CHAPTER III

EMBRACING THE DIGITAL ERA

Digital diplomacy is a new term in Indonesian foreign policy, despite the fact that digital technology has had an impact on Indonesia's foreign policy activities in almost the last two decades. Chapter III attempts to provide an overview of Indonesian diplomacy, from post-independence up to the beginning of digital diplomacy in Yudhoyono's administration. The second section of this chapter discusses the beginning of internet penetration in Indonesia, and how the internet has influenced current Indonesian diplomacy.

A. An Overview of Indonesian Diplomacy

After its independence on August 17th, 1945, Indonesia has actively engaged in a number of international agendas, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels. At the beginning of its development, Indonesian diplomacy focused on two important issues. First, to maintain the unity and sovereignty of Indonesia. As a post-colonial country, Indonesia was prone to unstable politics and disintegrations. Thus, the beginning of Indonesia's diplomatic career focused more on negotiations and international agreements to defend its sovereignty. The Indonesian Government has involved in several tough negotiations with the Dutch Government, which later resulted in several agreements, *Linggarjati* Agreement in 1947, the Renville Agreement in 1948, and the Round Table Conference or *Konferensi Meja Bundar* in 1949. To gain

international support, Indonesia also developed close bilateral ties with Egypt, China and the Soviet Union.

Second, Indonesia's diplomacy under Sukarno administration also focused on nation branding. Indonesia has engaged in some multilateral forums and international organizations. Indonesia initiated the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement or NAM in the Asia-Africa Conference or Bandung Conference in 1955. Sukarno also initiated the establishment of a Conference of the New Emerging Forces or CONEFO consisting of developing countries, then GANEFO or the Games of New Emerging Forces, which was first held in 1963 to compete the Asian Games (Nursita & Sahide, 2018). Indonesia has also been one of the UN member states, despite the fact Indonesia was the only country that had left the United Nations in 1965 due Sukarno rejection towards Malaysia's membership as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Indonesia finally rejoined the United Nations in 1966.

In the New Order, Indonesian foreign policy under Suharto's administration focused more on a number of agendas aimed to accomplish Indonesian national interests, particularly economic development and maintaining domestic political stability after the 30th September Movement. The Cold War has influenced Indonesian foreign policy to terminate its diplomatic relations with China, and build closer relations with Western. Indonesia has cooperated with several international interest groups; particularly privates or MNC. Indonesian diplomacy at both bilateral and multilateral levels was mostly aimed at

economic purposes. Private investment has grown faster rather than government investment since the end of 1970, and the number of Foreign Direct Investment or FDI in Indonesia has increased by 1980 (Emmerson, 2015).

Indonesia has participated in broader international forums, organizations and international cooperation to show its prominence as the Middle Power. Indonesia sought to become an influential country in Southeast Asia and contributed to the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN in 1967. Indonesia has contributed as a mediator on some regional conflicts; such as Mindanao Conflict in Philippines, and also conflict in the Southern Thailand (Azra, 2015), and introduced what later known as "Empat Mata" or informal bilateral negotiation between political leaders, and the "ASEAN Way".

Political unrest in 1998 has weakened Indonesian foreign policy and diplomacy. Because of the unstable government, political movement during democratization, and East Timor secession conflict have forced the government to deal with internal pressures. Such conditions have weakened Indonesia's prominence as the Middle Power. During the transitional government, Habibi focused on improving Indonesia's image, after being accused of human right violations in East Timor. The pressures have influenced Habibi to allow the referendum of independence in East Timor.

Abdurrahman Wahid has later made efforts to strengthen Indonesian diplomacy by restoring Indonesia's diplomatic relations

with China which have been deteriorated during the New Order. Abdurrahman Wahid chose to become "Chief Diplomat" who plays the main role in performing diplomacy and attempted to increase Indonesian diplomatic outreach by conducting some diplomatic visits, including the visits to Israel. His offer to open the Israeli diplomatic mission in Indonesia was rejected by the majority of Muslims in Indonesia.

The performance of Indonesian diplomacy has been slightly improved during Megawati's administration (2001-2004). Internal politics which have become more stable have allowed the government to make improvements and restructure its institutions and bodies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At that period, the term public diplomacy has been included as part of Indonesia's foreign policy strategy, even though public diplomacy has actually been practised even after Indonesian independence (Rachmawati, 2016); for instance, "*Mercusuar* Projects" and Indonesia's confrontation with Malaysia during the Old Order.

In 2002, the Indonesian Government has established the Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy (Kemlu, 2011), which later also became responsible for carrying out Indonesia's digital diplomacy. Nevertheless, Indonesian diplomacy under Megawati administration did not show any significant progress. Indonesia's economic diplomacy has also not resulted in notable achievement for the domestic economy. Megawati's response towards the invasion of the

United States in Afghanistan is more about to satisfy the Indonesian people.

Information and communication devices, particularly televisions, mobile phones, and the internet have led the information and news regarding Aceh Tsunami 2004 to spread rapidly all over the world. The rapid transfer of emotions and empathy has caused the Indonesian government to accept much foreign assistance from various governmental agencies, international organizations, and individuals. During the first and second period of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono administration, Indonesia has also actively engaged in several international agendas. Indonesia even hosted several international forums and summits. Lake Toba Summit which was held in the following year after Tsunami, on March 2005, has resulted in Lake Toba Call declaration which was aimed to increase the disaster awareness, particularly Tsunami.

The declaration had given a positive impact on the development of local governments, as well as the Indonesian tourism sector. Indonesia has also facilitated an interfaith dialogue to increase the awareness of inter-religious conflict. Bali Democracy Forum or BDF I in 2008 and BDF II in 2013, were held to discuss and share the ideas and experiences related to democratization in Asian Pacific countries.

The first period of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono administration was the time when the Web 2.0 framework has induced the emergence of several interactive websites; such as Facebook, Friendster, My Space, and YouTube. Still, digital diplomacy or other similar terms has not

been inserted as part of the Indonesian strategy. The leverage of the internet to Indonesian public diplomacy was first seen when Komodo Island was chosen as one of the New 7 Wonders. New 7 Wonders is a website which has promoted and polls for the new Seven Wonders of the World. Cultural diplomacy through the tourism sector also began with the formation of Wonderful Indonesia in 2011 which aimed to introduce a number of Indonesia's strategic tours to the world to the world.

B. Internet and Its Impacts to Indonesian Diplomacy

Since its invention in 1983, the internet has grown rapidly throughout the world. In the early of internet penetration in Asia, the internet was previously seen by most countries in Asia as the advanced communication technology to prop the economic development, rather than to support the political agenda. The Internet has later gradually influenced several aspects in politics since the last period of Suharto administration until the end of Indonesian transitional democracy, which was marked by institutional reform in several Indonesian governmental bodies, including Indonesian foreign ministry.

1. The Early History of Internet Penetration in Indonesia

The beginning of internet penetration in Indonesia has started in the mid-1990. Before the internet became popular, internet connection was previously developed by scholars (engineers) from several universities in Indonesia; University of Indonesia (UI), Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB),

Sebelas Nopember Institute of Technology (ITS), and Gadjah Mada University. In 1983, the University of Indonesia Network or UINet was developed, it was acknowledged as the first network in Asia to connect with the global network in 1984 (Lim, 2005).

Onno Purbo and other members of Paguyuban Network; a hobbyist community consisting of scholars and internet activists, introduced a low cost computer network using radio frequency to substitute Telkom communication service in 1993. The internet has later gradually become the commercial service. Indo Internet or Indonet was the first Internet Service Provider established in 1994, followed by Rahardjasa Internet (Radnet) in 1995, IndosatNet in 1996, dan Telkomnet in 1998 (Lim, 2005). *Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia* or APJII was established in May 15th, 1996 to develop the national internet network and control internet tariffs.

As many countries in the world, media has set political agendas in Indonesia. The use of electronic media has escalated in Indonesia during the Suharto administration. State's control over the information on the electronic media has led to the rise of Indonesian media, such as *Radio Republik Indonesia* or RRI and *Televisi Republik Indonesia* or TVRI. Such national media are important to represent the agenda-setting of the Indonesian government. They also played significant role in Indonesian public diplomacy. Throwing back to the end of the 1980s, *Titian Muhibah*, a popular TV program launched by TVRI and Radio Televisyen Malaysia or RTM have

proven the eminence of information technology leverage relations between countries.

Unlike radio and television, the internet was seen by the government as part of national development. ITC market was worth more than 100 billion rupiahs in 1995-1996, forty percent of them was from banking and finance industries (Hill & Sen, 2005). By contrast, the internet has become a space for spreading resistance and transgressiveness against the New Order regime. Mailing lists; such as Apakabar, IndoProtes, Siar News Services, and other anti-government mailing lists and online journalism were really helpful to gain the support and disseminate the information, as the government has strictly monitored the resistance on the ground (Lim, 2005). Mailing lists; such as MeunaSah (Aceh), MateBean (East Timor), and MemberaMo (Papua), helped separatist movements in Indonesia to communicate and spread the message regarding secession. Masariku Network, Ambon Berdarah Online or ABO were used by certain groups to during Ambon sectarian conflict. Thus, the beginning of internet penetration in Indonesian politics was associated with domestic political turmoils than diplomacy.

2. Post Transitional Democracy: The Beginning of Indonesian Digital Diplomacy

The transitional democracy was an important period for the development of the internet in Indonesia. Democracy requires open and transparent government, has caused changes in a number of

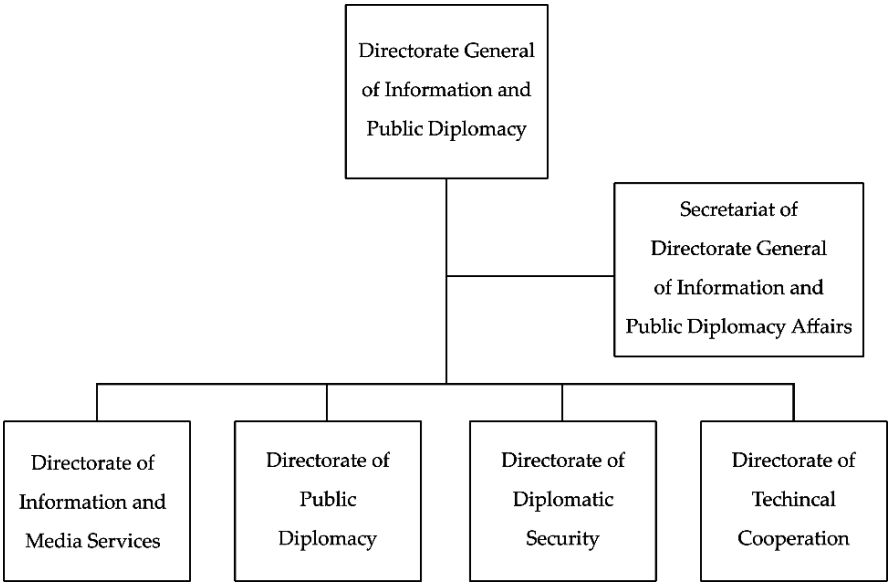
ministries, departments and other state agencies. In 2001, the Ministry of Communication and Information or *Kementerian Negara Komunikasi dan Informatika* was established, which was previously known as Information Department or *Departemen Penerangan*. The 2001 has also been marked as the beginning of the change in Indonesian diplomacy. Democratization has led to the transformation in several governmental bodies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Kemlu. The enactment of Presidential Decree No. 119 of 2001 or Keputusan Presiden Nomor 119 Tahun 2001 has influenced the establishment of Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy (Kemlu, 2013).

Thus, the term "public diplomacy" was recognized as the strategy of Indonesian foreign policy. Public diplomacy was introduced by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hasan Wirajuda to improve Kemlu's performance. Wirajuda's program focus on three main aspects; a) restructuring department bodies and organizations; b) restructuring Indonesian diplomatic missions (representatives); c) improving diplomatic career.

Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy was established in 2002. At the same period, Kemlu has also launched www.kemlu.go.id. Considering the influence of digital technologies in diplomacy, particularly public diplomacy. Under Yudhoyono administration, the government has later released Regulation No. 7 of 2011 concerning the Organization and Procedures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate General split its body into four

directorates, namely Directorate of Public Diplomacy, Directorate of Information and Media, Directorate of Diplomatic Security, and Directorate of Technical Cooperation. The present hierarchy of the Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy is as follows:

Figure 3.1 The Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy



According to Indonesian Law Number 14 of 2008 concerning Public Information Openness (UU KIP), every governmental institution is obliged to open access to public information to support the transparency and accountability within state administration. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs carries out the mandate of UU KIP

through providing accurate information, but it still has the right to exclude certain information.

The second Yudhoyono's administration was the period when internet penetration in Indonesia has increased, and social media has become the trend among people. The first Kemlu's Twitter account, @portal_kemlu_RI and Facebook @kemlu.RI were first released in 2009. Since then, social media and websites become the tools for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to disseminate the information. Diplomats have also actively used social media platforms to showcase the characteristics and images of Indonesia, especially those related to culture, tourism, and the economy (Pohan, Pohan, & Savitri, 2017).

Under Yudhoyono administration, Indonesian Government has started harnessing the social media platform for diplomacy, particularly Facebook and Twitter. To gain the support from the public, Yudhonoyo used Facebook post account to introduce his foreign policy slogan "A Millions of Friends and Zero Enemy" (See Figure 3.2). In 2013, Yudhoyono tweeted a response to Australian wire-tapping; *"Indonesia also demands Australia for official response, one that can be understood by the public, on tapping on Indonesia"* (See Figure 3.3). Such assertive and casual tweet has effectively caught public attention, both domestic and international public, including Australians.

Figure 3.2 Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono Facebook Post on Indonesian Foreign Policy

Figure 3.3 Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono Tweet on Wiretapping

A number of other ministries and government agencies have also actively used the internet and social media to promote national interests. The Ministry of Tourism for example, in 2010 has launched a Youtube channel, "Indonesia.Travel" and a website

http://indonesia.travel to promote Indonesian tourism. Indonesia Travel contains a variety of videos that showcase the natural beauty of Indonesia and cultural diversity. A number of videos have even reached hundreds of thousands of viewers and positive testimonies on Indonesian tourism.

Figure 3.4 Indonesia.Travel's Video on Raja Ampat Papua

Diplomacy does not merely deal with maintaining relations between states. In this wired era, when everyone is connected to the digital media, conducting routine online conversations or collecting feedbacks from public is necessary, and the government should be able to take advantage of this to gain the public support. The aforementioned examples have clearly shown that the embryo of digital diplomacy has been growing up at that time. Nevertheless,

"digital diplomacy" was not explicitly mentioned as Indonesia foreign policy strategy in Yudhoyono administration.

There are three reasons explaining why Indonesia should embrace digital diplomacy. First, digital diplomacy is not merely a trend, but it is now a widely accepted manner in diplomatic practice; more than 209 countries have been actively using social media. Digital diplomacy also helps the government to boost real diplomacy, particularly the government with average to low diplomatic outreach.

Second, digital diplomacy can be useful to deal with certain problems that cannot be fixed through direct communication. Even after the New Order, the Indonesian Government still needs to deal with secessionist movements, such as the Free Papua Movement or *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* or OPM. The United Liberation Movement for West Papua or ULMWP, an organization which consists of several countries in Oceania Pacific; such as Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and New Caledonia have actively voiced West Papua independence and dice the opinion to suppress Indonesian Government. Realizing the importance of digital diplomacy for Indonesia, Kemlu has later introduced the term digital diplomacy in 2017 and added digital diplomacy in Kemlu's strategic plan 2015-2019.

Third, digital diplomacy is beneficial to dice the discussion and gain feedback from the worldwide public. There are at least 4.1 billion internet users in the world. The latest data shows the number

of websites worldwide has reached 1.7 billion. People also more engaged in social media, Facebook has currently 2.4 billion active users; while Twitter has 344 million active users, and 681 million people are Google+ active users (Internet Live Stats, 2019).

One of the examples is Indonesia-Australia debates on the Bali Nine case. Bali Nine execution has induced a plethora of online protests from Australians. They even demanded the Indonesian government to give Australian aids for Aceh Tsunami back. The present government, particularly Kemlu seemed to learn from the Australians people regarding how powerful social media was.