social media, stating that disseminating hoax is prohibited[52].

4.2 Government-Technology Company Partnerships
31. The Indonesian government is enlisting the help of technology companies to join the fight against fake news. For example, Facebook has committed to helping Indonesia tackle the spread of fake news in the lead up to the 2019 presidential elections, citing that it had established a yet-undisclosed "special team" for this purpose[53].

---

[45] Bimo Wiwoho, "Komnas HAM Bentuk Tim Cegah Ujaran Kebencian di Pilkada 2018 (National Human Rights Commission forms team to prevent hate speech in 2018 regional elections)," *CNN Indonesia*, February 13, 2018, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/pilkadaserentak/nasional/20180212211540-32-275743/komnas-ham-bentuk-tim-cegah-ujaran-kebencian-di-pilkada-2018

[46] Bimo Wiwoho, "Hanya Satu Akun per Medsos Bagi Tim Kampanye Pilkada 2018 (Only one social media account for campaign team of regional elections 2018)," *CNN Indonesia*, February 02, 2018, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/pilkadaserentak/teknologi/20180203055846-192-273533/hanya-satu-akun-per-medsos-bagi-tim-kampanye-pilkada-2018

[47] *Indonesian Press Council* website, accessed February 24, 2018, http://dewanpers.or.id/#

[48] Gilang Fauzi, "Dewan Pers Terapkan Barcode untuk Media Terverifikasi," *CNN Indonesia*, January 09, 2017, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20170109084724-20-184890/dewan-pers-terapkan-barcode-untuk-media-terverifikasi

[49] "Data Perusahaan Pers (Press Companies Data)", *Indonesian Press Council* website, accessed February 24, 2018, http://dewanpers.or.id/data/perusahaanpers

[50] Aldi Geri Lumbang Tobing, "Kemendikbud Launches National Literacy Movement," *Berita Jakarta*, October 28, 2017, http://www.beritajakarta.id/en/read/23944/kemendikbud-launches-national-literacy-movement#.WpESm_luaM8. See also "Materi Pendukung Literasi Digital (Supporting material for digital literacy)," *Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture*, 2017, accessed February 27, 2018, http://gln.kemdikbud.go.id/glnsite/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/cover-materi-pendukung-literasi-digital-gabung.pdf

[51] "Literasi Digital untuk Kemajuan Bangsa (Digital Literacy for the Advancement of the Nation)," *Pendidikan Keluarga (Family Education)* magazine, August 2017, http://gln.kemdikbud.go.id/glnsite/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Majalah-Pendidikan-Keluarga-Edisi-Agustus-2017-perhalaman.pdf

[52] Santi Dewi, "Fatwa lengkap MUI tentang media social (Full MUI Fatwa regarding social media)", *Rappler*, June 05, 2017, https://www.rappler.com/indonesia/berita/172045-fatwa-mui-media-sosia

[53] Erwida Maulia, "Facebook hedges on 'special algorithm' to combat fake news", *Nikkei Asian Review*, August 04, 2017, https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Companies/Facebook-hedges-on-special-algorithm-to-combat-fake-news

32. The Communications and Information Ministry has coordinated with Google to roll out the Trusted Flagger Program in which volunteers can report false content on various Googleowned sites such as YouTube[54]. Google will review flagged content and decide whether to remove it. 4.3 Civil Society Initiatives

33. Civil society initiatives to combat online hoax include the #TurnBackHoax campaign[55], an initiative borne out of a collaboration between Indonesia's largest Muslim mass organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Masyarakat Anti-Fitnah Indonesia (Mafindo) in December 2016[56]. Mafindo works with social media platforms and media providers to debunk hoaxes, raise public awareness on the dangers of fake news, as well as encourage inter-community/religious exchanges[57]. It cooperates with a wide variety of actors, including the Communication and Information Ministry, Press Council, Indonesian Cyber Media Association as well as social media providers to address the challenges of fake news[58].

V.   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SINGAPORE
5.1 Nudging Pro-Social Behavioural Norms in Private Chat Groups
34. Singapore, like Indonesia[59], has high usage rate rate in terms of mobile-based private chat apps[60]. As the case study of Indonesia showed, there is need to specifically address fake news that are created as a result of interpersonal trust that arise from primordial links embedded within private chat networks through usage of behavioural nudging towards prosocial norms[61], such as responsible information sharing in private messaging networks. Administrators of encrypted private chat group could, for instance, alert members of false content and encourage fact checking of content before sharing. Anyone who is in a private chat group and sees a hoax should also feel empowered to alert others.

5.2 Cultural and Religious Approach to Tackling Fake News

---

[54] Erin Cook, "Saracen may have been shut down but Indonesia still needs a plan to take down other fake news generators," *The Splice Newsroom*, November 02, 2017, https://www.thesplicenewsroom.com/saracen-indonesia-fake-news/. See also Anton Hermansyah, "Indonesia, Google to use Trusted Flagger program to filter out internet content," *The Jakarta Post*, August 04, 2017,
http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/08/04/indonesia-google-to-use-trusted-flagger-program-to-filter-out-internet-content.html
[55] *#TurnBackHoax* website, accessed February 24, 2018, https://www.turnbackhoax.id/
[56] Erin Cook, "Saracen may have been shut down but Indonesia still needs a plan to take down other fake news generators," *The Splice Newsroom*, November 02, 2017, https://www.thesplicenewsroom.com/saracen-indonesia-fake-news/
[57] Septiaji Eko Nugroho, "Factchecking and Beyond: Indonesia's Story", Presentation at *Asian Journalism Forum*, Singapore, August 18, 2017.
[58] Ibid
[59] In 2016, 38% of the Indonesian population are active WhatsApp users. See Share of population in selected countries who are active WhatsApp users as of 4th quarter 2016, *Statista*, accessed February 27, 2018, https://www.statista.com/statistics/291540/mobile-internet-user-whatsapp/
[60] According to research firm Blackbox Research, in 2016, 97% of Singaporeans use WhatsApp. 86% said that WhatsApp is their most used app. According to statistics portal Statista, Singapore's penetration rate for WhatsApp is the highest among other social media platforms, at 73%. Facebook Messenger has a penetration rate of 42%, while LINE has a penetration rate of 22%. See "WhatsApp, Facebook lead Singapore", *WARC*, September 19, 2016,
https://www.warc.com/NewsAndOpinion/news/WhatsApp,_Facebook_lead_Singapore/a2d15314-89e2-4c53-b2c8-47c006d3f745 and "Penetration of leading social networks in Singapore as of 3rd quarter 2017", *Statista*, accessed February 27, 2018, https://www.statista.com/statistics/284466/singapore-social-network-penetration/
[61] Internet forum administrators, for example, ensure that users only post topics relevant to the group. Breach of social norm will be met with sanction by the forum community. See Ang Peng Hua, *Ordering chaos: Regulating the Internet* (Singapore: Thomson Learning, 2005).

35. As recent events in Indonesia show, fake news utilise cultural and religious lens that tap into the identities of those who accept its message. As part of the larger Southeast Asian entity, Singapore is one the most religiously diverse country in the world[62]. It is also home to various ethnic groups. The possibility of ethno-religious fault lines being exploited by fake news is a very real one to the city-state. It is thereby important to reach out to local cultural and religious leaders who are able to better contextualise fake news within cultural and religious frame of mind and so reach out to those who are inclined to believe in fake news.

Just as the Indonesian MUI issued a fatwa against hoax campaigns, the feasibility of similar approaches could be examined. For example, Pope Francis recently couched the phenomenon of fake news in biblical frame and urged his followers to engage in a "journalism of peace."[63] Roman Catholic adherents worldwide, including Singapore, may find the pope's exhortation useful as behavioural reference and apply it when they encounter fake news. Other cultural and religious leaders could adopt a similar approach, framing fake news in a manner that adherents can understand and will be motivated to apply.

VI.   ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS
5.4 Regional Collaboration to Combat Fake News[64]
36. As ASEAN chair in 2018, Singapore is well positioned to collaborate with Indonesia, the default "natural born leader" of ASEAN[65], together with other Southeast Asian countries, to address the challenges of fake news. The establishment of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (AMRI) has set the stage for regional collaboration[66]. Beyond introducing programmes for media literacy, countries involved could also look at the wider possibility of collaborating to tackle disinformation campaigns. Here, ASEAN could learn from the experience of other regional initiatives such as the EU East StratCom Taskforce, established in 2015 to counter Russian disinformation campaign[67]. The task force collaborates with a vast network of actors such as governments, journalists, NGOs and think tanks[68]. Some of the approaches could be tailored to fit ASEAN's diverse political and cultural landscape. For example, ASEAN could consider introducing a product like the weekly Disinformation Review, which is a compilation of reports from Taskforce's network of contributors[69]. Applied to ASEAN, this product could incorporate the work of regional hoax-debunking

---

[62] "Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for World Communications Day," *The Vatican* website, January 24, 2018, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/papa-francesco_20180124_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html
[63] "Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for World Communications Day," *The Vatican* website, January 24, 2018, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/papa-francesco_20180124_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html
[64] The author thanks her colleague, Faizal A. Rahman, for his original idea about regional collaboration to tackle fake news
[65] Dewi Fortuna Anwar, "ASEAN and Indonesia: Some Reflections," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 5, No 1 (1997): 20–34. Avery Poole, "ASEAN and Indonesia Under Jokowi", *Australian Institute of International Affairs*, May 16, 2017, http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/asean-indonesia-under-jokowi/
[66] "ASEAN to cooperate on fighting fake news in the region," *ASEAN* website, September 2017, http://asean.org/asean-to-cooperate-on-fighting-fake-news-in-the-region/
[67] "Questions and Answers about the East StratCom Task Force," *European Union External Action*, November 8, 2017, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/2116/%20Questions%20and%20Answers%20about%20the%20East%20StratCom%20Task%20Force.
[68] Ibid
[69] Ibid

networks such as Mafindo and make it available in ASEAN languages for the reference of policymakers, journalists and academics.

5.3 Enlisting Technology Companies in Tackling Fake News
37. Technology companies are crucial in the fight against fake news. Compelling cooperation through legislation, however, may not yield desired results and may even prove counterproductive. For one, removing fake news may give rise to the so-called "Streisand effect", whereby deleting content increases audience attention on it. In China, for example, aggressive efforts to censor social media posts that are not in line with the government's narrative reinforced some netizens' belief that the censored posts represent the true state of matter, while dismissing officially sanctioned newspapers as government propaganda[70]. In this state, netizens are more likely to seek and trust news from alternative sources than before.

38. Working with independent grassroots movements, (e.g. Mafindo's experience, see Section 4.3) could thus be one way of engaging with technology companies through a neutral party.

VI.   CONCLUDING REMARKS
39. While Indonesia and Singapore represent two very different countries, fake news is a future challenge that affects both nations and therefore pose an area for mutual learning. Indonesia's case study shows that fake news represent a spectrum whereby motivations for creation and dissemination vary. Politically motivated domestic misinformation campaigns that target ethnic and religious fault lines dominate the fake news landscape in Indonesia. While financial gain fuelled some of the e-hoax campaigns that were disseminated through both open and closed social media spaces, intrinsic motivations of private citizens contribute to fake news in Indonesia as well. Due to the shifting nature of trust, both Indonesia and Singapore are seeing rise in information-seeking behaviour on smartphone-based private chat groups, and correspondingly, fake news. For Singapore, addressing the challenge of fake news requires whole-of-society approach that is a combination of nudging behavioural norms in closed chat groups and enlisting the help of cultural and religious leaders, technology companies and independent grassroots movements to address fake news. Finally, Singapore and Indonesia could collaborate as part of the larger ASEAN community to combat fake news.

---

[70] Jing Zeng, Chung-hong Chan, King-Wah Fu and David Sutcliffe, "Censorship or rumour management? How Weibo constructs "truth" around crisis events," *The Policy and Internet blog*, October 03, 2017, http://blogs.oii.ox.ac.uk/policy/censorship-or-rumour-management-how-weibo-constructs-truth-around-crisis-events/.