

# The Hyperreality of Political Power: Political Condition of Indonesia During Pandemic in the Postmodern Era

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**Abstract**—This article discusses Indonesia's political power regarding policies dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic crisis through a postmodern perspective. This article examines all the discourse contestations from the perspective of hyperreality. Disruption of information is one of the characteristics of postmodernism, and it has shown us that various media can mix all realities. The use of various media has made individuals experience confusion in drawing an objective reality. Individual narratives form hyperreal meaning, replace the existing reality, and replace metanarratives. Meanwhile, alternative truths everyone favors replaced factual truths. This study conducts a comprehensive systematic review through literature, instrumental case studies, and phenomenology. Facts and truth have become biased and saturated, turning into more micro and individual forms, giving individuals autonomy over their truths. This truth is due to hyperreality, where the sign becomes more real than reality. The Indonesian government's policy regarding this pandemic is a reality that individuals want to abandon or take up. This dynamic form is currently happening in Indonesian society. Regarding the pandemic, the community has its narrative in assessing vaccines as a tool to suppress the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords**—COVID-19, Hyperreality, Indonesia Political Power, Metanarratives, Post-Truth

**Abstrak**— Artikel ini membahas kekuatan politik Indonesia terkait kebijakan penanganan krisis pandemi COVID-19 melalui perspektif postmodern. Artikel ini mengkaji semua kontestasi wacana dari perspektif hiperrealitas. Disrupsi informasi merupakan salah satu ciri postmodernisme, dan telah menunjukkan kepada kita bahwa berbagai media dapat mencampurkan semua realitas. Penggunaan berbagai media telah membuat individu mengalami kebingungan dalam menggambarkan realitas yang objektif. Narasi individu membentuk makna hiperreal, menggantikan realitas yang ada, dan menggantikan metanarasi. Sementara itu, kebenaran alternatif yang disukai semua orang menggantikan kebenaran faktual. Studi ini melakukan telaah sistematis yang komprehensif melalui literatur, studi kasus instrumental, dan fenomenologi. Fakta dan kebenaran telah menjadi bias dan jenuh, berubah menjadi bentuk yang lebih mikro dan individual, memberikan individu otonomi atas kebenaran partikular mereka. Kebenaran ini disebabkan oleh hiperrealitas, di mana tanda menjadi lebih nyata daripada kenyataan. Kebijakan pemerintah Indonesia terkait pandemi ini merupakan realitas yang ingin ditinggalkan atau diambil oleh individu. Bentuk dinamis ini terjadi di masyarakat Indonesia saat ini. Terkait pandemi, masyarakat memiliki narasi tersendiri dalam menilai vaksin sebagai alat untuk menekan penyebaran pandemi COVID-19.

**Kata Kunci**—COVID-19, Hiperrealitas, Kekuatan Politik Indonesia, Metanarasi, Pasca Kebenaran

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## A. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced governments of many countries to issue policies to break the chain of its spread, including Indonesia. The condition of COVID-19 in Indonesia is getting worse day by day. Even now, the total number of cumulative cases has reached more than 800,000 cases, with more than 120,000 active cases, and in Jakarta alone, there have been over 19,000 cases.<sup>1</sup> It has exacerbated the state of handling this pandemic and has drawn much criticism. The Indonesian government's policies are considered not serious, but, on the other hand, for the community, this unclear policy creates a new reality. Some still think this pandemic is a conspiracy.<sup>2</sup> The disruption of information led people to believe in and realize the reality of COVID-19 in society now at the individual level.

Post-industrial society is now in an era of high disruption, where certainty is difficult to reveal. Post-industrial society is an "information-based" or "informational" society formed along with the development of globalization of corporate capitalism after the Second World War. Within this limitation, society in the era of disruption has collided with valid and invalid information, which uses the logic of transnational capitalism, the flow of goods, services, images, and signs that blend into one cultural awareness with "hyperreality" or the "mediascapes" that continue to shape that consciousness but vaguely represent the workings of the new ideology. This post-industrial society has characteristics such as a tendency to increase in white-collar workers, a decrease in the number of blue-collar workers, and a greater emphasis on producing information services rather than traditional products. In it, the mobilization of knowledge, a factor of production

and management, becomes a separate force the white-collar workers use in carrying out their business, especially in politics.

This debate's polarization has formed a new reality shared by the people, especially the Indonesian people. These developments make Jean Baudrillard's critical project relevant today, as it offers a wealth of insight into the confusing global trends in contemporary power and politics. Baudrillard's thinking questions essential issues, including the classic picture of modernity and the metanarratives used to define and organize modernity. Moreover, the narrative forms thrown by politicians have shaped the simulation as the basis of an advanced capitalist reality. The analysis in this article will reexamine the postmodern condition in assessing his strengths and weaknesses as a form of analytical guidance in understanding the origins and operations of hyperreality in viewing power and politics in this postmodern zone of action.

In 2021, information containing political narratives that favored the COVID-19 policy battered the public and received the most criticism from the national and international community regarding government policies in handling the COVID-19 cases in Indonesia, reaching 10,000 cases of COVID-19 in a day, which also set a record for three consecutive days.<sup>3</sup> The government issued a policy using various terms to carry out a lockdown, such as Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), the Java-Bali Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM), and closing the arrival of foreigners to Indonesia. With the high number of COVID-19 cases, the government, through the president, directly stated that not implementing the lockdown is something to be grateful for citizens.<sup>4,5</sup> This statement makes the narrative from the government

<sup>1</sup> Banjarnahor, D. (2021). Makin Ngeri! Kasus Aktif Covid-19 di DKI Tembus 19.000. *CNBC Indonesia*. <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20210112154402-4-215371/makin-ngerik-kasus-aktif-covid-19-di-dki-tembus-19000>

<sup>2</sup> Purba, P. G. T. (2020). Studi UI Ungkap Tak Sedikit Warga yang Percaya COVID-19 Konspirasi Elit Global. *DW.Com*. <https://www.dw.com/id/studi-ui-ungkap-masih>

-ada-warga-percaya-covid-19-konspirasi/a-55810146

<sup>3</sup> Andriyanto, H. (2021). *Indonesia Passes 10,000 Coronavirus Cases in a Day, Sets Record for Third Straight Day*. Jakarta Globe. [https://](https://jakartaglobe.id/news/indonesia-passes-10000-)

coronavirus-cases-in-a-day-sets-record-for-third-straight-day

<sup>4</sup> Natalia, D. L. (2021). *Presiden ajak masyarakat bersyukur Indonesia mampu kelola COVID-19*. *Antaranews.Com*.

<https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/1937856/presiden-ajak-masyarakat-bersyukur-indonesia-mampu-kelola-covid-19>

<sup>5</sup> Nugraheny, D. E. (2021). *Jokowi: Alhamdulillah Indonesia Tidak Sampai Lockdown*. *Kompas.Com*.

<https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2021/01/08/15073801/jokowi-alhamdulillah-indonesia-tidak-sampai-lockdown?page=all>

get criticism, but on the other hand, this narrative is, in Lyotard's conception, a metanarrative thrown by the government with a specific purpose. The truth of this metanarrative creates a polemic in this interpretation; roughly speaking, this interpretation forms another narrative among the public. Pros and cons about Indonesian government policies related to COVID-19 are emerging on social media.

In Baudrillard's perspective, they questioned the government's political policies to distinguish the power and politics of "realist" modernity from "hyperreal" postmodernity. Before the explosion of hyperrealism, the political realities were organized in modern institutions with space and time structures of money culture different from those found in postmodern hyperreality.<sup>6,7</sup> Innis and McLuhan stated that this metaphor is appropriate for understanding the social ontology of a pre-information society, primarily bound by print media's bias.<sup>8,9,10</sup> This media creates linear, typographical, and panoptic spaces that position personal and social feelings regarding status, class, or geographical distance. Perspective space develops with the notion of a particularly social time based on concepts inseparable from development, such as evolution, progress, maturity, and development.

An additional measure of linear change characterizes these changes, increasing diachronic progression in time or space. The power exerted in the linear panoptic space assumes its production by the "powerful" agents as the ruling class, either outside or within the center of the established institutions that mediate between the production and exercise of power. In other words, the difference between active and passive, subject and object, message and meaning is apparent in its "realist" representation.

For Baudrillard, every dimension of social life is a complex simulation of reality that explicitly supports the political, economic, and cultural reproduction cycle. In this perspective, individual desires are abstractly autonomized into needs that function as productive forces—moving socially into atomized groups of individuals who mediate the meaning packaged from their desires on the political stage. Traditional cultural forms exist to achieve individuality and social collapse under these hyperreality conditions. Even Baudrillard concludes that individual subjects are only episodic conductors of meaning because, in essence and sincerely, we form a mass that lives mainly in panic, above and beyond whatever meaning is formed.<sup>11</sup>

In looking at contemporary Indonesian society, Lyotard's notion of postmodernity can serve as a point of view in diagnosing the transformation of scientific knowledge, explaining the emergence of consensus models as a basis for political judgment and why it has become untenable. In Lyotard's conception, the end of metanarratives is symptomatic of an enormous transformation in the role of scientific knowledge, which has important implications for forming social bonds.<sup>12</sup> In particular, the ending of metanarratives follows scientific knowledge's impossibility to produce the social competencies that individuals use to direct their speech and actions. In the end, Lyotard's attempt to dismantle metanarratives is a form of restoring the potential for individual creativity without any limitations (limitations). For Lyotard, we should not fight against the grand narrative but stop making it the primary basis of thought. It is in this way that the authority of metanarratives can automatically collapse. Lyotard continued that even individuals can refer to the case without metanarratives. There is no absolute criterion to be average; instead, it looks at a case's occurrence.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Burawoy, M. (1979). *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process Under Monopoly Capitalism*. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>7</sup> Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Pantheon Books.

<sup>8</sup> Innis, H. (1977). *The Bias of Communication*. University of Toronto Press.

<sup>9</sup> Lowe, D. M. (1982). *History of Bourgeois Perception*. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>10</sup> McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding Media The extensions of man*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Education)

<sup>11</sup> Baudrillard, J. (1983a). *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities...Or The End of the Social* (Paul Foss Trans.). Semiotext(e). p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Burdman, J. (2020). Universality without consensus: Jean-François Lyotard on politics in postmodernity. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 46(3), 302–322.

<sup>13</sup> Lyotard, J.-F. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi Trans: University of Minnesota Press).

Given the centrality of the problem of scientific knowledge to the development of postmodernity, it is surprising that Lyotard's readers have received so little systematic attention despite some rapid rejection of his conception of science.<sup>14,15</sup> If we follow this matter closely, we can see that the end of metanarratives is symptomatic of a more extensive transformation in the role of scientific knowledge, which has important implications for forming social bonds. In particular, the ending of metanarratives follows scientific knowledge's impossibility to produce the social competencies that individuals use to direct their speech and actions.

In this postmodern era, the world of politics has also entered a post-truth concept. It is the change from an earlier era of truth to a contemporary social and cultural environment. This change relies on alternative truths, such as fake news, alternative facts, or favorite truths. In the early stages of modern society, the truth was once in power, but then, in the era of disruption, the new post-truth paradigm finally has fertile ground for seeing the individual's capacity to see the facts. What is more important is that we see truth as a socially desirable good that we must embrace and have more substantial power in our heads.<sup>16</sup> In this post-truth era, individuals prioritize their feelings and beliefs in seeing the truth, forming a more extensive social situation.

These forms are characteristic of the postmodern era, which now sweeps the world. In the capacity of the postmodern paradigm's role, Indonesian politics has also undergone a substantive change in society's realities regarding government policies and interpretations of political actors' behavior in Indonesia. In this article, postmodernism is a way of looking at the current situation, and this is also a novelty, considering that almost no one has seen this

as a substantive role for public action in responding to political issues in Indonesia.

## B. Method

This paper uses a qualitative descriptive analysis study method through the literature study approach, instrumental case study, and phenomenology, often used as qualitative descriptive research.<sup>17,18</sup> This analysis is done in this paper to find cases/phenomena to understand other things besides the case itself, such as proving existing scientific statements. In this research, a new era of qualitative research in political communication will contribute much to the scientific understanding of the political communication process by expanding the field of inquiry. It will help the field get past our current impasse and generate new research theories and tools adapted to study political communication during rapid changes in media, politics, and social structures.<sup>19,20</sup>

This method can show the blending of reality in the media because one focuses on narratives in various media types (polymedia). Besides, this qualitative method also allows us to look at cultural symptoms, such as cultural shifts and social loss of structure in response to political policy issues. Furthermore, universality no longer exists in this postmodern era, so it is blended into one and polarized into the media with meta-synthesis. A comprehensive systematic review is conducted in this piece. Relevant information is gathered by hand.

Additionally, as part of a comprehensive systematic review, pertinent information is gathered manually by searching for papers using a predetermined set of terms in electronic databases and then examining each work's title and abstract to assess its applicability. In a later subsection, the applied methodology is covered in more detail.

<sup>14</sup> Baudrillard, J. (1998). *The Consumer Society*. SAGE Publications.

<sup>15</sup> Roberts, M., & Ponting, J. (2020). Waves of simulation: Arguing authenticity in an era of surfing the hyperreal. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 55(2), 229–245.

<sup>16</sup> Benesch, K. (2020). Is Truth to Post-Truth what Modernism Is to Postmodernism? Heidegger, the Humanities, and the Demise of Common-Sense. *European Journal of American Studies*, 15–1, 1–13.

<sup>17</sup> Karpf, D., Kreiss, D., Nielsen, R. K., & Powers, M. (2015). The Role of Qualitative Methods in Political Communication Research: Past, Present, and

Future. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 1888–1906.

<sup>18</sup> Kim, H., Sefcik, J. S., & Bradway, C. (2017). Characteristics of Qualitative Descriptive Studies: A Systematic Review. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 40(1), 23–42.

<sup>19</sup> Delamont, S., & Atkinson, P. (2009). Qualitative Research and the Postmodern Turn. In M. Hardy & A. Bryman (Eds.), *Handbook of Data Analysis* (pp. 667–681). SAGE Publications.

<sup>20</sup> Karpf et al. The Role of Qualitative Methods in Political Communication Research: Past, Present, and Future.

Before glancing through the titles and abstracts of each work to assess its applicability, conduct a paper search analysis using a preset set of phrases in the available electronic databases.

### 1. Databases and Terms

All published journal and conference articles taken from four primary bibliographic databases on the interdisciplinary major—Sage Publications, Elsevier, Springer, Oxford University Press, and Taylor & Francis—are included in the database-oriented search strategy. The research focused on the framework of political hyperreality and identifying perceived political issues. Several phrases were looked up for this purpose, including “Political Hyperreality,” “Post-truth Politics,” and “Media and Politics,” which are synonyms for the same field of study.

### 2. Inclusion and Exclusion

The following criteria are mainly employed to find pertinent studies from those gathered from electronic databases that meet the requirements of the research questions:

- a. Articles must be published between 2019 and 2021.
- b. This article must be written in English.
- c. Empirical studies on the application of hyperreality in the political sphere through media use must be included in articles.

Table 1. Number of Research per Database

Electronic Database	Number of Papers Identified in Search	Number of Papers Meeting Inclusion Criteria
Elsevier	24	12
Emerald Publishing	15	9
Oxford University Press	11	5
Taylor and Francis	25	10
Sage Publications	33	14
Springer	28	11

Source: Authors

<sup>21</sup> Hepp, A. (2013). *Cultures of Mediatization*. Polity Press.

<sup>22</sup> Peruško, Z., Vozab, D., & Čuvalo, A. (2015). Digital Mediascapes, Institutional Frameworks, and Audience Practices Across Europe. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 342–364.

The number of research articles used in this work is displayed in the database list (Table 1). The Literature Review section will cover a few papers the researcher believes are sufficiently relevant to characterize additional research articles. This section will examine the results, advantages, future-useful notions, and disadvantages.

## C. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

### 1. Mediascape and The Shape of Polymedia

Contemporary media culture has shaped the various media uses that previously used one medium to become irrelevant. The internet has changed the practices of using different and always diversified media interrelations, with digitalization as the basis of the technology.<sup>21</sup> In this case, media is the social power subject as a social product patterned by its creation and use conditions. That is called the mediascape.<sup>22,23</sup>

The mediascape embraces new media capabilities in a digital media system because of its increasingly global character and links to the political sphere framed in inclusive institutions’ theory. This model has four main dimensions, namely 1) the dimension of inclusiveness, which consists of political, social, and economic inclusiveness; 2) the digital media market dimension, which consists of the penetration of old and new media (newspaper circulation, social media penetration, broadband penetration, and fixed telephone subscription changes); 3) dimensions of media culture through the creative economy, and 4) dimensions of globalization.<sup>24</sup> Its dimension periodically creates a mixture of media consumption until, in the end, people use media through many types of media connections, called polymedia.

Polymedia theory was initially developed in computer-mediated communication forms to capture the environment that arises from communicative opportunities resulting from media convergence. In understanding polymedia, Madianou (2014) argues that we must understand new media as an integrated structure where each media or platform is related to

<sup>23</sup> Sørensen, I. E. (2018). Content in context: The impact of mobile media on the British TV industry. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 24(6), 507–522.

<sup>24</sup> Peruško et al. Digital Mediascapes, Institutional Frameworks, and Audience Practices Across Europe.

a relational fabric.<sup>25</sup> In this condition, the media emphasis shifts from focusing on individual media's quality as discrete technology to understanding new media as a separate ecosystem. There are three prerequisites in understanding this polymedia: first, access. Second, affordability, and third, literacy for individuals. The three of them form a unity in understanding because, in this form of polymedia, users have relatively unlimited access to various media platforms they can use.<sup>26</sup> Factors such as cost, access, and literacy form the background of polymedia so that the focus shifts from the limitations imposed by each media to emphasize the social and emotional consequences. It also navigates the emotions of its media users. Access to information through polymedia has become so diverse, mainly because polymedia lives using everyday gadgets.<sup>27</sup>

One thing that can obscure the function of the media in the capacity to use polymedia is the disruption of polarized information due to the impact of so much information from various media sources and types. Digital disruption changes fundamental expectations and behavior in a culture, market, industry, or process caused by or expressed through digital capabilities, channels, or assets. However, due to high uncertainty and rapid environmental changes, people are in a vortex of information confusion. Digital technology drives change by creating new revenue models and initiating and enhancing new practices and logic in journalism and media entrepreneurship.<sup>28,29,30</sup> This disruption is in line with postmodern conditions, so in the end, it creates hyperreality and even post-truth in society, including when politicians issue policies by multi-interpreting societies.

## 2. Hyperreality in Political Issues

In his early work, Jean Baudrillard attempted to elaborate a new political economy from the sign, based on the Marxian critique of the commodity form. Like Lukacs, he also contextualizes this critique in contemporary capitalists' contradictions. Baudrillard believes that "Marxist logic can be saved from the limited context of political economy in which it arises to explain our contradictions." However, when he explored this project's implications, Baudrillard became convinced that Marx's analysis of use-value and exchange-value was utterly outdated in an era dominated by monopoly capital.<sup>31</sup> With a planned production program, capitalism moves from producing "useful" goods and services to semiotic coding and drawing. Therefore, the focus of our understanding of commodity fetishism today should shift from the exchange rate to the value of the sign invested in the product as an image or symbolic code. Because this coding mode adds value to today's commodities, "the *valeur change signe* is an actual use-value often little more than a practical guarantee (or even a pure and straightforward rationalization)."<sup>32</sup>

The idea of Hyperreality, now worth examining, does not escape Baudrillard's grasp, such as the problem of this paper regarding political hyperreality, which takes many ideas from him. The trend of political hyperreality leading up to and until the end of the 2019 presidential election in Indonesia is emerging, obscuring the actual reality and providing a new public opinion image. However, the trend after the election will still happen again, every day and every time.<sup>33</sup> In Baudrillard's terms, hyperreality is a condition/state of collapse of reality in which the engineering of models (images,

<sup>25</sup> Madianou, M. (2014). Smartphones as Polymedia. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19(3), 667–680.

<sup>26</sup> Madianou, M., & Miller, D. (2013). Polymedia: Towards a new theory of digital media in interpersonal communication. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 16(2), 169–187.

<sup>27</sup> Madianou, M. (2019). The Biometric Assemblage: Surveillance, Experimentation, Profit, and the Measuring of Refugee Bodies. *Television & New Media*, 20(6), 581–599.

<sup>28</sup> Crittenden, V., & Peterson, R. A. (2019). Digital Disruption: The Transdisciplinary Future of Marketing Education. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 41(1), 3–4.

<sup>29</sup> Hartley, K., Kuecker, G., & Woo, J. J. (2019). Practicing public policy in an age of disruption. *Policy Design and Practice*, 2(2), 163–181.

<sup>30</sup> Maijanen, P., von Rimscha, B., & Głowacki, M. (2019). Beyond the surface of media disruption: digital technology boosting new business logics, professional practices and entrepreneurial identities. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 16(3), 163–165.

<sup>31</sup> Baudrillard, J. (1981). *For the Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. Telos Press.

<sup>32</sup> Luke, T. W. (1991). Power and politics in hyperreality: The critical project of Jean Baudrillard. *The Social Science Journal*, 28(3), 347–367.

<sup>33</sup> Radiansyah, R. R. (2019). Konsumerisme Hingga Hiper-Realitas Politik Di Ruang Publik Baru Era Cyberspace (Antara Kemunduran Atau Kemajuan Bagi

hallucinations, and simulations) takes over, blurring the line between the two as people consider them more real than reality. Hyperreality is also when everything eliminates the difference between the real and the imaginary.

The era of simulation and hyperreality, according to Baudrillard, is part of a series of imaging phases, a series of phases including 1) image as a fundamental “reflection” of reality; 2) images cover and distort reality; 3) Images cover the absence or disappearance of the basis of reality; 4) images give birth to the disconnection of any reality, the image is not the purity of the simulacrum itself (Baudrillard, 1983b). In this case, people can no longer feel the reality they perceive as right or wrong because their minds also create a picture of reality that exceeds existing reality. As in the case of the 2019 Indonesian presidential election, the Prabowo-Sandi camp said they won the election. This reality was brought to life through the media and the public, as their supporters also caught the reality that this was the real thing, even though it was not their partner who won. The same thing happened in the United States presidential election when Donald Trump’s camp declared their victory, which led to the Capitol building’s attack because supporters still interpreted that the reality of Trump’s victory was the most fundamental reality rather than the reality itself.

Public opinion here becomes simulacra. Meanwhile, a quick count public opinion leads respondents to reproduce what quick count survey experts are looking for or want—respondents who, in this case, did not create their own opinion. So, in the case of quick counts or polls and public opinion, Marshal McLuhan states the media and the message itself. This segment of this paper reviews the case simulation analysis from the perspective of the phenomena that occur and analyzes it through scientific theory. Consumers base the meaningfulness of consumption on generally shared ideological positions and their relationship with excess meaning without correspondence to its utility

or practical use. All “needs” in the market must manifest a shared cultural ideology not driven by rational thought but by an irrational desire that manifests fetishistically in the commodity market, in this case, political information.<sup>34</sup> Objects become indistinct simulacra with each other and, along with the object, from the people who produce them. The extinction of original references alone facilitates the common law of equivalence, namely the possibility of production.<sup>35</sup>

In the end, metanarratives, which are narratives by the owner of power and related politicians, have been replaced by the form of interpretation of various individuals, which, if they say right or wrong, have no such form. This form creates a post-truth condition, where post-truth is a philosophical and political concept that states “the loss of common objective standards for truth.”<sup>36</sup> Individuals ideologically interpret this condition as an alternative form of truth when they see the public space’s truth. Until final opinions, beliefs, and truths are autonomous between individuals.

### 3. Post-Truth: The Demise of Common Sense

As previously mentioned, post-truth is a condition where truth is no longer universal. Moreover, this truth becomes more personal and autonomous. There are at least three approaches to seeing the post-truth phenomenon in the concept. First, understanding the truth about the truth often only focuses on the correspondence between statements and objects considered to be fixed. Heidegger in *Being and Time* suggests an inseparable relationship between truth and untruth (Heidegger, 1985).<sup>37</sup> The two cannot separate and use each other interchangeably. Thus, people often use the idea of post-truth to expose someone who has failed to state the truth. On the other hand, for Foucault, “speaking the truth” is a form of criticism and a rhetorical tool in social and political discourse.<sup>38</sup>

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Pembangunan Negara Indonesia Yang Demokratis). *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik*, 3(2), 30–47.

<sup>34</sup> Hietanen, J., Murray, J. B., Sihvonen, A., & Tikkanen, H. (2020). Seduced by “fakes”: Producing the excessive interplay of authentic/counterfeit from a Baudrillardian perspective. *Marketing Theory*, 20(1), 23–43.

<sup>35</sup> Baudrillard, J. (2007). *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. SAGE Publications. p. 55.

<sup>36</sup> Biesecker. (2018). Guest Editor’s Introduction: Toward an Archaeogenealogy of Post-truth. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 51(4), 329.

<sup>37</sup> Heidegger, M. (1985). *Being and Time (John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson Trans.)* (7th ed.). Basil Blackwell.

<sup>38</sup> Prozorov, S. (2019). Why is there truth? Foucault in the age of post-truth politics. *Constellations*, 26(1), 18–30.

Second, in the cultural phenomenon, the power of anti-professionalism is closely related to the formation of discourses about truth itself. In this case, the online phenomenon allows anyone to state the truth to the public, regardless of what happens. Anti-professionalism and anti-elitism sentiments have risen in academic expertise and paved the way for a supposedly post-factual reality, ultimately overthrowing professionals and experts.<sup>39</sup> In 2019, before Donald Trump waged war at the university, the erosion of expertise was fostered by the forces unleashed in the humanities and the field of academic inquiry.<sup>40</sup> The causes for this are various, and the extent to which humans are involved in this phenomenon still opens more room for discussion. Right-wing political strategists like Steve Bannon have used critical jargon to “deconstruct” the notion of government as we know it, but it is puzzling. Nevertheless, there is little evidence that humanist critical thinking is at the heart of the post-truth crisis.

Lastly, far from causing an epistemological crisis, the current cultural transformation brings broad social and political consequences that we must address. To withstand the adverse effects of cultural and technological change, meaningful political dialogue in a primarily digital and privatized media environment is, in short, to make a strong case for speaking the truth as a form of meaningful criticism and participation in politics. Freedom of speech is one reason that has shaped this individual truth.<sup>41</sup> So, this becomes part of postmodern democracy, a form of habit considered correct in the existing political conditions. Doubt arises because the dominant direction of travel, as Aeron Davis (2019) notes, means that the previous relatively extensive, shared, and stable public sphere has been replaced by volatility, fragmentation, and polarization. With norms, values, and engagement, rules are rewritten individually and in groups.<sup>42</sup> The mediated national public space’s brevity resulted in new political-media-citizen relations.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Benesch, K. (2020). Is Truth to Post-Truth what Modernism Is to Postmodernism? Heidegger, the Humanities, and the Demise of Common-Sense. *European Journal of American Studies*, 15–1, 1–13.

<sup>40</sup> Plumer, B., & Davenport, C. (2019). *Science Under Attack: How Trump Is Sidelining Researchers and Their Work*. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/28/climate/trump-administration-war-on-science.html>

<sup>41</sup> Biesecker. Guest Editor’s Introduction: Toward an Archaeogenealogy of Post-truth.

This research provides an overview of a theoretical framework based on the literature review above. The government (politicians) has issued policies about several disseminated issues through the mainstream media and news channels. However, various media (polymedia) form a separate reality in an era of disruption like this. This polymedia shows us how the public thinks about the policy. Critics raised concerns, and supporters presented pro and contra conditions in various media outlets in national and international arenas.

Moreover, this flood of information creates social confusion and anxiety; thus, they have their reality, formed from general concepts in the postmodern era, such as hyperreality, metanarratives, and post-truth. This reality is alive, and, as in conditions of hyperreality, ideology has become entrenched in instilling public confidence in the policy, its impact, and its truth. Not to mention, regarding COVID-19, the public has yet to believe it because they think the government is not transparent and implementing its prevention policies is just nonsense.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, some consider the policies issued to be in the proper position. Even in the mainstream media, Indonesian President Joko Widodo has expressed gratitude for the COVID-19 condition. Society issues metanarratives, but they have their truth and reality, which derive from their respective experiences.

## D. Results and Discussion

### 1. Hyperreal Policy: The Polarization of What Is Right and What Is Not?

The public has been confused about government policies during the spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia. In an article entitled “*Kebijakan Pemerintah Tentang Corona Dinilai Mbingungkan Masyarakat*,” the government initially stated that the coronavirus was a big problem that would disappear by itself. It happened with government policies to boost the domestic

<sup>42</sup> Davis, A. (2019). *Political Communication: A New Introduction for Crisis Times*. Polity Press. p. 185.

<sup>43</sup> Schlesinger, P. (2020). After the post-public sphere. *Media, Culture & Society*, 42(7–8), 1545–1563. p. 1553.

<sup>44</sup> Rahmat, M. Z. (2020). *Indonesia’s poor COVID-19 responses take a toll on its global image*. The Jakarta Post. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2020/12/07/insight-indonesias-poor-covid-19responses-take-a-toll-on-its-global-image.html>



tourism sector. However, the policy did not change for long because three weeks later, the narrative changed. The government then stated that all people should fight COVID-19 together. A few weeks later, the government again changed the narrative in dealing with the coronavirus. At that time, the government said the community could make peace with Corona. Now, the government has made the narrative adapt to the coronavirus in a new, regular order. In the end, they handed it over to the people. On that basis, the government needs to improve the coronavirus policy narrative. One of the reasons for the emergence of neglectful community groups is that the government's narrative changes. It makes people less trusting of what the government says.

In a political text entitled *The Differend*, Lyotard tries to answer questions left open to postmodern conditions. In this case, how are heterogeneous language games related to each other, considering that there are no general rules neutrally regulating the relationship between one narrative and another? It is just a heterogeneous clash of rules. One language will be rejected by another (Lyotard, 1994, p. 8).<sup>45</sup> As Lyotard (1994) said, one party's error in different results in silence and 'exclamations for phrases which are in principle possible.'<sup>46</sup> The difference represents a state in which someone cannot put something into a phrase, but this 'something' feels like a call to find a new phrase by which someone can express it. Lyotard describes this feeling by employing an analogy that resembles the sublime.

Something cannot be put into words because it does not have an 'idiom,' a discourse that can communicate it. In terms of the new standard order that has created a widespread discourse among the people, the government does not use more straightforward language to be understood by all people. Ultimately, the policy created confusion, which also confused the public. Afterward, the

government blamed the public for non-compliance, which was the fruit of the confusion.<sup>47</sup>

This condition is also a hyperreality, which allows a person to be trapped in a simulation of their thoughts when they translate the existing narrative.<sup>48</sup> Power and politics seem to take new forms in hyperreality as the electronic mediation of experience and meaning replaces the imaginary with the real; simulation replaces actuality, and simulacra merges into reality. Simulations gain near-total integrity and are no longer duplicates or fakes, which many consider authentic. This process emerged when people considered COVID-19 a mere conspiracy, supported by the government's statement that underestimated the pandemic. Uncertainty and alternating decisions exacerbate the situation until society loses its sense of reality and is replaced by a sign or symbol of rejection. Plus, social media gives society much narration that includes realness.

The ever-changing daily, weekly, and monthly survey results cover the gap between opinion leaders and holders. The mathematical montages of satisfaction and dissatisfaction from these polls, in turn, increasingly shape what the contemporary public accepts as its meaning. The process is one hyperrealistic simulation of a particular type of democratic reality to replace it with real democracy.<sup>49,50</sup> These artifacts are much stronger than traditional ideologies to exercise power. Most forms of historical ideology require the betrayal or distortion of some actual reality with signs as "false consciousness," but simulations require a complete "short circuit of reality" and a "reproduction by signs"<sup>51</sup> in a way that almost suspends truth and falsehood. Entirely within the fabric of hyperreality itself. Just as daily television news programs create fake-style narratives of contemporary political "reality" with actors, sets, and scripts to report "what is right" about Indonesian politics by combining

<sup>45</sup> Lyotard, J.-F. (1994). *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (George Van Den Abbeele Trans.). Manchester University Press. p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Lyotard. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (George Van Den Abbeele Trans.). p. 13.

<sup>47</sup> Suryarandika, R. (2020). *Pemerintah Diingatkan tak Bangun Narasi Salahkan Masyarakat*. Republika.Co.Id. <https://republika.co.id/berita/qg6cub409/pemerintah-diingatkan-tak-bangun-narasi-salahkan-masyarakat>

<sup>48</sup> Baudrillard, J. (1983b). *Simulations* (P. Foss, P. Patton, & P. Beitchman, Eds.). Semiotext(e).

<sup>49</sup> Bernie, M. (2020). *Survei LSI: Kepercayaan Publik ke Jokowi Turun Menjadi 75,2 Persen*. Tirto.Id. <https://tirto.id/survei-lsi-kepercayaan-publik-ke-jokowi-turun-menjadi-752-persen-elBb>

<sup>50</sup> CNN Indonesia. (2020). *Istana Respons Survei Warga Tak Percaya Data Covid Pemerintah*. CNN Indonesia. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20200723163525-20-528243/istana-respons-survei-warga-tak-percaya-data-covid-pemerintah>

<sup>51</sup> Baudrillard. *Simulations* (P. Foss, P. Patton, & P. Beitchman, Eds.). p. 48.

reality and representation in a mix of meanings, the hyperreal practice of democratic forms at convention code that changes from continuous fabrication.

Not to mention that social media provides hoax news that has taken its toll on reality. The Republic of Indonesia's Minister of Communication and Information Technology found 2,020 hoax content spread across social media. Of these, 1,497 hoax content was spread on Facebook, 20 on Instagram, 482 on Twitter, and 21 on YouTube.<sup>52</sup> Simulations of communication media and mass reproduction are already proven and have only developed in the digital age rather than the latter providing an entirely new context. By asking whether the political catastrophe caused by fake news has a bidder when it seems to be a byproduct of the simulacra media's inherent lack of connection with the real. In a communications landscape where misrepresentations of so-called "Mainstream Media" are denounced, using more dubious "memes" on social media.<sup>53</sup> Throughout the 20th century, electronic broadcasting media showcased online culture and social media trends. Baudrillard argues that this communication technology gives birth to a world of media that exists in parallel with reality, breaking the traditional linguistic relationship between sign and meaning.<sup>54</sup> Conditions force people to become trapped in hyperreality, which makes them have their reality. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, politicians in Indonesia have biased and mingled between object and subject, forming only an alternative reality with what they said.

## 2. The Shape of Policy Metanarratives

Following Lyotard's analysis, we can identify two problematic assumptions that underlie the theory of action and consensus-based political judgment: first, that expectations of agreement and mutual understanding orient social interaction; second, a set of rules or procedures forms the basis of mutual understanding. While scholars have criticized these

assumptions from various angles in recent years, Lyotard's analysis uniquely offers a historical account of how consensus ideas emerged and the historical and social processes that have made them politically untenable.<sup>55</sup> As we can see, scientific development forms the basis of this account. The characteristics of metanarratives in modernity originate from efforts to establish social norms through a scientific consensus model, while the distrust of metanarratives in postmodern societies stems from this failure. Following this analysis, Lyotard claims that consensus is an 'out of date' idea because it does not reflect contemporary society's language game characteristics.<sup>56</sup> The task, then, is to find a model for political claims independent of standard scientific dates, which aims to validate denotative statements by following a set of rules.

It is worth emphasizing at this point the extent to which Lyotard's disregard for an aesthetic appraisal of Kant has contributed to the broad association of 'postmodernity' with a kind of 'anti-universalism.' Honneth (1995) rightly points out that Lyotard's assertion of the plurality of discourse cannot be reduced to meta-language, implying a universal obligation to respect such plurality.<sup>57</sup> If individuals cannot reach a consensus on the rules that form the basis of a political claim, the issue is whether it is possible to make political claims at all—that is, claims that demand the approval of others. This issue has caught the attention of several political theorists in recent years, most notably Hannah Arendt. However, while Arendt's response to the problem has been the object of extensive research, Lyotard's approach has received little attention. One possible explanation is the widespread misconception that Lyotard rejects universality and convention altogether. According to Lyotard, critics presuppose no doctrine: that there is no set of rules governing discourse, for its purpose is to investigate the validity of all rules. Rules for investigating the validity of rules lead to infinite regressions. Although there are doctrines specific to certain realms of experience,

<sup>52</sup> Akbar, C. (2020). *Kominfo Catat Konten Hoaks Covid-19 Banyak Tersebar di Facebook*. Tempo.Co. <https://bisnis.tempo.co/read/1397145/kominfo-catat-konten-hoaks-covid-19-banyak-tersebar-di-facebook/full&view=ok>

<sup>53</sup> Morris, J. (2020). Simulacra in the Age of Social Media: Baudrillard as the Prophet of Fake News. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 019685992097715.

<sup>54</sup> Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. Michigan University Press. p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Mouffe, C. (2000). *The Democratic Paradox*. Verso Books.

<sup>56</sup> Lyotard. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi Trans.)*. p. 66.

<sup>57</sup> Honneth, A. (1995). The Other of Justice: Habermas and the Ethical Challenge of Postmodernism. In Stephen K. White (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*. Cambridge University Press.

such as knowledge and ethics, criticism of such a doctrine, namely the investigation of its validity, cannot become doctrine.<sup>58</sup> This situation opens the opportunity to open meaning and incomplete universalism.

The Indonesian population is currently grappling with uncertainty stemming from the government's fluctuating approach to addressing the challenges posed by COVID-19. The changing policies issued by the government have left citizens feeling unsure and anxious about the future as they struggle to understand and adapt to the constantly shifting rules and regulations. This ongoing flux has created a sense of unease and instability among the Indonesian populace as they navigate the evolving situation and its impact on their lives. It creates reasoning of its own beyond the main reasoning or government metanarratives. Conditions like this in a democracy can cause a paradox. It may be that the government issued policies to help the people, but public distrust has put more pressure on them to find a form of interpretation of their own. It has an impact on the increase in active cases of COVID-19. Criticism of the government came from various groups, both national and international.

On the one hand, people no longer follow the government's rules because, later, the policy will change. It appears that the authorities have not correctly executed the existing policies. The cluster distribution of regional head elections, Christmas, and New Year holidays has become a point of easing government policies towards preventing the transmission of COVID-19.<sup>59</sup> The emergence of social care clusters and mental hospitals raised questions for the public about the government issuing inappropriate policies.<sup>60</sup> Not to mention, fully allowed aircraft is a worrying policy for many parties.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Burdman, J. (2020). Universality without consensus: Jean-François Lyotard on politics in postmodernity. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 46(3), 302–322. p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> Tolok, A. D. (2021). *Imbas Libur Panjang, Kasus Covid-19 Diprediksi Melonjak Pertengahan Januari 2021*. Bisnis.Com. <https://kabar24.bisnis.com/read/20201229/15/1336524/imb-libs-libur-panjang-kasus-covid-19-diprediksi-melonjak-pertengahan-januari-2021>

<sup>60</sup> Amindoni, A. (2021). *Covid-19: Panti sosial dan rumah sakit jiwa jadi klaster baru Covid-19,*

These policies have killed the government's public trust in handling the pandemic crisis, which is about how government communication does not know where it ends and creates disagreements between the government and the community and between governments. Now that we have seen the link between communication and disagreement, the possibility of universal judgment is independent of consensus. Lyotard criticizes universalist politics in this case, which presupposes the existence of universal subjects in a single discourse. One can represent concepts like 'humanity.'<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, as is now clear, the point is not to choose between universalism and particularism but to rethink universalism based on disagreements between discourses. According to Lyotard, universality is not a normative principle that shares conflicting discourses but the effect of attempts to communicate without a pre-existing principle. The demands of universality are complicated feelings that demand the discovery of new means of communication while acknowledging that these new means of communication will always produce new boundaries for communication. This open and incomplete universalism guides political judgment in postmodern societies.

### 3. Post-Truth Democracy

Social media did not exist before the mid-1990s and did not take its contemporary form until Facebook surpassed the university and Twitter launched in 2006. Social media and the disruption of information allegedly cause a post-truth condition—misinformation and distortion of facts characterize this condition. The active nature of social media allows for the rapid dissemination of information, regardless of its accuracy. As a result, individuals are exposed to a wide range of opinions and perspectives, making it difficult to discern truth from fiction. This constant bombardment of conflicting

*bagaimana ratusan penyandang disabilitas mental terpapar virus corona?* BBC Indonesia. <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-55583864>

<sup>61</sup> Pakpahan, F. (2021). *Kapasitas Pesawat Diperbolehkan Penuh, DPR: Bakal Picu Klaster Baru Covid-19*. Sindonews.Com. <https://nasional.sindonews.com/read/299256/12/kapasitas-pesawat-diperbolehkan-penuh-dpr-bakal-picu-klaster-baru-covid-19-1610470882>

<sup>62</sup> Burdman. Universality without consensus: Jean-François Lyotard on politics in postmodernity. p. 13.

information can lead to confusion and uncertainty, further fueling the post-truth environment. To combat this phenomenon, it is essential for individuals to critically evaluate sources and verify information before accepting it as truth. We can work towards a more informed and truthful society by being vigilant and discerning information consumers. The salient phrase on this issue, which has become a cliché a few months after its appearance, is “fake news”—also known as “alternative facts” by some on the right side of the political spectrum. Pundits and academics immediately described the new era as “post-truth,”<sup>63</sup> arguing that we have entered a phase where facts are radically devalued in favor of superficial appearances and confirmation bias, fueled by a surge in our use of online social media over the past year. Some have even argued that factual truth has been found.<sup>64</sup>

In a post-truth situation, objective facts about the world are less influential than personal feelings, beliefs, and opinions. Individuals also pointed out that social media detractors of the COVID-19 pandemic and government policies regarding this form a theoretical construct. Nevertheless, rhetoric still underlies politics even in the post-truth era, and one can argue that it has transitioned well to the era of social media, as good rhetoric generates entertainment and spectacle.<sup>65</sup>

The formation of reality regarding government power and its authority has arrived at an autonomous form in the individual’s capacity. In logic, this truth is a form of support or opposition to the government. In the case of COVID-19 itself, the truth about the data released by the government is still a matter of debate. One cannot rule out the possibility that someone falsified the data, coercing reasons for death due to COVID-19, and using the vaccine as mere forms of business are realities. This reality lives in society. Even though President Joko Widodo received the COVID-19 vaccine injection, some people were spreading a discourse claiming that the vaccine was not the Sinovac vaccine. The government uses a Halal and safe narrative to gain

people’s trust, but the post-truth is still polarizing in society. It formed because the Sinovac vaccine was allegedly still having undesirable effects. However, because it cooperated with China as a form of business, Indonesia chose this vaccine over other vaccines.

Apart from factual truth, in a post-truth view, individual truth becomes more vital to believe as alternative truths are favorites in an online randomization experiment to measure the power of alternative fact persuasion and the effectiveness of fact-checking to counter its impact. Barrera et al. (2020) found that fact-checking can correct bias in factual knowledge introduced by politically charged alternative facts.<sup>66</sup> Alternative facts are just as compelling with and without fact-checking in convincing voters to elect politicians who use alternative fact-based narratives.

This post-truth condition is a condition of postmodern depiction that many people experience using polymedia. Favorite information eventually becomes a favorite fact. Factual truth has a limited but indispensable role in pluralistic politics, in proportion to the material environment that allows and limits democratic debate in meaningful ways. Individuals put forward the understanding of post-truth as a two-pronged process in which structures and agents depend on and reinforce one another.

Post-truth politics increasingly detach political speech from the reliable infrastructure, shaping it as a predicament that must be understood. Expand slightly by providing examples of how this detachment occurs and its impact on political discourse. Explore potential solutions or approaches to address this issue. The compromise of our ability to react to political events and engage in democratic opinion-formation processes affects our ability to actively participate in shaping political outcomes. This definition equates post-truth with the death of expertise. We also need to be more precise regarding emotions in post-truth production. Suppose the comparison of individual facts with the physical environment holds. In that case, this can show how much the individual’s relationship to facts resonates

<sup>63</sup> Morris. *Simulacra in the Age of Social Media: Baudrillard as the Prophet of Fake News.*

<sup>64</sup> Happer, C., Hoskins, A., & Merrin, W. (Eds.). (2019). *Trump’s Media War.* Springer International Publishing.

<sup>65</sup> Nicholls, B. (2017). Baudrillard in a ‘Post-Truth’ World: Groundwork for a Critique of the Rise of

Trump. *MEDIANZ: Media Studies Journal of Aotearoa New Zealand*, 16(2).

<sup>66</sup> Barrera, O., Guriev, S., Henry, E., & Zhuravskaya, E. (2020). Facts, alternative facts, and fact checking in times of post-truth politics. *Journal of Public Economics*, 182, 104123.

with the increasingly fluid, practical, and ambivalent role of physical objects in life in an era of streaming practical experiences on demand. Ironically, when the media comes with factual information, people have urges to seek an alternative to their favorite facts. Individuals consume more images and experiences than physical objects. Thus, individuals experience degeneration of things in their stubborn wholes. Maybe we also want to stream “facts” that are personalized and on-demand. No matter how strong the Indonesian government’s narrative regarding the policy to alleviate the COVID-19 crisis, the public still has fluid and unstoppable truth if information still arrives from all sides and various media.

#### 4. The Discourse Contestation

Social media started to be inundated with public discussion as a worldwide pandemic. COVID-19 cases in Wuhan, China, the virus’s birthplace, were overexposed. Divergent viewpoints and thoughts regarding this outbreak started to clash. The religious viewpoint was comparatively more prevalent among them. For instance, Ma’ruf Amin boldly declared that COVID-19 would depart Indonesia following the *qunut* reading led by Kiai and Ulama. On the other hand, Abdul Somad, one of the artists who made the accusations, compared COVID-19 to Allah’s army. It must be acknowledged, therefore, that the division of Muslim leaders’ opinions began to appear in Indonesia in the early stages of COVID-19’s spread.<sup>67</sup>

Religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia require fast and relevant guidance to the current situation. For this reason, fatwas, *tausiyah*, *bayan*, *irsyadat*, and *taujihat* are believed to solve the problems related to worship procedures amid a pandemic. The government, through Vice President Ma’ruf Amin, said that the new fatwa decided by the scholars is oriented towards the principle of alleviating (*at-daisy*) but remains within the corridor permitted by Islamic teachings, namely *at-taisyr al-manhaji* and is not

oriented towards seeking convenience (*al-mubalaghah fit-taisyr*) and not seeking leniency alone (*tatabu’ arrukhash*).<sup>68</sup>

The academic contestation in several statements has gone through several waves since its inception. In the first period, the academic reception of the COVID-19 fatwa discussed the role of the Fatwa in mitigating the Outbreak. This debate was built with *bayānī* reasoning, which gave the impression that the approach to determining Fatwa was dominated by religious knowledge.<sup>69</sup> In the case of the COVID-19 fatwa, the fatwa’s reasoning uses a deductive model, starting from macro to micro issues. This debate means that the considerations used in the fatwa are based on the World Health Organization (WHO), which has determined that COVID-19 is a pandemic.

Meanwhile, to support the WHO’s statement, the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) supports it with verses of the Qur’an and hadith as legitimacy for the fatwa. The practice of simplifying this case has resulted in much conflict among Indonesian Muslims, which has implications for ignoring the fatwa. COVID-19 is purely about the world of health, which must be validated by medical rationality. Meanwhile, the birth of the COVID-19 fatwa did not go through sociological considerations and considerations of empirical facts in Indonesia.

The discourse battle is increasingly intense when the meaning of each of these discourses is accepted and has its place, no matter how strange. The discourse continues to grow over time, strengthening the belief that it grows as a form of accurate simulation. Because the existence of emotions and the acceptance of facts are only based on what the individual prefers, autonomous reality becomes a desert of reality. The “desert of reality”—can also be interpreted as a sea of reality because of its many alternatives—indicates that the imitation, the imitation, now has more vitality and integrity than the original, which is decomposing under the edge of the imitation, rotting, “rotting like a carcass.”<sup>70</sup> This construction moves beyond imitation and replaces real signs with real ones, namely the operation to

<sup>67</sup> Ilmi, N. (2020). Ustadz Abdul Somad Virus Corona Adalah Tentara Allah. In *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmNV0anRMgl>

<sup>68</sup> Setwapres. (2020, August 5). *Di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19, Fatwa Ulama Jadi Bimbingan dan Tuntunan Bagi Umat*. Kementerian Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia. <https://www.setneg.go.id/baca/>

[index/di\\_tengah\\_pandemi\\_covid\\_19\\_fatwa\\_ulama\\_jadi\\_bimbingan\\_dan\\_tuntunan\\_bagi\\_umat](https://www.setneg.go.id/baca/)

<sup>69</sup> Fawaid, A. (2022). Kontestasi dan Resepsi Akademis Atas Fatwa MUI Tentang Covid-19: Tinjauan Bibliografis Atas Monografi Tahun 2020-2021. *Islamika Inside: Jurnal Keislaman dan Humaniora*, 7(2), 281–301.

<sup>70</sup> Baudrillard. *Simulacra and Simulation*.

block every actual process through its double operation, a programmed, metastable, and highly descriptive machine that offers all the signs of the real and closes all its changes. The real will never again have the opportunity to produce itself.

Hyperreality comes from semiotics and postmodern theory, defined as “the substitution of real signs for the real itself” (Baudrillard, 1988). Although not always explicitly, most texts on hyperreality discuss the information environment, media experiences, and communicative relations.<sup>71</sup> Hyperreality denotes a discursive world resulting from the interplay between actual events and “media events” (Fiske, 1994, p. 62), with “media events” encompassing not only representations of what happened but also partial or complete fictional events and narratives that, however, can influence public opinion. In contrast to the concepts of “fake news,” “disinformation,” or “propaganda,” which are generally associated with the strategic production of lies, post-truth refers to the absence in the public sphere of conditions for citizens to agree on the goals and norms of the process for determining truth as a verifiable statement about reality.<sup>72</sup> Thus, post-truth and hyperreality have similarities in that post-truth negates the possibility of an undivided and undeniable truth, thus challenging the idea of a single and objective reality.

On the contrary, the truth of facts is increasingly diverse (poly-truth), depending on who consumes it and what truth they want. Moreover, in this era of digital journalism, the ease of searching for various information without knowing the absolute truth makes people consume what they want. The algorithm in digital journalism adds subjective beliefs and one particular fact that could be dangerous for information democracy.

## E. Conclusions

Power and politics in the postmodern era make knots spread to various sides. Several forms characterize postmodernism in the Indonesian government’s policy toward handling the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Facts and truths have become refracted and saturated into more micro and individual forms so that individuals have autonomy over their truths. It is due to hyperreality, where the

sign becomes more real than reality. People believe what they want to believe. Now, narratives of minor meanings that are more fluid have replaced metanarratives’ abandonment. No matter how hard the government issues policies, the issued narrative will still form a distinctive and unique individual reality. Factual truth has replaced universality with alternative truth, causing its disappearance.

The new typical policy carried out by the government forms a unique and heterogeneous interpretation. Ultimately, a strict rule becomes loose because of these different meanings. Although, in the end, when the case arose, the people were blamed. On the one hand, this also decreased public trust in the government. The belief in the correctness of the Indonesian government’s rules and restrictions seemed ineffective through politicians’ and the government’s eyes. The statement implies that misinformation or fabricated information may surround the Sinovac vaccine administered to President Joko Widodo during the COVID-19 crisis. It brings into question the reliability and accuracy of the information on the vaccine and raises concerns about the potential impact of false narratives amid a global health crisis. The public perceives the Sinovac vaccine as ineffective and dangerous and believes that the doctor injected a different brand of vaccine into the president rather than the Sinovac vaccine. Even though the government uses *Halal* and safe narratives, it cannot force this truth because it is an alternative truth that everyone favors. Despite their use of *Halal* and safe narratives, the government cannot force this truth, as it is a favored alternative truth among the populace. It is the form of Indonesian politics in the postmodern era.

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<sup>71</sup> Merrin, W. (2005). *Baudrillard and the Media: A Critical Introduction*. Polity Press. pp. 1-9.

<sup>72</sup> Waisbord, S. (2018). The elective affinity between post-truth communication and populist politics. *Communication Research and Practice*, 4(1), 17–34.

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