

Muslim Politics Review

Vol. 3 No. 1, 2024, 45-83

<https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v3i1.247>

Hybrid Movements, Digital Technology, and the Rise and Fall of Far-Right Islamist Protest Mobilization in Indonesia

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Abstract

What explains the rise and fall of far-right Islamist protest mobilization in contemporary Indonesia? The 2016-2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election witnessed significant growth in support for and mobilization of the far-right. While far-right Islamist mobilization has occurred regularly since the fall of the authoritarian Suharto regime in 1998, its longevity and impact on electoral politics has historically been limited. I maintain that the 2016 far-right Islamist protest mobilization was enabled and disabled by the dynamic relationship between hybrid media and hybrid movement strategies. Hybrid thinking serves as a platform for understanding the increasingly diverse and complex nature of Islamist mobilization, generating new ways of exploring some of the classic concerns of social movement studies and technology. This study proposes an innovative analytic strategy to understand the complexity of contemporary Islamist protest mobilization, creating a hybrid movement that effectively spans different movements, constituencies, and institutions.

Keywords: Far-right; movement; hybrid; media; digital technology; Islamist

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Introduction

There has been intense scholarly debate about the unprecedented Islamist mass demonstrations that took place in late 2016 in the context of the Jakarta gubernatorial election. The protests, commonly known as the *Aksi Bela Islam* (ABI, or Action to Defend Islam), were driven by radical right and conservative Muslim organizations, such as *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI, or Islamic Defenders Front), tapping into religious sensitivities and successfully mobilizing hundreds of thousands of people on the streets. Protestors demanded the arrest of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (popularly known as Ahok), the then-Governor of Jakarta and a double minority (Christian and of Chinese heritage), for allegedly blaspheming Islam. The ABI series of protests is widely regarded as one of the largest mass demonstrations ever documented in Indonesian history following the 1998 revolution, implying that far-right Islamist mass mobilization is set to open up new avenues to political power at the expense of Indonesia's democratic norms and institutions. The scale and impact of the ABI movement were surprising, especially considering that, despite regular far-right Islamist mobilizations since the fall of the authoritarian Suharto regime, their influence on electoral politics has historically been limited. The magnitude of the crowd and the seriousness of their demands caught even government and security officials off guard. Notably, this mobilization marked the largest social movement organized by the FPI, an organization known for vigilante activities and attacks on religious minorities and which, until 2016, had typically mobilized only a few hundred people at a time. How did these Islamist organizations suddenly manage to foster a collective consciousness among a vast and diverse group of Indonesians? After decades on the social and political margins, far-right Islamist movements in Indonesia are gaining ground and even claiming a role in mainstream local and national politics.

In response to far-right political and mobilization victories, scholarship in Indonesian studies has made significant progress in analyzing the dynamics underlying the emergence of far-right Islamist

mobilization in Indonesia. Central to the controversy is the question of whether the surge in far-right Islamist mobilization signals the rise of a new form of Islamist populism (or ‘mobocracy’) in Indonesia,² providing evidence of increasing conservatism among Indonesian Muslims.³ Scholars have also highlighted President Joko ‘Jokowi’ Widodo’s failure to meet the political goals of Indonesia’s conservative Muslim population, in contrast with the inclusive policies of his predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.⁴ Others argue that the far-right’s capacity to mobilize people in events such as mass rallies and demonstrations benefits certain elites, primarily by appealing to religious sentiment⁵ and aligning with Yudhoyono’s specific interests in the Jakarta election, thereby increasing the political opportunities and resource mobilization necessary for the social movement to emerge.⁶ Additionally, they are known to have developed opaque and questionable arrangements with state security forces.⁷

At the same time, Cas Mudde has recently highlighted an increasing divide between far-right parties and politics.⁸ Traditionally, right-wing movements were believed to be confined to nation-states and primarily engaged in party politics, with exceptions for communities and groups like white power skinheads or Al Qaeda. However, the recent surge of far-right contention in Europe has challenged this assumption, particularly with the emergence and popularity of ‘extra-parliamentary’ organizations like the anti-Islamic Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West (PEGIDA) and the Identitarian Movement in Germany. This led Mudde to propose the inclusion of a fourth wave of postwar far-right politics, characterized by significant electoral success and political influence.

² Fauzi 2016.

³ Lindsey 2016.

⁴ Mietzner and Muhtadi 2018.

⁵ Hadiz 2018.

⁶ Mietzner and Muhtadi 2018.

⁷ Wilson 2015.

⁸ Mudde 2016a.

Similarly, in Indonesia, contemporary far-right politics exhibit a diverse landscape where the far right encompasses not only political parties focused on elections and public office but also social movements or 'networks of networks' aiming to mobilize public support outside the electoral arena.⁹ This complex nature of the far-right movement in Indonesia mirrors the evolving dynamics observed in other contexts and contributes to a broader understanding of far-right politics worldwide.

While the research mentioned above has acknowledged these crucial distinctions, it has made little empirical and theoretical effort to understand the non-electoral articulations of far-right politics. This absence, in my view, poses a risk of obscuring a comprehensive understanding of contemporary far-right politics for two reasons. Firstly, many contemporary far-right parties originated from protest movements.¹⁰ Neglecting the study of far-right protest mobilization could result in an incomplete and overly electoral-focused account of this significant political phenomenon. It is crucial to go beyond the electoral aspect and delve into the broader dynamics of far-right politics.¹¹ Secondly, this focus downplays the fact that protest mobilization enhances the public visibility of the far right and the social profile of its claims.¹²

Thus, the social movement viewpoint I suggest here is a call for a broader understanding of this phenomenon beyond its most evident political manifestations, while also contributing to social movement studies, which should broaden the research scope beyond left-wing and progressive mobilizations to include right-wing movement politics. Traditional approaches to collective action can be also effectively employed when studying far-right movements. The concepts commonly used in social movement studies, such as 'political opportunity structure',¹³

⁹ Griffin 2003; Minkenberg 2003; Klandermans and Mayer 2005; Caiani *et al.* 2012.

¹⁰ Kitschelt 2006; Pirro 2019.

¹¹ Gattinara *et al.* 2022.

¹² Amenta & Elliott 2017.

¹³ Kriesi 2004.

'resource mobilization',¹⁴ 'repertoires of contention',¹⁵ and 'framing',¹⁶ have demonstrated their applicability in addressing fundamental questions underlying far-right movement emergence and success.¹⁷

The 2016-2017 far-right Islamist mobilization in Indonesia represents a unique example of a contemporary social movement that combines various religious, political, and economic elements to achieve its objectives, resulting in the invention of hybrid forms. This movement undergoes dynamic ideological shifts and goes beyond traditional theological references, utilizing available resources and adopting diverse strategies. Hybrid organizations are recognized widely to enjoy distinct advantages over non-hybrid counterparts. Heaney and Rojas¹⁸ demonstrate that hybrid social movements have the ability to attract a broader range of individuals to their cause. Additionally, hybrid organizations are often more innovative in finding solutions for complex problems.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Chadwick²⁰ proposes that political parties, interest groups, and social movements can and do borrow organizational and mobilization strategies from one another. This notion extends to right-wing movements, which can potentially adopt organizational and mobilization repertoires typically associated with progressive and left-wing movements.

As an illustration, hybrid forms of mobilization are not unique to Indonesia but have been observed in various regions facing political volatility and ideological shifts. In the Arab Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel, it has been demonstrated that there has been a rise in political volatility and hybridity within Islamist repertoires of contention since the

¹⁴ McCarthy & Zald 1977.

¹⁵ Tilly 1986.

¹⁶ Snow and Benford 1988.

¹⁷ Rydgren 2005; Arzheimer and Carter 2006.

¹⁸ Heaney and Rojas 2014.

¹⁹ Jay 2013.

²⁰ Chadwick 2014.

Arab Uprisings between 2010 and 2011.²¹ Furthermore, Goss and Heaney²² demonstrate that the crisis of confidence faced by conservatives after the election of United States (US) President Barack Obama, which bolstered Democratic majorities in Congress, presents strategic challenges for right-wing activists, thus highlighting the potential suitability of hybrid organizational forms to mobilize and energize their grassroots base. In the context of Indonesia, the mobilization driven by the FPI presents an intriguing example. FPI is known for its conservative Islamic stance, anti-pluralist views, and fundamental opposition to the democratic system in principle. However, this identity contrasts with their actions in the mobilization process, where they attempt to present themselves as a civilized organization and support democracy through narratives of constitutional jihad and peaceful demonstrations. This movement exhibits clear hybridity, as it strategically combines elements of conservative Islamist ideology with popular political ideas such as democracy, tolerance, and nationalism for the sake of mobilization. This approach creates a nuanced appeal, attempting to reach a broader audience while still retaining FPI's fundamental principles.

In reaching audiences, movements have been intertwined with media, shaping the ways in which groups mobilize and influencing broader societal consequences.²³ Social movements have consistently evolved alongside media, states, and markets. Therefore, in addition to the hybrid nature of the movement, contemporary movements are embedded in, and interact with, an environment of unprecedented media abundance, which itself is the result of a far-reaching process of hybridization, referred to as a hybrid media system.²⁴ This system has fundamentally transformed the way in which movements mobilize protest politics. This evolution extends to far-right Islamist movements in Indonesia as well. Islamist movements can now rely on social media to influence mainstream media agendas

²¹ Gade and Bøås 2020.

²² Goss and Heaney 2010.

²³ Tarrow 2011; Tilly 1982.

²⁴ Chadwick 2017.

while also developing a 'purer' form of digital media strategy focused on algorithm manipulation and alt-tech platforms; this is an important development. From the early Internet popularization in the 2000s represented by *Laskar Jihad* to the web 2.0 era with the use of privately-owned social networking sites typified by the ABI movement, Islamist movements in Indonesia have entered a new, more complex, and unsettled era, characterized by relational, fragmented, plural, and dispersed dynamics of mobilization.

On this basis, I argue that the hybrid nature of the far-right Islamist movement in Indonesia, both in its movement and media strategy, plays a crucial role in its emergence. The integration of various social stratifications, including religion, ethnicity, nationalism, sectarianism, and tribal divisions in Indonesia, demands mobilization and organizational strategies that can appeal to the country's diverse and heterogeneous communities. To be successful, far-right Islamist movements must navigate these complexities and adapt their repertoires to ever-changing conditions. Hybridity thus offers a powerful mode of thinking about contemporary Islamist movements because it foregrounds complexity, fluidity, and transition. Specifically, this article examines a range of examples of this systemic hybridity through the analysis of protest communication and movement mobilization contexts, ranging from political and resource mobilization to media opportunity structure.

To study these processes and their specificities, I base my analysis on three aspects of media and movement hybridity that are central to understanding the dynamics of contemporary social movements in contexts outside the established liberal democracies of the West. First, I delve into three interconnected mobilization factors while adopting an organizational innovation perspective at the macro (e.g., socio-political context, political opportunities), meso (e.g., organizational dynamics, choices, and strategies), and micro levels (e.g., individual motivations, life histories, and experiences, and activism). I contend that focusing on the combination of macro, meso, and micro levels is equally valuable and crucial for understanding the far-right as a hybrid movement.

Furthermore, I focus on three dimensions of media hybridity: disruptive/dramaturgical, authoritative/professional, and dissident/counter network strategies. Finally, I argue that the ABI movement in Indonesia achieved successful mobilization by creating hybrid media and movements that deftly merged elements from these three hybrid factors. This approach effectively spanned different movements, constituencies, and institutions, as well as old and newer media logics.

The study focuses on the ABI movement in Indonesia. ABI emerged in October 2016 to express Islamist opposition to Ahok following a campaign visit to a community in which he allegedly blasphemed Islam. At the time of his controversial statement, Ahok was running for a second term as governor, with the election scheduled for early 2017. ABI, as a far-right Islamist faction, comprised of individuals previously involved in various movements, organized multiple demonstrations under the coordination of *Gerakan Nasional Pengawal Fatwa MUI* (National Movement of the MUI Edicts Guard, or GNPf-MUI). After two smaller protests, the largest demonstration took place in December 2016, attracting an unprecedented 750,000 protestors and making it the most significant protest in the country since the 1998 revolution. Successfully achieving its objective of ousting Ahok from Jakartan politics and catalyzing substantial changes in Indonesia's social and political landscape, the movement's mobilization defies conventional expectations of political Islam movements. However, despite initial success, the movement has experienced a decline in popularity over the past three years, particularly during the pandemic period, and its mobilization capacity has become limited. The investigation of this specific movement's trajectory is essential because it deviates from established theories, providing insights into a unique and intriguing form of political Islam mobilization.

Mainly theoretical, this article's empirical dimension is based on examining representative platforms and accounts associated with the movement, consulting numerous news stories, policy reports, and

secondary datasets, such as social network analysis from open-source tools. While these data provide insights into how digital technology is used, there are limits to their utility. To address these limitations, I included interviews with five informants, including activists responsible for media and information dissemination as well as national and local coordinators. The article proceeds as follows. First, I present the theoretical foundations of my work, drawing on insights from the study of hybrid organizations, hybrid media systems, and far-right politics in social movement contexts. Next, I provide the empirical analysis. Finally, I discuss the main findings and conclusions of the study.

Situating radical Indonesian Islamists in contemporary far-right politics

Over the past two decades, Indonesia has been held up as a model of democratic transition for other countries. It has enjoyed a positive image and coverage in the Western media as a shining example of a 'liberal' and 'tolerant' Islam, particularly in countries with significant Muslim populations.²⁵ The most noticeable difference between Indonesia and other parts of the Muslim world is that Indonesia's form of government is tolerant, often references pluralism and religious tolerance, and accepts modernity and democracy, while still enshrining religious practice and highlighting the gracious and merciful sides of God,²⁶ providing a more palatable political alternative for Muslim communities than the failed Arab Spring and the extremist disasters that have engulfed the Middle East, which has been ravaged by foreign-imposed proxy wars, interstate conflicts, and internal strife.²⁷ The puzzle is why such an image has not necessarily translated into substantive adoption of socially pluralist perspectives on a wide variety of contemporary public concerns.

²⁵ Bruinessen 2013; Hadiz 2019; Sofjan 2016; Lindsey 2018.

²⁶ Inoguchi 2012.

²⁷ See Bruinessen 1999; Hooker 2003; Laffan 2006; Bruinessen 2011; Feillard and Madinier 2011; Hasyim 2013; Sofjan 2016; Lindsey 2018.

Looking at the emergence of far-right Islamists in contemporary democratic Indonesia, it can be said that Indonesian Islamic populism has grown increasingly anti-pluralist and illiberal traits,²⁸ which Martin van Bruinessen²⁹ refers to as the 'Conservative Turn' that has helped to destroy the well-known images of smiling faces of Indonesian Muslims.³⁰

It should be emphasized that the Indonesian situation reflects a worldwide trend, although the specific manifestations differ. It has been observed, for example, that the entirety of Europe has witnessed the resurgence of far-right street politics, with established political parties adopting some of their ideas, particularly regarding immigration policy and sovereignty issues,³¹ triggering a new wave of xenophobic violence and social unrest against immigrants.³² Moreover, it is worth noting that three of the world's largest democracies—India, the US, and Brazil—have recently been led by far-right populist figures. Thus, what we now see in some Muslim-majority societies is a kind of right-wing politics similar to that encountered in many parts of the West. This trend is present in almost all countries around the world, challenging the notion that far-right mobilization is solely driven by mass immigration.³³ However, it is important to note that the factors driving the rise of far-right contention can vary widely depending on the country and region in question, and that there is no one-size-fits-all explanation for this phenomenon.

In this research, the definition of the far right draws on Mudde's conceptualization,³⁴ which outlines a set of core ideological attributes commonly shared by such actors, such as nationalism, exclusionism, nativism, authoritarianism, xenophobia, a strong-state orientation, welfare chauvinism, revisionism, adherence to traditional ethics, and

²⁸ Hadiz 2018.

²⁹ Martin van Bruinessen 2013.

³⁰ Ricklefs 2012.

³¹ Yilmaz 2012.

³² Benček and Strasheim 2016; Gattinara 2018.

³³ Kriesi *et al.* 2008; Minkenberg 2019.

³⁴ Mudde 2017.

populism. Additionally, Mudde³⁵ distinguishes between 'extreme' organizations that overtly reject the democratic constitutional order and 'radical' right groups that display antagonism towards its liberal democratic principles. The use of the term 'radical Islamists' within the context of far-right politics might be perceived as contradictory, as in the West, far-right politics traditionally align with nationalist and anti-Islam sentiments. However, in the Indonesian context, right-wing politics often intersects with Islamic populist ideologies. This connection is not solely a consequence of Indonesia's Muslim-majority status but is also due to the historical role Islamic organizations played in the military-led dismantling of the Indonesian Communist Party in the mid-to-late 1960s.

Moreover, the utilization of the far-right concept in this study is congruent with the ideology adopted by FPI and the leadership that spearheaded the examined mobilization, specifically Muhammad Rizieq Shihab. FPI openly rejects the idea of democracy, which they consider as bringing the 'disease' of secularism and liberalism that is not in accordance with Islamic teachings. Moreover, Shihab has emerged as one of Indonesia's most prominent figures associated with the far right since the late 1990s.³⁶ As a radical Islamic scholar with ties to Saudi Arabia, he has spent decades advocating against the state, positioning himself as a staunch leader dedicated to protecting Islam for the broader population. This research's application of the far-right framework aligns with both the ideological characteristics outlined by Mudde and the distinct profile of leadership represented by Shihab.

The far-right as social movement

Political protest explanations produced in the field of social movement studies have not been applied systematically to the extreme right.³⁷ Scholars of comparative politics have largely been preoccupied

³⁵ Mudde 2019.

³⁶ Yilmaz and Barton 2021.

³⁷ Caiani *et al.* 2012.

with studying far-right parties and their supporters,³⁸ overlooking non-electoral processes.³⁹ In contrast, social movement academics have historically favored research on the progressive side of politics,⁴⁰ ignoring the nativist side of the debate.⁴¹ As a result, far-right protest mobilization remains a gap in the field, and empirical research into its drivers has been limited at best. I argue that combining classical theories of social movements and research on far-right politics offers valuable insights into the causes of far-right mobilization in the protest arena.

Scholars describe far-right protest mobilization as a distinct, non-electoral venue for political participation in which collective actors express their grievances, advance their claims, and elicit responses from politicians and voters.⁴² These types of grassroots mobilization are part of a larger range of extra-parliamentary activities involving far-right collective actors, such as political parties, movement parties, and social movements. Therefore, the far right can be indeed appraised as a social movement constituting a collective challenge “by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities”.⁴³ Looking at far-right politics from a social movement vantage point means accounting for the purposive, collective, and dynamic factors of participation in collective action.

As noted by Klandermans and Mayer,⁴⁴ studying far-right organizations as social movements in Indonesia entails examining their members as movement activists, their structures as movement organizations, and contemporary far-right politics as part of a longer trajectory. This research direction holds promise, since far-right political parties in the country have generally performed poorly in local and

³⁸ Golder 2016.

³⁹ Hutter & Borbáth 2019.

⁴⁰ della Porta & Diani 2006.

⁴¹ Blee 2007; Giugni *et al.* 2005.

⁴² Gattinara and Pirro 2019.

⁴³ Tarrow 1998: p. 4.

⁴⁴ Klandermans and Mayer 2005.

national politics. Unlike in Europe, where the growth of far-right movements aligns with the success of radical right parties, the situation in Indonesia contrasts this trend. While radical right political parties may not achieve exceptional success in Indonesia, they have displayed significant power in mobilizing social movements, especially protests. Therefore, focusing on the far right as a social movement in Indonesia seems appropriate, as investigating the dynamics of the far right as social movements can provide insights into how they wield influence and engage with societal and political issues, even without achieving electoral success.

Contextualizing hybridity in media and movement

The concept of ‘hybridity’ was initially introduced in a significant study on political systems in Central America to explain the complexities of social environments where traditional categories are insufficient to describe emerging patterns of social organization, practices, and identities.⁴⁵ In the context of organizational theory, a hybrid refers to an organization that combines two or more types of identities that are not typically expected to coexist.⁴⁶ Cultivating a hybrid organizational identity, meaning synergistically blending divergent practices, goals, and meanings is a challenge for organizations that strive to meet the needs of varied stakeholders and attend to multiple audiences.⁴⁷ Zuckerman's notion of an ‘illegitimacy discount’ explains that actors who cannot fit into a single, well-defined category may face a credibility deficit when viewed by attentive audiences.⁴⁸ However, despite the challenges associated with hybridity, previous studies have shown the positive dimensions of hybridity in feminist and antiwar movements.⁴⁹ These studies indicate that such movements effectively mobilize constituents and achieve greater

⁴⁵ Karl 1995.

⁴⁶ Albert and Whetten 1985.

⁴⁷ Battilana & Dorado 2010.

⁴⁸ Zuckerman *et al.* 2003; Hsu, Hannan, and Kocak 2009.

⁴⁹ Heaney and Rojas 2014.

success than non-hybrid organizations by encompassing intersectional identities, navigating multiple institutional environments, and capitalizing on their inclusive nature to attract widespread participation and impact their causes through antiwar demonstrations. Thus, within the realm of social movements, it is common and even valued for organizations to adopt hybrid identities.

Beyond the progressive movement, scholars who analyze the radical right also recognize its hybrid nature through the introduction of the concept of 'movement parties'. They highlight that, similar to developments observed on the left,⁵⁰ the radical right has the capacity to give rise to movement parties.⁵¹ These entities exist between traditional political parties and social movements,⁵² engaging in electoral politics to secure political representation as well as in mobilizing public support by framing contentious issues in specific ways.⁵³ Hence, the concept of hybridity in the context of the radical right primarily focuses on how these movements transform into distinct political organizations, referred to as movement parties, to effectively mobilize voters. This perspective draws heavily from influential contributions in the field of social movement studies, which stress the significance of analyzing the electoral arena, political parties, and their interactions with social movements and protest politics.⁵⁴

In recent studies exploring Islamist social movements,⁵⁵ the concept of hybridity has emerged, highlighting how Islamism can intertwine with nationalist ideas to form new hybrid versions of movements. This hybridity is a consequence of the state's and the regime's hybrid nature spilling over into civil society, and it reflects the impact of

⁵⁰ della Porta *et al.* 2017.

⁵¹ Caiani and Cisar 2018; Pirro and Castelli Gattinara 2018.

⁵² Gunther and Diamond 2003.

⁵³ Minkenberg 2002.

⁵⁴ Goldstone 2003; McAdam and Tarrow 2010, 2013; Kriesi *et al.* 2012; Hutter 2014; Heaney and Rojas 2015; della Porta *et al.* 2017.

⁵⁵ Gade and Palani 2022; Drevon 2021.

state structure and strategy on how Islamist social movements hybridize and respond to the state's logic. As social movements operate within society, they must navigate the logic of the state and how it shapes societal dynamics. For instance, in Indonesia, Islamist movements, like the one mobilized by the FPI, had to merge radical Islamist ideology with Indonesian nationalism, despite their close ties to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. Consequently, the paths of resistance for Islamist social movements in a hybrid political environment take on a hybrid character. This blending of different ideological elements allows Islamist movements to adapt and mobilize effectively within the complexities of the political landscape in which they emerge.

Furthermore, contemporary hybrid movements are embedded in and interact with an environment of unprecedented media abundance, which itself is the result of a far-reaching process of hybridization that has fundamentally transformed the way information is produced, disseminated, and consumed. Different sub-fields of communication scholarship have developed various conceptualizations of hybridity in media. Chadwick,⁵⁶ for example, is renowned for his theory of the hybrid media system, which contributes significantly to the discussion of the hybrid media environment in social movements. Chadwick's theory of hybridity is developed from a technological perspective and analyzes how digital technologies offer powerful resources for collective action, enabling citizens to share ideas and act in concert, even though they are largely excluded from access to mainstream media.⁵⁷ This is particularly relevant for far-right groups, who have previously struggled to gain traditional media coverage. The end of elite-controlled mass communication as the predominant mode of public communication suggests a wide-ranging redistribution of informational uncertainty, as more players can promote alternative narratives through a multitude of channels, fundamentally transforming how power is exercised.

⁵⁶ Chadwick 2017.

⁵⁷ Bennett and Segerberg 2013.

For that reason, movement forms have now become more diverse, characterized by the convergence of previously distinct organizational repertoires and deploying a wide range of strategies and tactics to build and pursue broader change. Consequently, some social movements showcase diverse ways of organizing and mobilizing, seamlessly blending online and offline efforts, combining specific actions with more flexible approaches, and transcending national boundaries while organizing local events like town square fundraisers. Chadwick cites MoveOn as an example of hybrid movement mobilization, as they effectively blend different repertoires and rapidly transition between them.⁵⁸ MoveOn is a US-based, progressive leaning action political committee and a public policy advocacy group. Similar to Chadwick, Treré introduced the concept of ‘hybrid communications practice’⁵⁹ to challenge the notion of technological determinism that still haunts many studies in media-movement relationships. Treré argues that in each social movement protest, activists employ a complex and often unpredictable hybrid of old and new, physical and digital, human and non-human, and corporate and alternative technologies. This approach is used to determine, develop, and disseminate proposals to allies, multiple publics, dominant media, and state actors. At the same time, activists use these hybrid communication practices to cultivate, articulate, and reproduce collective visions and identities within the movement.

Theorizing hybrid social movements

While previous studies have focused on specific aspects of hybridity in social movements such as repertoires,⁶⁰ identities,⁶¹ and organizations,⁶² this article adopts a more comprehensive approach. By

⁵⁸ Chadwick 2007.

⁵⁹ Treré 2018.

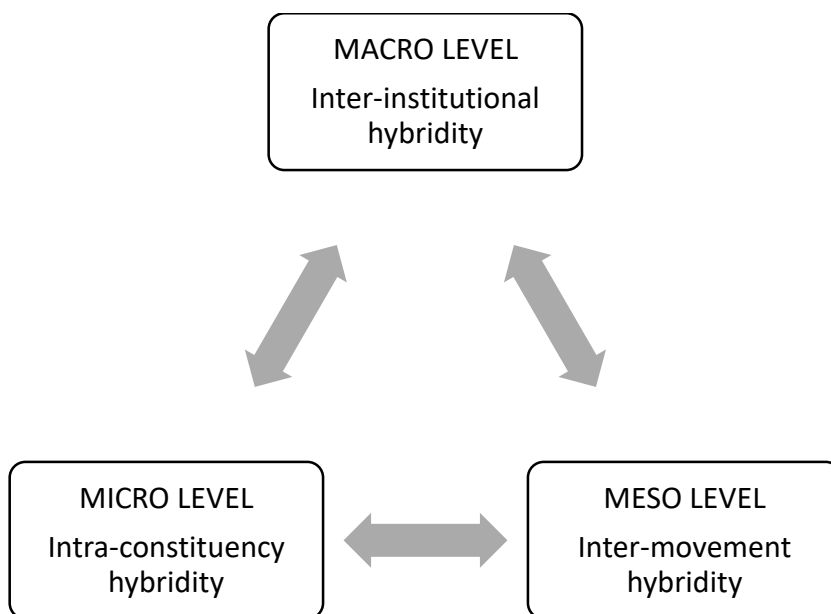
⁶⁰ Chadwick 2014.

⁶¹ Heaney and Rojas 2014.

⁶² Caiani and Cisar 2018.

integrating concepts from macro, micro, and meso levels, we can attain a holistic understanding of hybridity in social movements (Figure 1). This approach surpasses the notion of hybridity in movement parties, repertoires, organizational and identities, as it also allows for a deeper examination of individual motivation and ideologies within the movement, as well as the role of discourses. It also attempts to fill the gaps of Chadwick's concept of organizational hybridity which lacks consideration of these aspects, making this broader perspective essential for a comprehensive analysis.

Figure 1. *Hybridity on macro, meso, and micro levels of movement*



At the macro level, scholars adopting the political process approach emphasize the examination of far-right movements within their broader political and institutional context, considering sociocultural and political factors that influence their growth.⁶³ Additionally, spatial and issue

⁶³ Kriesi 2004; McAdam and Tarrow 2010.

competition between the electoral and protest fields plays a significant role, with political opportunity structures influencing the accessibility of political space for far-right actors. At the meso level, attention is directed towards internal organization and strategic decision-making, examining how mobilization structures and resources contribute to protest actions and garnering public support for the far-right movement, providing insights into the 'production structure' of far-right movements.⁶⁴ At the micro level, far-right individuals' activism and motivations are scrutinized, with a focus on the role of discourse and framing in shaping their beliefs and behaviors. The language, symbols, and narratives used by far-right activists play a crucial role in constructing meaning and shaping individual motivations within the movement.

Hybrid movement strategy

Macro level: mobilizing inter-institutional hybridity

The first crucial feature in defining the macro level of hybrid factors involved in the ABI movement is the spatial aspect. The physical location of protest sites, and other public areas such as streets, parks, and squares where social movements assemble, is an essential spatial consideration. The physical placement of a movement can affect its visibility and impact, as well as the level of dispute with authorities and/or opponents. When ABI activists, angered by Ahok's allegedly blasphemous statement, earned the support of various elements of Muslims in Indonesia, they peacefully occupied several important places in the capital city, Jakarta. One of their most significant accomplishments was successfully occupying the National Monument. In claiming their right to the city, activists created physical and political space for reasserting the power of the Muslim people. The capacity to act collectively and appear simultaneously in the political space, as depicted in the occupation of the National Monument at

⁶⁴ Rucht 1999.

the heart of Jakarta, reflected power.⁶⁵ Following the success of the first mobilization, the movement organized regular reunions for individuals who took part in a series of further public actions. However, the government was reluctant to allow the use of the National Monument for these events. When ABI lost their capacity to dominate public spaces—one of the fundamental hybrid features at the macro level—they also experienced a decline in their mobilization capability, as fewer people were drawn to participate.

Before delving into the role of political institutions, it is essential to discuss the significant support provided by interest groups in advancing ABI's agendas. Among these interest groups, *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Indonesian Ulema Council, or MUI) played a pivotal role. Through its opinions and religious stances, MUI actively supported the issues that were central to the cause of the movement. These issues later served as triggers for mobilizing the movement and laid the foundation for the establishment of GNPF-MUI as the main organization for the movement, even though GNPF-MUI is not officially recognized by MUI's leaders as an affiliated organization. MUI's opinions and religious stances are regarded as authoritative fatwas that carry significant weight within the Indonesian Muslim community. As such, MUI's opinions became the basis upon which clerics and Muslims participating in the ABI movement gained legitimacy for their actions. By aligning with MUI's fatwas, ABI could solidify its position and garner support from a wide range of individuals and organizations within the Muslim community. In this way, the movement strategically recombined social movement repertoires with the repertoires of interest groups to effectively manage the conflicting interests of external actors through this hybrid approach.

Furthermore, the presence of government and political party elites as potential allies provided the movement with better access to resources, such as funding, media attention, and political influence. According to

⁶⁵ Arendt 1958.

media and policy reports,⁶⁶ political figures were present in some capacity during the 2016 demonstrations. Political parties associated with the movement were identified, such as Gerindra, the National Mandate Party (PAN), and Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), as were notable figures such as Titiek Soeharto (daughter of former president Soeharto), former presidential candidate (and, at the time of writing, president elect) Prabowo Subianto, former president Yudhoyono, General Gatot Nurmantyo (Ret.), Ahmad Heryawan, Fahri Hamzah, Fadli Zon, Amien Rais, and Sohibul Iman. Yet, unlike religious groups, these political actors were not prominent in the movement, since they preferred to remain anonymous to depict the movement as wholly religious rather than political. However, there were instances when some political figures did publicly support the movement, transforming it from strictly religious to a more overtly political. For example, observations from participants' social media during the live demonstrations showed that politicians from parties like PKS and Gerindra delivered speeches to the masses, discussing strategies to challenge and potentially overthrow the existing government regime. This indicated how the movement's dynamics could fluctuate based on its interactions with political actors and their willingness to align with the cause. In addition to political figures, various institutions linked with political parties made significant contributions to the 2016 demonstrations. One notable institution was the Red and White Network (JMP), which is well-known for its close ties to Gerindra. JMP was mentioned by many⁶⁷ as a crucial logistical contributor to the rally.

Taken together, the ABI movement adeptly sampled and recombined tactical repertoires from both 'outsider' social movement organizations and 'insider' interest groups and political parties to amplify their external reach. This flexible approach allowed them to navigate between religious interpretations of *shariah* and pragmatic political considerations when engaging with both political outsiders and insiders.

⁶⁶ Kompas 2016; IPAC 2018; CSIS 2020.

⁶⁷ Majalah Tempo 2017; CSIS 2020; Interviews 2021.

On one hand, the movement effectively drew upon religious understandings of *shariah* to appeal to its core supporters and mobilize them for collective action. On the other hand, they also recognized the importance of practical politics, strategically supporting political candidates and parties that aligned with their broader objectives and enjoyed promotion by political insiders. This tactical shifting enabled the group to appeal to the diverse values and interests of external political actors, including political elites, MUI leaders, party members, and even the president, thus securing their cooperation. The idea that political parties, interest groups, and social movements can borrow from each other's typical organizational and mobilization repertoires⁶⁸ has also been proven to support their approach. However, in the past few years, the movement has been unable to maximize on its inter-institutional hybridity, as they no longer have enough partners among opposition organizations to the government. This might explain why the far-right movement's fall correlates with their loss of hybrid status; in other words, if one of the hybrid aspects is missing, the overall mobilization potential may suffer.

Meso level: mobilizing inter-movement hybridity

This level of analysis sheds light on the identification of allies and opponents of the far right in the protest arenas, and in society at large. Which major organizations reached out to and engaged with participants in the movement? What were their identities, and how did these identities overlap or not with one another? Examining these elements, one can better understand the coalition dynamics within the movement and the diversity of the groups involved. What I found from my fieldwork shows that the alliance represented the diversity of Islamist organizations in the ABI network. It revealed that each major type of organization (conservative Islam, moderate Islam, and hybrid) played a part in the movement mobilization, particularly in terms of financial support. Based

⁶⁸ Chadwick 2014.

on interviews with the local treasurer in Yogyakarta, it was indicated that due to Islam being the majority in Indonesia, acquiring resources such as funding from other Islamic organizations was relatively easy. This was supported by interviews with the owner of a *majelis taklim* (religious study group) in the same city, which revealed that the group received donations from congregants even after the demonstrations had concluded, resulting in a considerable surplus. Apart from congregations, he mentioned that donations were also easily obtained from institutions such as mosques, *majelis taklim*, foundations, hospitals, and even schools. This inter-movement hybridity played a crucial role in ABI's collective efforts, providing the movement with valuable resources and support.

The principal focus of the ABI movement was the mobilization of Muslims to defend Islam and demand the imprisonment of Ahok, whom they viewed as a blasphemer. ABI's leader, Bachtiar Nasir, explained that their goal was to uphold the law by demanding that blasphemers be imprisoned. Their actions went beyond mere remembrance and prayer, as they sought to demonstrate and demand fair law enforcement. GNPf-MUI and ABI were successful in bridging Islamist and non-Islamist movements by leading the discourse towards the urgency of imprisoning Ahok, not only on behalf of offended Muslims but also for people who felt they had been deprived under Ahok's governorship. This could explain why some non-religious and ethnic mass groups were willing to combine their command and members with larger Islamic mass organizations, showcasing a higher level of movement hybridity. For instance, the Betawi People's Forum and Indonesia Reform joined the GNPf-MUI command, while the National Youth Forum and Minang Youth Association merged into the Indonesian Martyrs Forum. Additionally, the labor movement, particularly the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions (KSPI), played a significant role in mobilizing large crowds during the demonstrations. According to police accounts, the labor movement, notably KSPI, gathered the greatest number of people, with between 15,000 to 20,000 participants present at various points during the demonstrations.

Another intriguing aspect was the involvement of a nationalist movement called *Gerakan Selamatkan NKRI* (Movement to Save the Unitary Republic of Indonesia). Initially, this movement aimed to restore Indonesia's state ideology of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, reject foreign workers, and promote local production. However, despite their nationalist identity, they began collaborating with Islamists, an interesting departure from what one might expect. Logically, it could be presumed that they would have aligned with the nationalist Ahok, but they ended up working with Islamists instead. This illustrates how ABI's efforts in developing institutional capacity and networking with various organizations was so instrumental. They recognized the importance of avoiding isolation, as fighting alone could be seen as pursuing their own interests, potentially hindering effective mobilization. In this context, the data from this study illustrate that the ABI movement was mobilized and supported by a diverse range of groups, including those strongly identifying with religion and advocating for Islam, as well as those recognized for their work outside of religious communities. This demonstrates that ABI often turned to hybrid organizations as a way to encourage other activists who may have a wide range of concerns to devote their time and attention to the same cause. By effectively integrating diverse groups and interests, ABI was able to strengthen its base and amplify its impact.

Micro level: mobilizing intra-constituency hybridity

The micro-level approach in studying far-right mobilization emphasizes examining individual activism and repertoires of action, considering factors such as instrumentality, identity, and ideology.⁶⁹ This approach often revolves around the analysis of collective action frames, or the process of “meaning construction” as described by Robert Benford and David Snow.⁷⁰ A relevant concept in this context is that of the ‘master

⁶⁹ Klandermans and Mayer 2005.

⁷⁰ Robert Benford and David Snow 2000: p. 614.

frames',⁷¹ which involves ideologically integrating a diverse set of groups to attract various constituencies without alienating others.⁷² Concerning the ABI movement, a crucial question arises: how did ABI successfully unify individuals from diverse backgrounds, including Muslim (conservative and moderate) and non-Muslim participants? To explore this, I propose the application of the specific grievance theory in my case study. While recent studies have often focused on the economic aspect of grievance, overlooking its complexity, earlier works like that by Muliavka present a comprehensive theoretical model of grievance that is multidimensional and multilevel.⁷³ Muliavka's model identifies three distinct forms of grievance: economic, political, and social, which can intersect or act independently. Recognizing that individuals are motivated by diverse emotions and interpretations, it is expected that multiple grievances would arise within the far-right movement. By considering these various dimensions, Muliavka's framework offers a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted and hybrid nature of grievances, which can be applied to analyze the case of the ABI movement. This approach allows for a more in-depth exploration of the grievances that brought together diverse individuals and facilitated their unity within the movement.

Reflecting the diversity of actors and their participation in the ABI movement, the motivations of participants varied. Some came to defend religion, others for mixed political and religious reasons, and some came solely to protest against Jakarta government policies, such as reclamation and resettlement. Even so, it is impossible to deny that the main motivation of the demonstrators was indeed religious. The demonstration was staged explicitly in reaction to Ahok's speech, which they saw as disrespectful to Islam. Many of those I engaged with in informal interviews stated that their participation was mainly about their religion being slandered. One individual even spoke in an emotional tone, saying that

⁷¹ Snow & Benford 1992.

⁷² Gerhards & Rucht 1992: p. 574; Goss and Heaney 2010.

⁷³ Muliavka 2020.

even though she was not particularly religious and did not consider herself a good person, she could not remain silent when her religion was abused.

The narrative of the need to "*penjarakan penista agama*" ("imprison religious blasphemers") held significant importance in the success of the mass mobilization of Muslims in the ABI movement. Blasphemy refers to the act of criticizing or disrespecting a religion, which in Indonesia can lead to legal consequences. This narrative was consistently reiterated by mobilization actors and organizational elites in their social media content and speeches during the demonstrations. Derived from a press release issued by the media center team, a spokesperson for the movement stated, "*While some parties may attempt to downplay it as mere gatherings for remembrance and prayer, the underlying goal remained the desire to punish those who perpetrate religious blasphemy.*" Therefore, in addition to placing the demonstration as an act of defending religion, it also became seen as an act of defending the law, because, as well as the jargon of defending religion, language relating to defending the country ("*bela negara*") and loving the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia ("*cinta NKRI*") also served as the main spirit in the mobilization process.

Even before the allegations of religious blasphemy emerged, it is essential to acknowledge that several of Ahok's policies as governor were perceived by Jakarta's Muslim community as detrimental to them. His remarks and actions were also seen as disrespectful to Muslims and contradictory to Islamic teachings. Given that Muslims constitute the majority in Jakarta, many desire to be governed by leaders who adhere to Islamic principles and create a city that upholds Islamic norms and standards. Furthermore, ongoing economic issues such as poverty and challenges arising from development programs during Ahok's leadership were seen by many as negatively impacting the predominantly Muslim lower middle-class communities in Jakarta.⁷⁴

In this case, while religious grievances played a significant role, they were not the sole driving force behind the successful mobilization against

⁷⁴ IPAC 2018, 2019.

Ahok. Social grievances, particularly those felt by marginalized groups during his leadership, were equally pivotal. Far-right actors skillfully capitalized on these non-religious grievances to mobilize support among the urban poor. By tapping into these social concerns, they managed to foster solidarity within the lower middle-class population. Originally, the mobilization may have been motivated by the desire to uphold religious values and fulfill religious obligations. However, as the movement progressed, it transformed into a broader sentiment of challenging the prevailing situation and the perceived unsupportive regime. The far-right actors effectively redirected the initial religious motivation towards addressing the social and economic disparities faced by the lower middle-class communities.

However, the movement still had an ulterior motive: to use this rare momentum to strengthen Muslim identity, including politically, economically, and socio-culturally. Politically, they wanted greater influence over the legislative process in parliament. In terms of economics, the movement opposed “*asing dan aseng*” (foreigners and Chinese; the latter is considered a racial slur), a phrase used to refer to foreigners or foreign investment, notably connected to possible dominance by Chinese-Indonesians and citizens of the People’s Republic of China, claiming that they had secret goals to take over the Indonesian economy. The presence of diverse grievances indicates that far-right protest mobilization is influenced by a combination of economic, religious, social, cultural, and institutional concerns. While religious issues served as a rallying point, the far-right actors skillfully harnessed non-religious grievances to generate broader support and solidarity among marginalized groups. The process of reconciling and prioritizing these grievances for different constituencies is a distinctive feature of the hybrid movement strategy of the ABI movement, rendering this finding both compelling and novel.

Hybrid media strategy

In this section, I explore how the ABI movement and activists strategically engaged with hybrid media environments. Social movements draw on and adapt to prevailing forms of media to achieve a variety of goals within this context. I distinguish between three major forms of hybrid media strategy⁷⁵ employed by ABI. Firstly, the disruptive/dramaturgical strategy relies on tactics like mass demonstrations or civil disobedience to capture public attention and gain media coverage. Through digital platforms, movements can amplify the impact of these actions, making them more visible and compelling to mainstream media. Secondly, the authoritative/professional strategy involves activists establishing credibility and expertise within specific domains or as visible spokespersons representing a constituency. They use digital media to disseminate informed content, position themselves as thought leaders, and shape public discourse. Lastly, the dissident/counter network strategy entails movements bypassing mainstream news media to build independent channels of communication. By creating their own networks and platforms, they control the narrative and reach their audience directly, circumventing traditional gatekeepers.

In the first approach, departing from Tilly's concept of WUNC (worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment),⁷⁶ this highlights the performative qualities of protest that enhance its ability to communicate to broader audiences.⁷⁷ The core idea is that protest constitutes a form of communication projected through the words, symbols, and behaviors of activists. This approach has motivated substantial research as one of the primary ways in which movements strategically engage with the media.⁷⁸ However, mainstream media predominantly tend to focus on violence and the spectacular rather than the underlying message being conveyed, as

⁷⁵ Caren et al 2020.

⁷⁶ Tilly 2004.

⁷⁷ Benford & Hunt 1992.

⁷⁸ Vliegthart & Walgrave 2012.

part of their structural journalistic routines.⁷⁹ It is well-documented that the majority of mainstream media outlets tend to privilege the frames of the economic and political elites who own them.⁸⁰ Mainstream media outlets also often uphold liberal and capitalist values, and typically condemn radical groups. This poses a challenge for far-right groups with radical and marginalized ideologies, which is where the hybrid media system comes into play.

In the context of ABI, activists strategically leverage digital media tools to attract mainstream media attention and amplify movement claims to reach broader audiences. Before the digital era, movements relied on offline mass demonstrations and civil disobedience to gain media coverage. However, in the case of the ABI movement, digital media was utilized as the primary means to seek media coverage by amplifying movement claims and making them go 'viral'. The Ahok incident, which triggered the mobilization of ABI, exemplifies how social media intersected to amplify the movement's impact and secure interest from external media sources. The mobilization was initiated when a man named Buni Yani uploaded a heavily edited video of Ahok's speech to Facebook. Interestingly, in a recent interview, Buni Yani admitted that the cyber team from the opposition candidate during the Jakarta election was responsible for editing the video intentionally to provoke the masses and encourage virality.⁸¹ The speech took place in the Thousand Islands, in Jakarta Bay, where Ahok criticized his political opponents for exploiting religion as a campaign tactic. The video, accompanied by written transcripts and captions, insinuated that Ahok, a Christian-Chinese governor, intentionally disrespected Islam. The post was titled "Blasphemy against religion?" and ended with the phrase "It looks like something bad is going to happen with this video." The video quickly went viral, sparking

⁷⁹ DeLuca & Peebles 2002; Donson *et al.* 2004.

⁸⁰ Chomsky 2002; McChesney 2008.

⁸¹ Pikiran Rakyat 2022.

widespread outrage among influential Muslim figures and serving as the primary catalyst for the ABI movement.

Another example is the tactic of manipulating algorithms to propel a topic to trend online and secure traditional media coverage.⁸² These steps follow previously established viral content strategies for far-right activists to amplify their message, gain public attention, and reach a larger audience. Based on social network analysis from the open-source tool Drone Emprit (accessed in 2018), it was found that initially, the pro-mobilization cluster did not dominate the conversation, with the majority coming from the pro-government cluster, supported by mainstream mass media. However, over time, involving the use of buzzers (in Indonesia, buzzer refers to the machinery of political social media influencers) and bots and an external cyber jihadist organization called Muslim Cyber Army (MCA) to bolster the narrative of far-right Islamist groups during the mobilization, the pro-mobilization cluster achieved a balanced position with the pro-government cluster, even without the support of mainstream mass media. Eventually, when the movement's claims and narrative went viral on social media, mainstream media considered them newsworthy and provided coverage. This was evidenced by national media outlets in the country, including mainstream media like Kompas and Media Indonesia, as well as Muslim community media such as Republika, rushing to put their coverage on ABI movement as their top news headline. This approach illustrates the blend of newer and older media logics as part of a hybrid media strategy, which is effective in mainstreaming far-right discourse as one of the most crucial aspects of mobilization.

In the second strategic approach, movement actors attempt to establish themselves as prominent organizations and leaders. They may be sought for their perspective on an issue or in the context of movement-initiated activities, such as holding a press conference or issuing a report. In this way, movement actors can establish their newsworthiness independently of protest and disruption. Prominent organizations can

⁸² Mustafaraj & Metaxas 2010.

capture significant attention by establishing themselves as an authoritative source or representing a perspective or constituency valued by the media. Here, movements are most likely to prevail when they represent large constituencies, have formal staff, and are linked to major policy domains that are the subject of routine media attention.⁸³ Some movements develop media strategies focused on building relationships with reporters, hire professional media staff, and implement media training.⁸⁴

This approach resonates with the media strategy of the ABI movement, which established an official media center responsible for public relations activities. The media team engaged in diverse tasks, such as managing websites and social media, covering incidents during demonstrations, conveying updates about the movement's development, and responding to mainstream media reports that they deemed inaccurate. They had their own official website and social media accounts, allowing participants to access information directly from primary sources. The leader of ABI's media center stated that they relied solely on the team to disseminate information across both new and old media. They occasionally held press conferences, which mainstream media and journalists often competed to attend and obtain information from the team.

Finally, the dissident/counter network approach emerges when movements are excluded from or seek to bypass mainstream news media.⁸⁵ Davidson & Berezin provide a case study⁸⁶ examining how far-right social media users in the United Kingdom were able to produce an anti-Islamic shift in a major political party despite their lack of visibility in the media and little elite support. This can also be applied to the ABI movement, where long-marginalized groups lacked positive visibility in mainstream media but were still able to produce an Islamist narrative

⁸³ Amenta & Elliott 2017; Andrews & Caren 2010; Elliott et al 2016.

⁸⁴ Karpf 2012; Rohlinger 2014; Ryan et al 2005.

⁸⁵ Rohlinger 2014.

⁸⁶ Davidson & Berezin 2018.

during the 2016 Jakarta election. One way in which they did so by creating their own platforms, often referred to as alt-tech platforms. One such platform, frequently mentioned by informants, is RTimes, which closely resembles Facebook in appearance and functionality. Additionally, platforms like geevv.com and callind.com were being promoted as replacements for Google by the leader of ABI's media center. Scholars have noted a sudden surge in the alt-tech ecosystem in recent years, with several of these platforms accused of fostering radicalization and inciting violent uprisings.⁸⁷

Furthermore, this approach, drawing on Bennett et al's analysis of Occupy Wall Street,⁸⁸ develops a broader theoretical argument explaining the mechanisms that allow crowds to coordinate collective action during periods of heightened activity. Activists use social media technologies to support 'stitching', linking distinct networks or layers of preexisting communication networks. Specifically, they argue that mobilization requires production, curation, and dynamic integration to bring coherence to the movement's arguments and activities. In this context, the use of instant messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram in organizing heterogeneous masses is also noteworthy. In an interview with the deputy chairman of GNPF-MUI, he admitted that WhatsApp was the most frequently used platform during the mobilization, even among elites and ulama, who had their own WhatsApp groups for coordination. As this mobilization happened not just on a local level but also a national level, with almost 34 provinces having their own ABI communities, using WhatsApp for consolidation was crucial.

Furthermore, coordination happened not only within the WhatsApp groups of Islamic organizations but also within WhatsApp groups of non-religious communities, such as schoolteachers and workplace divisions. This fundamentally follows an Olsonian argument⁸⁹ that puts the issue of

⁸⁷ Mekacher et al 2023.

⁸⁸ Bennett et al 2014.

⁸⁹ Olson 1971.

coordination at the center of explanations of the function of media technologies. Based on this finding, we can see how these different types of individuals and groups collaborated to create a multilayered alternative media system that allowed far-right actors to collaborate on campaigns under the same umbrella. It is because of digital technology that ABI's right-wing extremists were able to reach their target audience and attract a wider audience beyond their borders.

The ABI movement's adept utilization of the Internet enabled the movement to engage in a more extensive and hybrid-driven repertoire switching, as postulated by Chadwick,⁹⁰ compared to previous Islamist movements such as *Laskar Jihad* in the early 2000s, which operated during a comparatively primitive period for digital activism. This evolution is also relevant to explore within the framework and theories of media ecologies, as it sheds light on how different types of far-right actors within ABI strategically chose particular media platforms over others and adapted their frames and discourses accordingly. In this hybrid media approach, we see how ABI, besides engaging with or attempting to 'hack' the mainstream media, also invested more resources—human, technological, and financial—into 'being the media' rather than hating it.

Conclusion

Hybridity is a phenomenon that has fundamentally transformed the institutions, practices, and discourses of modern societies. This article demonstrates that the intersection of hybrid-driven media and mobilization strategies played a significant role in the emergence of ABI as the largest far-right Islamist protest mobilization in Indonesia. The findings highlight the critical role of hybridity at the macro, meso, and micro levels in the organization and mobilization of the movement. The ABI movement effectively employed hybridization by incorporating elements from various institutions, including political parties and interest

⁹⁰ Chadwick 2007.

groups, at the macro level. At the meso level, the movement successfully integrated diverse constituencies, ranging from conservative Muslim supporters to moderate Muslims and even non-religious social movements, such as the labor and nationalist movements. Furthermore, at the micro level, they adeptly blended discursive frames and grievances.

The hybridity is also evident in their media strategy, as the findings emphasize the crucial role of combining newer and older media logics in mobilization. Such movements relied on a blend of media strategies that integrate digital technologies and traditional media approaches. This hybrid approach enabled actors in this system to create, tap, or steer information flows in ways that suit their goals and modify, enable, or disable the agency of others across and between a range of older and newer media settings. This flexibility allowed for swift 'repertoire switching' within a single campaign or between different campaigns. Moreover, hybrid media facilitates interactions among different movements and actors, fostering collaboration and coordination. By serving as a platform that enabled diverse actors to converge and work together under the same umbrella, the hybrid media strategy enhanced the overall effectiveness of far-right Islamist mobilization in Indonesia.

This study contributes to research on the far right as a social movement, particularly in Indonesia, in two significant ways. Firstly, it explores the challenges faced by the Islamist movement in post-authoritarian Indonesia, focusing on issues of hybridization of media and movement in shaping their mobilization strategies. Secondly, it sheds light on the often-overlooked social movement dimension of far-right politics. Furthermore, this study addresses why Muslim far-right mobilization was ineffective both before and after 2016-2017, asking what was it about ABI in 2016-17 that triggered influential nationwide Islamist demonstrations? The findings reveal that the success of the 2016 mobilization can be attributed to the presence of crucial hybrid elements that were absent in previous and subsequent mobilization efforts.

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