

# Political Public Sphere and Mass Media: Critical Perspective

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to explain how political public sphere occurs in *Republika media*. Mass media as a public sphere ideally provides space for audiences to get balanced information and news related to developing political issues. Not being an *apartus* of power or entrepreneurs, but bridging public interests. This study uses qualitative research with a critical paradigm. The findings of this study are that *Republika* provides political public sphere for various political party backgrounds, news for Islamic and nationalist based parties are given the same space. Mass media as a public sphere is often used by rulers and businessmen for their political interests. Journalists as professional journalists can interact directly with politicians, with the limitation of not being allowed to led to the political publicity of the former owner of the Mahaka Group who became Minister of BUMN of the Republic of Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Mass media, *republika*, public sphere, politics.

**Abstrak.** Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana ruang publik politik yang terjadi di media *Republika*. Media massa sebagai ruang publik idealnya memberikan ruang bagi khalayak untuk mendapatkan informasi dan berita yang seimbang terkait isu-isu politik yang berkembang. Tidak menjadi *apartus* kekuasaan maupun pengusaha, namun menjembatani kepentingan-kepentingan publik. Kajian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif dengan paradigma kritis. Temuan penelitian ini *Republika* memberikan ruang publik politik bagi berbagai latar belakang partai politik pemberitaan untuk partai berbasis islam maupun nasionalis diberikan ruang yang sama. Media massa sebagai ruang publik kerap digunakan oleh penguasa dan pengusaha untuk kepentingan politik mereka. Wartawan sebagai jurnalis profesional dapat berinteraksi langsung dengan politisi, dengan batasan tidak boleh masuk dalam struktur partai. Disisi lain ditemukan adanya pemberitaan yang mengarah kepada publisitas politik mantan pemilik Mahaka Grup yang menjadi Menteri BUMN Republik Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci:** Media masa, *republika*, ruang publik, politik.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to explain how political public sphere occurs in *Republika media*. Mass media as a public space ideally provides space for audiences to get balanced information and news related to developing political issues. Not being an *apartus* of power or entrepreneurs, but bridging public interests.

The meaning of public space is an area of social life where something close to public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. Part of the public sphere exists in every conversation where private individuals come together to form a public body (Habermas, 1964).

The political public sphere is formed from private people coming together as a public, then articulating the needs of society and itself as part of the private sphere. Marx puts forward the perspective of the *propertyless and uneducated masses*, who despite not meeting the requirements to enter the bourgeois public sphere, still try to enter it in order to be able to translate economic conflicts into the only form that can trumpet the promise of success, namely the arena of political conflict.

According to Marx, the masses use the platform of the institutionalized public sphere within the constitutional state, not to destroy it but to make it, according to the liberal view, what it should be. In reality, however, the occupation of the political public sphere by the dispossessed masses leads to the mutual destruction of the state and society, by eliminating the public sphere of its original base, without thinking of providing a new base. Critical publicity has been replaced by manipulative publicity (Habermas, 2007).

Citizens behave as a public body when they deliberate in an unrestricted manner, i.e. with guaranteed freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publicize their opinions on matters of public interest. In a large public body, this kind of communication requires specialized means to transmit information and influence those who receive it. Today newspapers and magazines, radio and television are the media of the public sphere.

Speaking of the political public sphere is in contrast, for example, to literature, when public discussion deals with objects related to state activity. Although state authority can be said to be the executor of the political public sphere, it is not part of it. To be sure, the state authority is usually regarded as a "public" authority, but it derives its duty to care for the well-being of all citizens primarily from this aspect of the public sphere.

Only when the exercise of political control is effectively subordinated to the democratic demand for information to be accessible to the public, does the political public sphere win institutionalized influence over the government through the instrument of lawmaking institutions. The expression of "public opinion" refers to the task of public criticism and control. Citizen institutions informally, in periodic elections, both formally and practically *vis a vis* the structures of government organized in the form of the state (Habermas, 1964).

The modern state is essentially a state built on taxes, where the financial bureaucracy is the true core of its administration. From here, the sharp separation of the ruler's private wealth from that of the state becomes the paradigmatic objectification of private relations of *domination*. The term 'public' itself in its narrow meaning is synonymous with *anything state-related*. Civil society was born as a logical consequence of the depersonalized authority of the state (Habermas, 1964).

Each individual family economy has become the center of its existence, so that what is born then is the private space as an entity. Not long after, *perspun* was systematically created to serve the administrative interests of this country. a big difference between the public that gathers as a crowd around a speaker or actor in a public place, and the public in the world of readers (Habermas, 2007).

Public sphere is a realm of political communication that allows democratic participation for everyone. Its openness is limited by the asymmetry of economic, political and cultural power. The media system operates in the public sphere as a system of political

information that provides inputs for political communication. Capitalist media limit the public sphere in many respects, and hamper democratic communication (Fuchs, C. 2020).

Public space is often used as a tool, even hegemony, for the political interests of the rulers. Mass media that is controlled by a few people will be very vulnerable, especially if it is controlled by people involved in politics. They can lead public opinion to have political views in a certain direction. Tight competition in the mass media has given rise to concentration of media ownership, various methods have been used by the authorities to maintain the hegemony of media resources with various elements, including by carrying out acquisitions and mergers with mass media companies.

A phenomenon that occurs when the owner of a mass media company becomes an entrepreneur and also becomes a politician. In Indonesia, as many as thirteen large media groups control information channels. This media group controls information channels starting from print media; newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and online news networks. Among them are Visi Media Asia (Viva Group), MNC Group, Kompas Gramedia Group (KKG), Elang Mahkota Teknologi (Emtek), Jawa Pos Group, CT Group, BeritaSatu Media Holdings, Media Group, MRA Media, Femina Group, Tempo Inti Media and Mahaka Media (Lim. M. 2012). Mahaka Media oversees Republika which is Muslim community media. Republika has print and online newspapers, but now the print newspaper has been closed.

Mass media conglomeration has been going on for a long time in Indonesia, previously the author had conducted research on three large mass media groups, namely in 2012 at MNC Group, Media Group in 2013, (Fahrudin, D. 2013). Vision Media Asia (Viva Group) in 2015 and Trans Corp group in 2016 (Fahrudin, D. 2016). Researchers want to further develop research on mass media, by analyzing mass media conglomerations and their relationship to the political public sphere.

Republika, as a mass media, is present as a public space for political discussion and discourse.

## 2. METHOD

This study uses qualitative research with the paradigm used in this research is the critical paradigm. This paradigm is one approach in researching communication problems, especially media studies.

The critical paradigm has three characteristics, *first*, it has direct experience obtained from actors and real people in certain contexts such as interpretive theory. *Second*, investigating the existence of hidden social conditions in the order of society and revealing the existence of rules that damage the order. *Third*, there is an attempt to combine action with existing theories, so that there is a balance.

The critical approach aims to investigate and reveal the competing interests that compete with each other for dominance, then find ways to resolve conflicts that occur between one group and the interests of other groups. Critical theory aims to reveal the process of domination that is hidden from the public eye, without many people realizing that it actually controls them. Critical theory tends to approach and even defend the interests of marginalized groups (Littlejohn, 2011).

Data collection was carried out by interviews and direct observation at the Republika media office. Focus Group

Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with field journalists. All information and data obtained such as documents, interview results, and observations were analyzed using a critical theory perspective. Epistemologically, critical theory views through a comprehensive perspective of a problem, in the sense that there is a very close relationship between political organization and economic organization, social aspects and cultural aspects. Based on historical analysis, it analyzes the concept of *late capitalism* and its current development.

Analysis is carried out by self-reflection as a way of gaining experience and a way of acting appears to be equivalent to instrumental action and symbolic interaction. Reflection on the function of knowledge and the reproduction of social life and reflection on the objective

conditions under which the subject of knowledge is historically constituted. Critically reflective, which is the a priori character of interests said to be fused with the structure of communication, authoritarian implications or implications of submission (Mc. Carthy, 2006).

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The background of the establishment of *Republika* comes with a mission to bring the Islamic press as the main press in this country. A country with a majority of Muslims, but inadequate platforms in the field of press or media. Through *Republika*, Islam can appear more universally. Not only discussing the issues of ulama and fiqh, but also promoting the values of pluralism, openness and a broader understanding of Islamic values.

However, in reality it is not easy to make this happen. several times *Republika* 's headlines have been in the spotlight, debated, and even demonstrated by certain groups or organizations. Whereas from the beginning of its establishment, *Republika* clearly carried a mission to raise the image of Islam that could be accepted by all groups (*universal*). Especially in the new order era, many communities or organizations became sensitive regarding the writing of certain figures on the pages of *Republika*. When other newspapers seem to take a comfort zone not to report on certain events for fear of impacting the existence of the media, but *Republika* is different.

*Republika* is more critical of government policies and crucial issues. This critical attitude is not just criticism, but measured criticism. Behind *Republika* 's critical attitude, it turns out that it indirectly becomes input and consideration for the government in issuing policies. From the community side, it is also a lesson to be smart in opinion.

Some news such as the dissolution of SDSB (Donation of Social Funds with Prizes), news about the SARA riots in Ambon, supporting the National Education Law No. 20 of 2008 concerning Religious Teachers, and supporting Law No. 44 of 2008 prohibiting pornography, are some examples of news raised by *Republika* when other media behave otherwise (Utomo, 2010).

#### 3.1. Participation in Politics

The age when the public sphere was usually limited by the boundaries of democratic states is over. The conditions for crisis can be found in transnational trends such as the abundance of communication, the use of the Internet, social media, and mobile phones, the significant reliance of actors on publicity strategies and the ability to inflame political conflicts, and the creation of global publics. They appear in a variety of political, social, and cultural settings.

In politics, similar developments that jeopardize citizenship have taken place. As Bennett and Pfetsch argue, we have entered a very different political era from the time when "broadly inclusive and relatively wellfunctioning," public spheres could be considered winning or likely to win. Instead, we are entering a time of a "moredisrupted public sphere" where the relative depiction of political issues and policy choices that prevailed in legacy media of the past has been displaced by a dissonance of views, opinions, voices and values. As such, digital networks can expand the range of voices to be heard in the public sphere. In short, it is a "networked public sphere", albeit a somewhat ambiguous one, where almost everything goes or can be known (Blumler, 2018).

Mass media as a public sphere should ideally be free from political interests, but rather prioritize the broader public interest, especially *Republika* as the media of the people, should defend the interests of the people as a common platform to achieve common goals.

Researchers interviewed the deputy editor-in-chief (Wapemred) of *Republika*, who has been active for 20 years pursuing a career at *Republika*, joining since September 2001. This casual discussion about the media, at the *Republika* office in the Warung Buncit area, with a relaxed atmosphere just the two of us. Wapemred revealed that the *internal* rules in the *Republika* editorial team do not allow the editorial team to become members of the party structure, in any party, but do not prohibit if there are journalists or editors who are close to party functionaries. However, to maintain neutrality, they must not become members or enter the structure of any

political party. "If there is a close relationship, there is no problem with any party, it is just a part of us to get information, what is not allowed is to become a structural member (Wapemred, 2022).

There is nothing striking about the activism of journalists and editors in political parties, there are no findings related to membership in a particular party. Personally, they are free to choose their political inclinations to vote for anyone from any party that is in accordance with their constitutional rights in the elections.

*Republika* as a people's media still displays comprehensive news related to political parties, not only Islamic parties are reported, but nationalist parties are still reported as the responsibility of the press, to convey what is important related to political issues that develop in society. But of course, the main focus is still to provide more news related to the issues of Islamic parties. "In 2009, the Mega Pro Megawati and Prabowo declaration in Bantar Gebang. At that time *Republika* did not have a special declaration, everything was still displayed even though Islamic parties had a larger portion even though they were not prominent" (FGD Journalist, 2022).

Regarding activeness in political organizations, the editor's policy is not to enter the party structurally but to be close to the family to get information, to be anywhere but not to be part of any politician either personally or institutionally.

*Republika* continues to maintain professionalism as a journalist in the mass media. Journalists can build relationships with members of political parties to make it easier to get information, with close relationships that will build trust in journalists and their media institutions. With the closeness that exists, journalists can freely get in-depth information that would not be obtained if they did not have closeness with certain party members.

After the information is obtained, journalists process the data and information obtained in accordance with journalistic rules that adhere to *coverboth sides*, there is a balance in the news raised "We remain professional as a journalist, they can be anywhere, but not

necessarily part of them. Part of journalism itself is to find news. *Yes, if you are not close, how can the source provide in-depth information*" (Wapemred, 2022).

### 3.2. Political Public Sphere

We have seen that the public sphere is a kind of reflection of society that mediates between different spheres. When citizens engage in politics as part of non-governmental organizations, movements, and political practices. When they discuss politics in public, they are part of the public sphere.

Political protests happen in the public sphere. In recent decades, there has been much talk about the role of new social movements (such as the environmental movement, gender equality movement, animal rights movement, etc.) in politics. Many liberal and conservative observers in this context argue that the labor movement is outdated, no longer plays an important role in politics and social struggle, and that new social movements have replaced the labor movement in social struggle. If the question of social movements is framed in this way, then it is a question of the relationship between economy and non-economy, class and non-class, exploitation and domination (Fuchs, 2020).

The analysis of political communication in the public sphere raises questions about how capitalism and domination are intertwined. Alienation is not just an economic phenomenon, it is also economic, political and ideological. It operates at the level of human subjects, societal structures, and mediating communication processes. Exploitation, which is economic alienation, acts as a model for political and ideological alienation. In capitalism, exploitation and domination are based on the logic of accumulation. Political and ideological alienation aims to build a surplus of authority and difference that acts as a political and ideological wage that allows a surplus of pleasure, enjoyment, power, real wages, and income (Fuchs, 2020).

From the observations of researchers, *Republika* often features Erick Thohir, who is the former owner of the Mahaka Group which oversees *Republika*. In news coverage, almost every

day there is coverage of Erick as Minister of BUMN, this is considered a normal thing because Erick is a *public figure* as a source of news.

**Figure 3.1 Capaian Erick Thohir di BUMN Bisa Jadi Modal Pilpres 2024**



Source: <https://news.republika.co.id/berita/rlmhxq384/capaian-erick-thohir-di-bumn-bisa-jadi-modal-pilpres-2024>

The results of the researcher's search obtained information that there was a kind of shadow team that always covered news about Erick Thohir. The team monitors and reports on the activities of the SOE Minister, although he is no longer the official owner of Mahaka Media as a *holding company* that oversees *Republika* and several other media, but still has loyalists in *Republika* and Mahaka Media in general. "For the minister of BUMN, it is required and specialized to follow the minister of BUMN, because the minister of BUMN owns *Republika* so all news about the minister of BUMN and is more focused (FGD Journalist, 2022).

During the election season, *Republika* reporters are placed in several major parties to get information and issues that develop in them. By planting people in major parties, *Republika* gets fresh information from its main sources. But now the pattern has changed to only two presidential candidates, because there are only two candidates carried by several coalition parties. "In 2014 all reporters were *incase* in major parties and also in the regions but after the last two elections it was more *incase* to the parties that supported the president because they saw that the readers' interest was more interested in the two presidents and for now it is still an individual nature, the portion is also not explicitly made clear" (FGD Journalist, 2022).

Janet Steele (2018) in her field research for almost four years monitoring *Republika*, concluded that journalists working in the news media do not share the same views as those

conveyed by their newspapers. As the journalists put it, "it's the readers." Just as readers drove support for Prabowo and criticism of Jokowi in the presidential contest, they also pushed the news organization to an increasingly politically conservative position, of course, when the newspaper was still subsidized by ICMI, their movements might have been freer to guide the Muslim community by providing various viewpoints.

Although *Republika* journalists now proudly assert Erick Thohir and Mahaka have taken the newspaper out of the politics that put it on a sound business footing. It is hard not to conclude that *Republika* is already suffering the consequences of its change in orientation to commercialization, and is now inclined to play it safe rather than challenge the interests of its readers or advertisers (Steele, 2018).

**Figure 3.2 Jadi Menteri Terbaik 2022, Erick: Untung Dikasihnya Tahun Ini, Bukan 2024**



Source: <https://ekonomi.republika.co.id/berita/rmtx61423/jadi-menteri-terbaik-2022-erick-untung-dikasihnya-tahun-ini-bukan-2024>

The public sphere is a realm of political communication that allows for the democratic participation of all people. Its openness is limited by asymmetries of economic, political and cultural power. Since capitalism is based on such asymmetries, the bourgeois public sphere is always limited, colonized, feudal, and only a pseudo-public sphere. The media system operates in the public sphere as a political information system that provides input for political communication. Capitalist media limits the public sphere in many ways, and inhibits democratic communication.

"During the political period, sources are *ordered* according to the flow and questioned to the scholars (Islamic

boarding schools) because the target audience is there. It can be called a routine agenda to find out. for the selection of narrators, not all of them are Muslims, but can also go to other religions. So that Islam is not discriminated against, *Republika* covers several other religions and raises general issues (FGD Journalist, 2022)."

Public service media and critical alternative media are two approaches that have the potential to challenge capitalist media. Both models face many problems and limitations and are not immune to the subjugation of communication under the logic of capitalism and domination. However, both have been and continue to be starting points for discussion and organizing of alternatives to capitalist communication. Although they offer no guarantees, they contain the potential for a democratic public sphere (Fuchs, 2020).

**Figure 3.3 Survei Poltracking: Elektabilitas Erick Thohir Sebagai Cawapres Tertinggi di Jateng**



Source: <https://news.republika.co.id/berita/rmx2x4328/survei-poltracking-elektabilitas-erick-thohir-sebagai-cawapres-tertinggi-di-jateng>

### The Semiotics of Public Sphere

The dominant approach to public space is characterized by idealism and normativism. It overemphasizes civic discourse, imagines unrealistically egalitarian and widespread participation, has difficulty in dealing with public events that have consequences, and ignores the spatial core of public space and the effects of visibility. Ari Adut (2012) proposes a semiotic theory that approaches public space through general sensory access.

This approach enables a better understanding of all public events, whether they are discursive or not. It also captures the dialectical relationship between public space and

politics by (1) determining the mechanisms through which visibility and publicity become resources or constraints for political actors, (2) explaining the political regulation of visibility, (3) demonstrating the central role that struggles over the content of public space play in political conflicts, and (4) analyzing the links between social structures, social norms, and political action in the transformation of public space (Adut, 2012).

The semiotic theory presented here has phenomenological validity and social utility. This paradigm understands the public as a collection of strangers whose attention is drawn to the same thing, emphasizes the activities of elites, and relates to real and well-demarcated objects.

It foregrounds the important spatial dimension of public space, which is assumed but not adequately analyzed by the dominant approach, while showing that the space in question is a semiotic space - thereby proposing a unified framework for understanding all kinds of significant events and communications in diverse public sphere.

This framework, which is based on the semiotics of public visibility (with its tendency to reduce the world to types and appearances) and publicity (with its constitutive elements, common knowledge and asymmetry, which produce various collective status effects), allows us to derive many casual arguments regarding political behavior within the public sphere (Adut, 2012).

Semiotic public spheres contribute to citizenship studies. The dominant approach to public space is optimistic about the effects of visibility on citizenship. This can be problematic, as the circulation of places where one can criticize government officials is essential for liberal democratic governance. However, intensified citizen activity in the public sphere can intensify polarization (Sunstein, 2001).

In countries that allow open registration of party affiliation, the level of partisanship is higher (Harvey, 1999), Michael Young (2003) points out that the golden age of American organizational life touted by Tocqueville had a dark side, *antebellum* conflicts between evangelical

societies and fraternal societies were a major cause of the civil war (Adut, 2012).

Mandatory openness to civic activities also silenced dissent. It is a hallmark of authoritarian governments that they require their citizens to vote in public and engage in civic participation. Since the public sphere may subject voters to social pressure or allow them to commercialize their votes, they conduct closed secret ballots.

Transparency is a control technique used by both governments and forces in civil society. For example, when the French Revolution radicalized, a show of hands replaced the secret ballot. Compulsory participation in ceremonies along with public recognition and purging further publicized citizenship. These examples show that citizenship can be adequately explained only if we consider its spatial context and visibility (Adut, 2012).

The theoretical emphasis on visibility and publicity also enhances our understanding of culture. Many cultural sociologists, with good reason, study signs organized in texts or systems. Yet meaning often transcends discursive or paradigmatic structures. The publicity of an offense, for example, will change the meaning of the offense and often make it seem much more serious (Adut, 2008).

According to the theory put forward here, whether a sign is publicly available, whether it is successfully publicized, as well as the particular space in which it is displayed will significantly affect its signification and effect. This is a correction to the usual semiotic theories, which, by focusing on the relationship between the sign and its recipient or on the relationship among signs, ignore the role of visibility and publicity in the production of meaning (Adut, 2012).

Political power shapes the public-private distinction by determining the content of the public sphere. And most political conflicts revolve around the content of the public sphere, especially those that receive high publicity. Thus, foregrounding censorship as a signaling mechanism that regulates the public sphere and its audience, and as a tool in political conflict.

This theory also contributes to research on symbolic politics. How powerful groups make authoritative and performative definitions of things. What is missing is how censorship, the struggle for the content of public space, is a major element of symbolic politics. Censorship is a social fact usually ignored by sociologists that is crucial to symbolic politics in civil society and political governance in general (Adut, 2012).

Sociologists often emphasize the constitutive power of language. However, when they write about language, sociologists usually refer to ideologies and not to concrete speech acts uttered in specific situations. However, reducing language to ideology prevents us from determining when words are important and when they are not. Instead, a good way to know this is to study when collectivities sanction speech. Censorship reveals a lot about the power of a group's language and culture.

The framework adopted here empowers us to address many of the issues that come into focus and receive less attention in public life by emphasizing the complex, contradictory, and nonlinear effects of visibility and general publicity on political actors, social groups, and institutions.

Similarly, further research on different forms of representational access (indexical, iconic, or symbolic) to the public sphere. Focusing on general visibility at the expense of general audibility (Adut, 2012).

The effects of visibility and publicity on institutions have also received less attention, yet are central issues in public life. This article underlines that the public sphere is not always good for liberal democracy. Full transparency inhibits bold decision-making and fosters ambiguous attitudes among state officials and politicians (Anechiarico and Jacobs, 1996). This makes it difficult for political actors to bargain and reach compromises (Garment, 1991).

### 3.3. Public Opinion and Ideological Aparatus

In France, the term 'public opinion' appeared around the middle of the 18th century, although at that time its meaning was still



differentiated from opinion. *Opinion publique* was a term for popular opinion backed by tradition. Regardless of whether Rousseau, as a cultural critic, highlighted its naturalness or not. Nor whether or not the encyclopedists attempted to debunk it through ideological critique. It was only when the physiocrats attached it to the *publique éclairé* itself that *opinion publique* acquired its strict meaning, that of an opinion purified through critical discussion in the public sphere to become a *true* opinion.

In *opinion publique*, the contradiction between *opinion* and *critique* disappears. It is well known that the physiocrats, exponents of a public that now also debates political issues, were the first to insist that civil society follow its own rules when resisting state interventions; but when dealing with absolutist regimes, they acted more as apologists. As Marx said, their doctrine is more about bourgeois reproduction in a feudal system (Habermas, 2007).

Public opinion takes the form of common sense. It circulates in a society in the form of prejudices. Despite its absurdity, it still reflects "the genuine needs and true tendencies of the common life. Public opinion reaches consciousness of itself precisely in the assembly of estates where civil society organizations according to occupational status participate in legislation. However, it is not for this reason that the 'publicity of the upper house' becomes the link between parliamentary discussions and the critical political debate of a public that criticizes and monitors government power (Habermas, 2007). Private spaces have achieved an independent existence. Marx proclaimed public opinion as a false consciousness (Habermas, 2007).

### **Ideological State Apparatus**

To advance the theory of the state, it is crucial to take into account not only the distinction between state power and the state apparatus, but also another reality that is clearly on the side of the (repressive) state apparatus, but should not be confused with it. Louis Althusser calls this reality the *Ideological State Apparatus* (ISA).

In Marxist theory, the State Apparatus consists of: Government, Administration, Army, Police, Courts, Prisons, etc., which will hereafter be referred to as the Repressive State Apparatus. Repressive indicates that the State Apparatus in question is one that "functions by violence" - at least ultimately (since repression, e.g. administrative repression, can take a nonphysical form) (Althusser, 2022).

Louis Althusser calls the Ideological State Apparatus a certain number of realities that appear before direct observation in the form of distinct and specialized institutions. Althusser proposes an empirical list that must obviously be examined in detail, tested, corrected, and reorganized. With all the reservations that this requirement implies, we can provisionally regard the following institutions as the Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser, 2022).

Ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that its "recruits" subjects among individuals (it recruits them all), or "transforms" individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) through a very precise operation called interpellation or summoning, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most common police (or other) summons.

Althusser presents things in the form of an order of before and after, and thus in the form of a temporal succession. The existence of ideology and the invocation or interpellation of the individual as subject are one and the same thing (Althusser, 2022).

We have to be outside ideology, i.e. within scientific knowledge, to be able to say: I am in ideology (quite exceptional case) or (general case): I am in ideology. As is well known, the accusation of being in an ideology only applies to others, never to oneself (unless one is really a Spinozist or Marxist). This means that ideology has no outside (to itself), but at the same time it is nothing but an outside (to science and reality).

The theory of critique and self-critique of the Marxist-Leninist practice of class struggle depends on it. Thus, ideology praises or interprets the individual as a subject. Since ideology is eternal, Althusser suppresses the

temporal form in which it has presented the function of ideology (Althusser, 2022).

### 3.4. Transformation of Political Public Sphere

According to Peters (2008), public space can be described through its functions, social organization and symbolic structure. It has the latter two dimensions and shows a series of institutional and cultural changes in the public sphere such as in Norway associated with the emergence of digital media as a communication channel. Overall, digital media and in particular *Social Networking Sites* (SNS) have resulted in a process of democratization of access to the political public sphere.

The *gatekeeper* functions of journalists and media editors are weakening; more people can publish different types of content, express their opinions, and experience free speech (Enjolras, 2014). New forms of mobilization and participation are also being developed through the use of digital media (Enjolras, 2013)

This democratization process has also triggered a shift in the underlying power structure of the public sphere, where new observers have emerged and the agenda-setting function is no longer the monopoly of the media. At the same time, the boundaries between the public and private spheres have become increasingly blurred, and the symbolic structure of the public sphere - its content, forms and styles of communication - has evolved towards new communicative practices called 'written oral culture' that are more performative than informative and more expressive than rational, and can include major struggles over identity and its practices.

This analysis provides a complex picture of the functions of the new public sphere that enables deliberation, opinion formation, and mobilization of citizen voice Peters (2008). On the one hand, one could argue that with the increased participation of many people, the potential for collective and collaborative processes can enhance deliberation and diverse voices. On the other hand, there are questions about the establishment of new types of hierarchies beyond

established institutions and the emergence of a culture of deliberation that can lead to conflict, silence and withdrawal by some groups. Here suggest two issues that may pose particular challenges to the public sphere as an arena for deliberation, voice and the formation of shared meaning, the issues of fragmentation and representative democracy (Alexander, 2006).

The problem of fragmentation is that while the digitization of the public sphere has led to pluralization and increased representation in the sense that more participants, topics, and styles are present in public discussions, its impact on presentation, i.e. joint deliberation on shared issues, remains less clear (Rasmussen, 2008).

The emergence of social media entails a diversification of communication, which is partly related to anonymity, quasi-orality, diversity of communication platforms, and diversity of inter-textual relationships between forums.

A crucial question related to the normative evaluation of the digital transformation of the public sphere is whether the possibilities for self-selection, personalization, individualization, and identity expression embedded in digital media capabilities. Ultimately create a fragmented and polarized landscape of political discussion. Whether the network effects described earlier will lead to the emergence of a common discourse in different places and guarantee the overarching unity of the political public sphere.

On the issue of representative democracy, another question related to the normative assessment of the digital transformation of the public sphere is its impact on the functioning of representative democratic institutions. The decline of broadcast journalism enables a form of direct communication between politicians and voters bypassing the gatekeepers, where new political celebrities can set the agenda. The extent to which this form of democratization of access to the public will contribute to the strengthening of the trend of 'audience democracy' (Manin, 1997). The initiation of new forms of relationships between representatives and citizens in moving towards a more participatory democracy remains unclear.

For Manin (1997) audience democracy is characterized by the personalization of the relationship between politicians and citizens. The mediating function performed by political parties has been replaced by the broadcast media, and whereas previously voter loyalty was the result of affiliation with political parties based on socio-economic and cultural characteristics, in audience democracy the support of voters is constantly changing and increasingly dependent on the image of candidates in the broadcast media. The expansion of the participatory public sphere through the lowering of access barriers and the possibility of direct interaction with representatives enabled by digital media may result in new forms of direct political participation.

However, new forms of impression management and self-presentation are available through digital media capabilities that are mobilized in the service of political communication and can strengthen the democratic workings of audiences. The digital transformation of the public sphere has had a profound impact on the ways in which ideas are disseminated and debated, how opinions are formed and how identities are expressed in modern society. It has also affected the exercise of citizenship and the functioning of our democratic institutions.

With the concept of transformation in terms of institutional change impacting the social and symbolic structures of the public sphere. Enjolras (2017) has identified several ongoing underlying trends that characterize the digital public sphere. The direction and longterm impact of these changes are ambiguous, as these transformations still contain potential positive and negative developments for democracy and citizenship (Enjolras, 2017).

### Political Literacy

Political literacy is very important amidst the current process of consolidating democracy in Indonesia. Indonesia has two main problems that are on the agenda in the development of political substance. First, the strengthening of *state capacity* due to the absence of the *state in* people's daily lives (*state in practice*). Second, the

capacity of citizens (*citizen capacity*) results in the inability of citizens to adapt to various problems that arise in the communal and personal.

Relationships among citizens occur instrumentally, not based on critical thinking, and are not born from the womb of a democratic public space. According to Heryanto (2021), various problems arise such as, first, the inability to be reached by the political literacy mainstreaming movement, because it is more dominant in using a structural approach. Second, the main locus in this movement is the concern of fellow citizens for their political *empowerment*.

The lofty discourse of democracy with openness as its sacred value is incompatible with practices full of holes and deals that democratic politics cannot afford. Moreover, legislators who vote in public - by acclamation, *roll call*, or show of hands - will also be highly vulnerable to special interest pressures. High transparency may taint political institutions, instead of removing doubt about their activities by reducing politicians' vulnerability to scandal. The proliferation of scandals will undermine public trust, which can be detrimental to the public itself as trust in government is a public good.

It is no coincidence that the two public institutions that still enjoy high prestige, the Supreme Court and the military, are the ones that have been most successful in keeping their operations out of the public sphere and that they have been the most public and transparent branches of government. Congress is also the most transparent, Congress, is also the least socially esteemed institution. Adut (2012) proposes various mechanisms through which transparency breeds mistrust, but the evidence provided is very limited.

Politics is not the only activity shaped by visibility. Consider also the law, most judicial proceedings are open in Western democracies. Visibility ensures the rights of the accused, checks illegitimate politicization of the judicial process, and holds legal actors accountable.

This makes it difficult for authorities to expose abuses committed by officials. But the

public sphere is not a pure blessing for justice. The more publicity a trial gets, the greater the risk of it turning into a circus where appearances trump actual evidence and social types (Adut 2012).

Many scholars in the dominant paradigm equate the public sphere with civil society. Some of them make the distinction, such as Calhoun (1993), in his analysis who conceptualizes the public sphere as "the operationalization of civil society capacity for self-organizing civil society." But then public space is incorporated into the parameters of civil society. The result is that the public sphere risks being reduced to just another phenomenon; visibility and publicity, things that affect and concern all political and communication actors are ignored.

Ari Adut (2012) has separated civil society from the public sphere, as Congress, city parks, national archives and courts - which are clearly not civil society - are all public spaces. This separation also allows us not to confuse two important and independent types of conflict: conflict between groups within civil society and conflict around visibility in the public sphere by various actors.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In the public sphere of politics, *Republika* journalists can join any political party for reporting purposes, but organizationally they cannot become members and functionaries of a particular party. Closeness to political parties is more to build personal and organizational closeness, which will later lead to easy access to information.

*Republika* as mass media provides public sphere for political actors from various political party backgrounds, reporting for Islamic and nationalist-based parties is given equal space and there is no bias towards any party.

On the other hand, it was found that there was a news spotlight that focused on the political publicity of the former owner of the Mahaka Group, who now serves as Minister of BUMN of the Republic of Indonesia. *Republika* is seen providing massive coverage of Erick Tohir's various activities in the news in its mass media.

Further research that can be developed further concerns public media under government and critical alternative or community media, these are two approaches that have the potential to challenge capitalist media. Do today's mass media have the same political and economic interests, or do they have different views from private media which can be owned by a few rich people or big investors who can dominate the public sphere or perhaps provide a wider public sphere with different perspectives.

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14.00 -15.00 WIB. Wawancara/FGD  
Wartawan Republika, Kamis 25 Agustus  
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