POLITICAL PUBLIC RELATIONS IN INDONESIA UNDER THE YUDHOYONO PRESIDENCY: PAST DEVELOPMENTS AND NEW FORMATIONS

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
School of Arts-Murdoch University
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Rendro Dhani
Perth, December 2018
Abstract

This thesis is about political public relations in Indonesia. It draws on the tremendous changes after the fall of the Soeharto regime in May 1998. The transformation of the political system from authoritarianism to democratic government quickly led to the freedom of the press and freedom of expression in the country. Consequently, new governments in the post-Soeharto era sought to develop new strategies and models of communication in the new political atmosphere.

This thesis is concerned with analysing the rapid growth and the exercise of political public relations under Indonesia’s sixth president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014). It focuses on how Yudhoyono harnessed political public relations during his presidency to maximise political and popular support. A multiple approach to public relations, i.e. system, rhetorical, and critical were used in this thesis to examine the concept, development, practices, and effects of political public relations. A single case study is employed in this thesis to analyse how Yudhoyono improved the quality of political public relations and thus could safely ‘democratise’ propaganda in Indonesia.

The thesis argues that the term ‘political public relations’ in the context of Yudhoyono’s presidency can be considered as ‘soft propaganda’ because the president and government apparatus basically used old and new methods of propaganda in their political communication through sophisticated and subtle ways. Yudhoyono harnessed political public relations with communication strategies and techniques that were largely propagandistic. He relied on military officers and trusted them more than professional public relations consultants in helping to manage his communication tactics and plans. Compared to his immediate predecessors, Yudhoyono applied more professional communication strategies and was particularly adept at managing his presidential persona to his advantage, and that was one of the pivotal factors leading to perpetuate his political hegemony. This thesis also found that the process of decision making become sluggish as his presidency progressed as Yudhoyono began to rely excessively on political public relations to quell public rejection of policies.
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Explanatory Notes

Having only one name (for example, Firmanzah), or multiple names (for example, Ikrar Nusa Bakti) are not unusual for Indonesians. But not all people with multiple names are usually known by their last names, and one's last name does not always indicate their family name. For example, Megawati Soekarnoputri is widely known as Megawati, not Soekarnoputri because it sounds strange for Indonesian ears. But others, such as Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie is known as his last name Habibie, not Bacharuddin; and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is also known as Yudhoyono or by his acronym SBY, not Susilo. The same applies to other names, such as the names of participants and authors of the books and articles cited in this thesis. Although most of them are largely known by their first names, this thesis uses participants’ last names in quoting their statements in order to follow APA style, which is used in this thesis.

Indonesia’s first and second presidents are among those who used a single name. In literature and in news media articles, the names of these two Indonesian presidents were written differently. International scholarship and the news media largely write Sukarno and Suharto, instead of Soekarno and Soeharto as often written by Indonesian writers. This thesis uses ‘Sukarno’ because according to Indonesia’s first president, he got his name from his father and his signature had to be spelled ‘Soekarno’, the Dutch way, but then he changed it to Sukarno in independent Indonesia. As Sukarno told to Cindy Adams: “The spelling of Soekarno is now SUkarno. However, it is difficult to change one’s signature after fifty years so when I myself sign my name, I still write S-O-E [emphases in original]” (Adams, 1966, p. 27). Although Sukarno had ordered all “OE” spelling to revert back to “U”, Indonesia’s second president preserved his original name ‘Soeharto’ from the beginning and he never changed it to Suharto.
### Abbreviations and Glossary

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJI</td>
<td>Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (Independent Journalists Alliance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPRI</td>
<td>Asosiasi Perusahaan Public Relations Indonesia (Association of Public Relations Company Indonesia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPRJ</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUD</td>
<td>Australian Dollars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakohumas</td>
<td>Badan Koordinasi Hubungan Masyarakat (the Coordination of Government Public Relations Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bappenas</td>
<td>Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional (National Development Planning Agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBM</td>
<td>Bahan Bakar Minyak (fuel)</td>
</tr>
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<td>BLT</td>
<td>Bantuan Langsung Tunai (Unconditional cash transfer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budaya telepon</td>
<td>‘telephone culture’, refers to the practice of authorities telephoning editors in order to influence media coverage or prevent the publication of sensitive information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bupati</td>
<td>Regent or district chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demokrasi Terpimpin</td>
<td>Guided democracy, the political system in place in Indonesia from 1957 until the New Order began in 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demokrasi Pancasila</td>
<td>Five pillars democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depkominfo</td>
<td>Departemen Komunikasi dan Informatika (Department of Communication and Informatics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deppen</td>
<td>Departemen Penerangan (Department of Information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPR</td>
<td>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (People's Representative Council)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPR</td>
<td>Government Public Relations</td>
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<td>GSI</td>
<td>Global Subsidies Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haatzaai-artikelen</td>
<td>Hate-sowing articles’ or articles prohibiting the spreading of hostile opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humas</td>
<td>Hubungan Masyarakat (Public Relations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDR</td>
<td>Indonesian Rupiah</td>
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<tr>
<td>IEA</td>
<td>International Energy Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHPRC</td>
<td>International History of Public Relations Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IISD</td>
<td>International Institute for Sustainable Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kementerian Penerangan</td>
<td>Ministry of Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSI</td>
<td>Lembaga Survey Indonesia, and also Lingkaran Survey Indonesia, two Indonesian survey and political</td>
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consultancy institutions that used the same abbreviation

LIPI 
*Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia* (The Indonesian Institute of Sciences)

Menko Kesra 
*Menteri Koordinator Kesejahteraan Rakyat* (Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare)

Menko Polkam 
*Menteri Koordinator Politik dan Keamanan* (Coordinating Minister of Political and Security)

Menpen 
*Menteri Penerangan* (Minister of Information)

Mensesneg 
*Menteri Negara/Sekretaris Negara* (State Minister/State Secretary)

MPR 
*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat* (People’s Consultative Assembly)

MPRS 
*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Sementara* (the Interim People’s Consultative Congress)

Nasakom 
*Nasionalisme, Agama, Komunisme* (Nationalism, Religion, Communism)

NGO 
Non-governmental Organisation

OECD 
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OPEC 
Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

Orde Baru 
New Order, the term Soeharto coined for his government from 1966 to 1998

Pancasila 
Indonesia’s state philosophy (literally ‘The Five Principles’)

Partai Golkar 
*Partai Golongan Karya* (Functional Groups Party)

PD 
*Partai Demokrat* (Demokratic Party)

PDIP 
*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (the Struggle for Indonesian Democracy Party)

Perhumas 
*Perhimpunan Hubungan Masyarakat Indonesia* (the Association of Indonesian Public Relations)

Pertamina 
*Perusahaan Tambang Minyak Negara* (The State Oil Company)

PKI 
*Partai Komunis Indonesia* (Indonesian Communist Party)

PNI 
*Partai Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian Nationalist Party)

PRIA 
Public Relations Institute of Australia

PWI 
*Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia* (Journalists’ Association of Indonesia)

RRI 
*Radio Republik Indonesia* (Republic of Indonesia Radio)

SBY 
Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono

SBY–JK 
Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla

Sespri 
*Sekretaris Pribadi* (private secretary)

SIC 
*Surat Ijin Cetak* (printing permit)
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<td><em>Surat Ijin Terbit</em> (publishing permit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIUPP</td>
<td><em>Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers</em> (press publication enterprise permit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOB</td>
<td><em>Staat van Oorlog en van Beleg</em> (State of War and Siege Ordinance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVRI</td>
<td><em>Televisi Republik Indonesia</em> (Republic of Indonesia Television)</td>
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<td>USD</td>
<td>United States Dollars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNEP</td>
<td>United Nations Environment Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watimpres</td>
<td><em>Dewan Pertimbangan Presiden</em> (Presidential Advisory Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organisation</td>
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This thesis would not have been completed without the assistance and support of many people. My principal supervisor, Associate Professor Terence Lee, paved the way and encouraged me years before I enrolled in June 2014. As my first mentor, I am extremely grateful and must express my appreciation for his invaluable advice and his expertise in shaping this dissertation. My co-supervisor, Dr Kate Fitch, supervised the dissertation thoroughly with her sharp eyes and attention to details. I am enormously grateful and wish to thank her for having shaped my critical thinking and for encouraging me to present my thesis ideas at international conferences.

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I dedicate this thesis to my (late) parents, my father Soehoed and my mother Rosani. I am very grateful to my dear wife Rini and my beloved children Amira, Alisa, and Ahmad for their love, understanding, and prayers while accompanying me on this PhD journey and for sharing both joys and hardships with me.
Preface

The State Secretariat is the largest and most complex political organisation in Indonesia. Located around Merdeka palace, which also became the official residence of the president and the office where Indonesian presidents run their daily routine, the secretariat office for the state and government affairs occupies several buildings around the presidential palace. Since 2004, a presidential direct election has become the biggest political arena and an important democratic event in Indonesia where the public can witness various campaigns and rhetorical promises of political elites. The complexity that exists in both presidential and government activities is observable, but this thesis focuses on one aspect of government communication, i.e. the political public relations that was harnessed by Yudhoyono during his presidency and when he ran for presidential election.

Since Habibie became president in May 1998, I have been familiar with the atmosphere of the presidential palace, mainly because I was working as a journalist (since late 1996) and was often assigned to cover the president and their subordinates’ activities until the term of President Megawati ended in 2004. Thus, as a journalist, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to observe presidential communication directly and witness important political events at the presidential palace and throughout the country. These experiences led me to studying political public relations.

In 2002, I obtained my master degree in communication management at University of Indonesia, Jakarta. My master thesis is about the communication management of President Abdurrahman Wahid (2002). I expanded my research and wrote a book, entitled *Presidential Communication Management, from Sukarno to Megawati* (published in 2004 in Bahasa Indonesia). Subsequently, I switched my profession to become a lecturer and share my journalism experience. Hence, I can declare my position in this thesis as a ‘journalist-turned-academic’. My professional experience has informed the research I report on in this thesis.

I have presented two chapters in this thesis at public relations conferences. Firstly, I discussed key findings of Chapter 4 ‘A Historical Review of Government Communication in Indonesia’ at the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) conference in Hobart, Tasmania, on October 26, 2015. I submitted the revised paper based on this presentation to a peer-reviewed journal, *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal* (APPRJ). The journal article was significant for me as a starting point to introduce my research project to the scholarly community. Secondly, I presented key findings of my thesis at the International History of Public Relations Conference (IHPRC) in Bournemouth, UK, on July 7, 2017. Presenting my work at the conferences with my supervisors’ advice and support, I found it fruitful to get feedback from internationally recognised public relations scholars.
Chapter 1
Introduction

Indonesia experienced tremendous changes after the fall of the Soeharto regime in May 1998. Transformation of the political system from authoritarianism to a democratic government was a historic moment for the nation. One significant consequence that emerged from this transition was the dramatic change in the government’s communication system and strategies. In order to meet public demand for reformation and greater democracy, new governments in the post-Soeharto era sought to develop new communication models that are more transparent, participatory and egalitarian form of communication, rather than using one-way top down communication, propaganda techniques and other forms of domineering or unbalanced communication. Yet, the transition of government communication required several years before a government in Indonesia’s new democracy could effectively utilise modern and sophisticated communication strategies.

In the first five-year of the transitional period (1998 – 2003), the leadership of three civilian presidents Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie (hereafter Habibie), Abdurrahman Wahid (hereafter Wahid) and Megawati Soekarnoputri (hereafter Megawati) was often tested with various crises, political and economic instability, as well as cultural and religious conflicts. These presidents encountered more difficult challenges than previous administrations, particularly as the press and civil society were suddenly free to express their criticisms after being suppressed by the Soeharto regime for decades. In the post-Soeharto era, the press and citizens not only dared to
question government policies on controversial issues, they also criticised the government when they found mistakes or evidences of the misuse of power.

It can be said that economic turmoil and political instability during the transitional period and the ineffectiveness of government communication were some important factors that contributed to the failure of the three presidents in perpetuating their power, which only last totally in six years. It explicitly argues that the fragility of Habibie, Wahid and Megawati’s governments was due in part to failure to apply political public relations strategies during their presidency. The government’s ability to deal with a crisis in order to increase political stability was much better after Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (hereafter Yudhoyono) was elected president.

This thesis is concerned with analysing the rapid growth and the exercise of political public relations during the Yudhoyono presidency.¹ It focuses on how Yudhoyono harnessed political public relations to strengthen his political communication in order to maximise political and popular support. In particular, this thesis also examines how the emergence and utilisation of political public relations in Indonesia has broader impact on the political environment in Indonesia, especially in terms of political decision-making and enhancing political stability. This thesis argues that Yudhoyono intensively harnessed political public relations during his presidency, and that was one of the pivotal factors leading to perpetuate his political hegemony. This thesis found that Yudhoyono relied on military officers and trusted them more than professional public relations consultants. Political public relations

¹ ‘Political public relations’ is relatively a new term in the field of public relations research. The term will be conceptualised and clarified its interception with other terms in the next chapter.
also influences the process of political decision-making, assuming that the president and their government as decision-makers tend to maintain their power by dominating the news agenda and excluding minority voices from public debate. In the context of populist politics, political actors are constantly concerned that their popularity will fall if their policies or initiatives are not widely accepted by the public.

**Research Background**

As an independent state once under Dutch and Japanese occupation, the forms of government communication in Indonesia range from using conventional and colonial propaganda to the professionalisation of political public relations. Shortly after taking office, in August 1945, Indonesia’s first president Sukarno established *Kementerian Penerangan* (Ministry of Information), and renamed later as *Departemen Penerangan* or ‘Deppen’ (Department of Information). The name and role of this government institution was changed from time to time, such as Department of Indoctrination which was supposed to be Department of Revolution during the Sukarno’s Guided Democracy [1957–1966] (Dhakidae, 1991, p. 437–438).

In 1962, Sukarno instructed all government institutions to have public relations officers or public affairs departments to manage the relationship between the government and the public and support the decision-making process (Ananto, 2004). These government officials, including media relations, public affairs or public relations officials, and government spokespersons certainly had an ultimate goal and agenda that Cutlip (1994) identifies as: “to influence public behaviour” (p. 19), or to draw on Edward Bernays’ (1947) term, “engineering of consent” (p. 114).
After the transfer of power in 1967, the Soeharto ‘New Order’ regime intensified the role and functions of Deppen and harnessed this institution to control the mass media in order to smooth the deployment of government propaganda. Thus, the authoritarian regime could easily implement their policies without significant challenges from the press and the public. Nowadays, perhaps only totalitarian countries restrict the free practice of public relations, as Verčič (2004) argues: “All countries that are hostile towards public relations have one common deficiency: they are not democracies” (p. 1). Likewise, Cutlip (1994) contends that the social justification for public relations in a free society is that “every idea, individual, and institution shall have a full and fair hearing in the public forum – that their merit ultimately must be determined by their ability to be accepted in the marketplace” (1994, p. 20).

However, this tendency does not always happen in all countries. Rodríguez-Salcedo and Watson (2017), for instance, demonstrate a new understanding about the development of public relations in Europe that is different from the progressivist, optimistic modelling of North American public relations which has dominated historical writings. Based on a comparative history of Southern and Eastern Europe perspectives from 1945 to 1990, Rodríguez-Salcedo and Watson challenge the argument that public relations was conceived as a product of democracy. According to the scholars, public relations practices were formed during dictatorships and thrived subsequently. Rodríguez-Salcedo and Watson conclude “these practices are sustainable in some disadvantageous political situations where democratic activity is very controlled” (2017, p. 380).
Political situation in post-Soeharto Indonesia. In May 1998, Indonesia entered a new era called *era Reformasi* (Reformation era)\(^2\) or democratisation era. In this new era, various established systems and infrastructures run by Sukarno and developed by the Soeharto administration, including their model and communication systems, are now considered obsolete, no longer relevant to the Reformation era, and therefore need to be dismantled. Although the results were not significant, new governments had tried to change their communication strategies and its infrastructures. Abdurrahman Wahid, for instance, immediately abolished *Departemen Penerangan* (Department of Information) or Deppen after being appointed president as he argued that “it did more harm than good, both because of its Stalinist approach to the control of information and because of its entrenched practice of extorting money from media outlets” (Barton, 2002, p. 290). In addition, he said that a department or a ministry was too big to manage government communication and information (see, for example, Hidayat, 2007). At the same time, the euphoria of new-found press freedom and freedom of expression made the news media profoundly critical and street demonstrations had become common.

These radical changes and ‘sudden democracy’ posed a big problem for the new government because they did not understand how to communicate strategically and effectively with the public in a new political landscape whose community had suddenly become liberal and critical. The new rulers of the Reformation era, who were

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\(^2\) The term ‘Reformasi’ literally means reform or reformation. There are many interpretations of this term, including of the periodisation of the reform, such as the first, second and third wave of reform (Interview with Firmanzah, January 11, 2016; Yudhoyono, 2010). However, this thesis uses ‘era Reformasi’ to refer to the era of democratisation and transformation of the political system in Indonesia that began in May 1998 when Soeharto stepped down. It is thus interchangeable with the term ‘post-Soeharto era’.
part of Soeharto’s ‘New Order’ regime, were not accustomed to communicating with the public by using participatory models. The newly emerged political elites, who had once been the government’s opposition, were also clumsy rulers when they had to change their communication style. As a result, poor communication between government, political elites and citizens led to political instability, public unrest, or even anarchy, all of which combined to make the president’s task of ruling difficult. Therefore, the work to transform and steer the nation towards a democratic system was constrained by the difficulty of balancing perceptions between the government and the public. The presidents in the early Reformation era faced serious challenges in running their government. In such a situation of prolonged political instability, three Indonesian presidents in the post-Soeharto era, Habibie, Wahid and Megawati, ruled the nation in just six years (1998–2004). Although all of the presidents had the opportunity to be re-elected, as regulated by law, none of them could hold longevity in office. Habibie, for instance, had to end his presidency after he ruled the nation for only 17 months (21 May 1998–20 October 1999).³

Subsequently, President Wahid also had to give up office in the middle of his tenure, partly due to his inability to mitigate criticism and media attacks against him, as he often spoke impromptu with journalists. This happened even though he was known as ‘the media darling’ before he was elected as Indonesia’s fourth president.⁴

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³ After members of parliament rejected his accountability speech, Habibie chose to resign despite having the opportunity to nominate himself in the presidential election (see, for example, Tran, 1999).
⁴ Prior to becoming Indonesia’s fourth president, Abdurrahman Wahid, a prominent Muslim leader of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), was a newsmaker who often conveyed very sharp and visionary statements interspersed with jokes and thus his remarks were eagerly awaited by the journalists. But, as president, he could not control himself in making comments that often provoked and confused (see, for example, Barton, 2002; Hasibuan, 2017; Wahid, 2001).
Likewise, President Megawati also encountered hardship moments when she had to deal with the press and the public, even though she was often perceived as a symbol of resistance to Soeharto’s authoritarian regime. Given that Indonesia has the world’s fourth largest population, the world’s largest Muslim population, and the largest and most diverse archipelagic country, political communication in the process of democratisation soon became complex amidst the contestation of power struggle. This communication problem was not only occurring in the central government but also happened in regional government in all provinces.

Similar experiences of some developing countries in the Middle East and Southeast Asia suggest that democratic reforms by toppling a dictator hardly guarantee a smooth path to consolidated democracy (see, for example, Kurlantzick, 2011). In the first three years of the post-Soeharto era, Indonesia nearly suffered the same fate. An analysis of the literature review reveals that during the administration of Habibie and Wahid, Indonesia experienced many religious and racial conflicts. When East Timor gained independence from Indonesia and similar efforts took place in Aceh and Papua, the incident raised fears that it could trigger a ‘balkanisation’5 (Barton, 2007). Thomas Friedman (2000) observed the chaotic situation and concluded that, Indonesia was a “prime example of a new kind of state: the ‘messy state’” (p. 8).

When Yudhoyono had won the 2004 presidential election and ran his first term of presidency, the stability of politics and security in Indonesia considerably improved

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5 Balkanisation refers to the division of a multinational state into smaller ethnically homogeneous entities. The term is used to refer to ethnic conflict within multiethnic states. The term Balkanisation is today invoked to explain the disintegration of some multiethnic states and their devolution into dictatorship, ethnic cleansing, and civil war (see, Pringle, n.d.)
and led to a consolidated democracy. In a world democracy forum, conducted in Jakarta on 12 April 2010, Yudhoyono (2010) said that at first it was believed that Indonesians felt unprepared for democracy, because of many political disturbances and instability, and that democracy did not fit into the cultural and historical situation of Indonesia. He acknowledged that there were suspicions that democracy would lead to national decline rather than progress. He also claimed his achievements in defending and enhancing democracy, included allowing freedom of the press and freedom of expression, holding regular elections, and reforming the military and police to no longer intervene in politics. He added that there was a system of checks and balances where the parliament was vibrant and completely independent, and likewise the judiciary (Yudhoyono, 2010, pp. 8-9). This thesis is positioned with this new social and political environment where public relations plays a salient role in Indonesia’s new democracy.

Focus of the Study

The modern practice of political public relations is fairly new in Indonesia. Following the fall of Soeharto in 1998, the new trend of political public relations is emerged and marked by dramatic changes in electioneering and campaign strategies, while the government communication began to be intensified in the country during the campaign season ahead of the 2004 presidential election (Qodari, 2010). Elsewhere, I have argued that three presidents at the beginning of the Reformation era, Habibie, Wahid, and Megawati had not yet realised the importance of building a public information system and how public relations strategies and functions can be used to strengthen their political communication (Dhani, 2004). As such, there is a gap
between the implementation of press freedom and freedom of expression and the use of the modern practice of political public relations which came in five or six years later. Therefore, the government communication in Indonesia during the Yudhoyono presidency is an important case study, especially in terms of the transformation and utilisation of government communication strategies and public relations techniques.

One of the main focuses in this study is related to early development of political public relations in Indonesia’s new democratic environment. The process of democratisation began in the country when governments in the post-Soeharto era issued a number of new regulations to facilitate the transformation of the political system. President Habibie, for example, made new political regulations, including a press law that protects press freedom and freedom of expression. President Megawati also made a significant contribution to the democratisation process by producing and enacting several new regulations governing the direct presidential election (starting in 2004) and then the head-of-local-governments election (in 2005). These new regulations sparked a new phenomenon in the milestone of political public relations: the rise of political consultants. But Indonesia is unique. Most of these political consultants had no experience as public relations practitioners or journalists. They are largely political experts with expertise in conducting and analysing popular surveys and polls, which they later used to influence public opinion, design communication strategies, and polish a candidate’s image.

The emergence of political consultants quickly became a necessity for political elites since the polls could predict the election results with high accuracy (Interview with Adjie Alfaby, 2016; Ufen, 2010). The services of these consultants were in great
demand by political actors even though they were expensive and required a budget to cover other costs associated with the development of a communication strategy to win the election. It is difficult to deny that political consultants with their popular and exit polls have become a salient feature of political public relations. As a new capitalist democratic country, the emergence of these consulting services stimulates the growth of creative industries in Indonesia, including the image makers and public relations firms for the corporate sector in Indonesia (Interviews with Tipuk Satriotomo, 2016; Interview with Silih Agung Wasesa, 2016; Interview with Sinta Soetardjo, 2016). The demand for political consultants to help the candidate win the election was not fully met by the national public relations industry, nor by the agencies of political consultants (Interview with Silih Agung Wasesa, 2016).

Various important things as described above are justifications for determining the main focus of this thesis, i.e. the harnessing of political public relations under the Yudhoyono presidency. It analyses the strategies used by Yudhoyono and his government officials to gain power in two presidential elections (in 2004 and 2009), as well as in the day-to-day presidential communication activities. It explores how Yudhoyono built relationships with mass media organisations and reformed the presidential communication office, and analyses the performance of public relations officers in the presidential organisation. It found that the strategies and practices of political public relations during the Yudhoyono administration were more effective compared to the previous governments in the post-Soeharto era. Yudhoyono was arguably supported by a better communication management system as well as the proper deployment and performance of public relations officers.
The findings reported in this thesis underline the roles and efforts of public relations practitioners to overcome various crises and to help the president polish their performance and the way they communicate in public in order to impress Indonesian people and their potential voters. Yudhoyono was arguably harnessing political public relations constantly and competently, especially during his first tenure, and it becomes one of the important factors in ensuring his political longevity far more than his immediate predecessors. More importantly, with these efforts and strategies of political public relations in dealing with crises and mitigating conflicts, it not only enabled him to improve political stability and conditions necessary for the consolidation of democracy, but also allowed him to maximise political and public support.

**Research Questions and Purpose of the Study**

There has been limited research explaining the development and role of political public relations in Indonesia’s new democracy. Research into the development of public relations in Indonesia has been sparse, with only a small number of studies to date (Simorangkir, 2011, 2013; Yudarwati, 2010, 2014). In particular, there is almost no research specifically in the sub-disciplinary area of political public relations (Willnat and Aw, 2009; Yudarwati, 2014). Scholars have identified the lack of research into public relations and political communication in Indonesia. Yudarwati (2014), for example, noted “There has been no empirical study on the current status of PR in Indonesia, which involved all types of organization and industry” (p. 57). Willnat and Aw (2009) also point out: “The number of studies that focus on political communication in Asia remains relatively small, especially in
countries where communication research is just beginning to emerge as a distinct academic field [for example, in Indonesia or Malaysia]” (p. 218). This study will address that gap, in that it will advance knowledge of governmental communication, or more specifically presidential communication, and expand perspectives on the relationship between the political public relations, state authority, media, and civil society. Based on the research background aforementioned, this thesis has developed the following research questions.

1. How is political public relations perceived from the Indonesian perspective?
2. How did political public relations develop and institutionalise under the Yudhoyono presidency?
3. How did Yudhoyono harness political public relations to maximise political and public support?
4. In the context of Yudhoyono’s presidency, what are notable impacts of political public relations on the broad political environment in Indonesia?

In a broader perspective, this thesis seeks to explore three main themes, namely the development, the practice, and the implications of political public relations in Indonesia under the Yudhoyono presidency. By examining these three main issues, this study has two objectives. First, this thesis aims to advance our understanding and views on the emergence and development of political public relations in Indonesia. Second, the purpose of this thesis is also to investigate the modern practice of political public relations in Indonesia under the Yudhoyono presidency.

This thesis draws on in-depth interviews with senior public relations practitioners and educators, presidential spokespersons, political experts, political consultants, news media editors, and senior journalists in the presidential palace.
associated with the Yudhoyono era. The interviews were conducted in Jakarta, between December 2015 and February 2016. Given that modern political public relations concepts and practices are thriving in Indonesia, and the political system has also undergone a transformation from authoritarianism to democracy, this dissertation will also highlight the implications of political public relations on the processes of decision making.

In order to shed light on how President Yudhoyono and his administration harnessed political public relations, both in winning presidential elections and in daily activity, this thesis analyses the implementation of government policy to increase oil prices between 1980 and 2013 as a case study. Focusing on the direct presidential election is important because it is arguably the best example to illustrate the interplay between political public relations, news media, political elites, and civil society. To this end, this thesis also examines how presidential candidates persuade people through public campaigns, press conferences, presidential debates, and other strategies that aimed to gain maximum of positive media publicity.

This research offers a significant contribution to the study of political public relations, especially in its role and function in the presidential communication in Indonesia. Firstly, it will contribute to a better understanding of how and why the Indonesian presidents after Soeharto shifted their political communication styles and strategies to adjust to the new political system and the growing political awareness of the public. This study will explain how political public relations has played a significant role in changing the nature of political communication in Indonesia, and correspondingly how this has contributed to social and political change.
Secondly, it will show different views and paradigms about public relations in the academic literature and theories as well as what actually happens in practice. More specifically, this thesis will make a significant contribution on the usefulness of multiple-approach, particularly on a combination of three different approaches, i.e. functional/system, rhetorical and critical approach, in relations to the study of political public relations as well as in the study of public relations in general. This research, therefore, can fill the lacuna of such pluralistic studies, specifically into the study of political public relations and public relations research in Indonesia that most of them merely uses the dominant paradigm.

**Thesis Structure**

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the thesis, identifies the problems, and justifies the study. The purpose of the study and research questions are also identified in this chapter. Chapters 2 reviews the academic literature related to this study. This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks and approaches to public relations. It focuses on reviewing the existing theories, concepts and three main approaches to public relations, namely system, rhetorical, and critical. As a starting point, the chapter outlines some key concepts and terms occasionally used in this thesis. Then it provides a historical review of propaganda and public relations. And subsequently, the final section of this chapter conceptualised political public relations.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in this study. It demonstrates how this research was carried out and highlights the approaches used to examine the development, practices and impacts of political public relations under the Yudhoyono
presidency. A case study on oil price increments is selected to analyse the political public relations strategies used by the Yudhoyono administration and compares with other Indonesian presidents when implementing a complex and unpopular government policy. Elite interviews with 20 participants associated with the Yudhoyono administration offer new perspectives and insights on the practice and concept of political public relations during that time. Interview participants’ backgrounds are varied, ranging from public relations practitioners and educators, political experts, journalists and chief editors, presidential spokespersons, political consultants and presidential staff members to a member of parliament.

Chapter 4 offers a historical review of propaganda and political public relations in Indonesia, from the era of Indonesia’s first president Sukarno to the Megawati administration. The aim is to provide a contextual background on the political and ideological propaganda practised by the authoritarian regimes. Subsequently, the chapter compares the practices of propaganda in the past with the political public relations under the democratic governments in the transitional era. This is important to review differences and changes in the techniques and practices of propaganda in authoritarian regimes and political public relations in the post-Soeharto era. In addition to exploring the government communication strategies, this chapter also highlights the performance of each president and analyses how the presidents and their government use propaganda and other persuasive communication both in wartime and in peacetime. Therefore, I use this chapter as a comparison and to show some changes: what was done in the past and what has been formed in the present.
Chapter 5 is the core of this thesis which provides the interview results derived from fieldwork and discusses phenomena and problems that arise from the field of research. Drawing on the participants’ retrospectives, academic literature, and personal accounts, this chapter analyses participants’ perspectives and answers the research questions. Firstly, I explore the development of political public relations that focused during the Yudhoyono presidency. Next, I analyse the practices of political public relations carried out by the Yudhoyono presidency. In the final section, I summarise all the important findings, analyses and related theories in order to develop the concept of political public relations in the Indonesian context.

Chapter 6 critically examines a case study to shed light on how Yudhoyono harnessed political public relations during his presidency and in the presidential election. The chapter focuses on a case study on oil pricing policy in this thesis as this policy is one of the most difficult to implement for all Indonesian presidents. A contentious issue, increases in oil price generated public unrest, and riots. This case study demonstrates the important role and functions of political public relations strategies in government institutions particularly in the newly democratic Indonesia. The chapter shows that Yudhoyono eloquently used various communication strategies. Yudhoyono also sought to ‘neutralise’ media coverage and silence public resistance with sophisticated strategies for unpopular policies. But if the unpopular policy applications are linked to efforts to improve political stability, Yudhoyono has done what other presidents have done. Therefore, this thesis argues that, conventionally, what Yudhoyono had done in his communication strategy was also carried out by his predecessors particularly the authoritarian regimes. In other words,
propaganda techniques carried out by authoritarian regimes in the past was also frequently applied by Yudhoyono during his presidency. What distinguishes the two is the content and type of Yudhoyono’s propaganda were largely non-ideological messages as well as the techniques and strategies that are carried out with subtle and more sophisticated ways. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis, addressing the research questions and highlighting the significance of this study on political public relations in Indonesia under the Yudhoyono presidency.
Chapter 2
Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter reviews academic literature and presents the theoretical frameworks. It analyses the issues and consequences that arise from the practice and development of political public relations in Indonesia. It lays the foundation for this thesis, as the chapters that follow will seek to contextualise these theoretical perspectives by drawing from the interview findings. Public relations scholars have suggested that “virtually all public relations theories could be applied in research on political public relations” (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2013, p. 6). In addition to the dominant paradigm in public relations research, there are many other standpoints and approaches that can be used to expand our insight in researching the practices and impacts of public relations. This thesis uses a combination approach to public relations in order to get a more diverse perspective and greater understanding of government propaganda and political public relations in Indonesia.

This chapter is organised into four sections. Following this introduction chapter, the first section defines the key concepts and terms related to the field of political public relations. Clarification of these concepts and terminology is important to avoid confusion over the use of the concepts that have similar meaning but are not interchangeable. The second section examines historical background of public relations. It highlights early development of public relations including its roots and
its connection with propaganda practices. The aim is to understand the history of propaganda, public relations and the negative connotations that are often attached to them, as well as reviewing how the efforts made by practitioners and scholars to neutralise it or otherwise strengthen its pejorative connotation. The third section outlines three main paradigms and approaches to public relations used in the study, both in terms of their benefits and limitations. The final section elaborates the conceptualisation of political public relations from scholars, which will be used as one of the theoretical foundations in this thesis to analyse the development, practices, and effects of political public relations in Indonesia.

**Key Concepts and Terminology.** Although politics, political communication, and public relations are always closely intertwined (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2011), Lieber and Golan (2011) noted that “any discussion of political public relations theory should arguably begin within the greater public relations context” (p. 55). As a starting point, this section clarifies some key concepts and term used in this study to avoid confusion, as well as to see their differences and relationship to political public relations. In addition to the concepts of public relations, propaganda and political public relations that will be discussed in the following sections, there are other three main concepts and a term occasionally used in this thesis that need to be clarified. The three concepts are government communication, political communication, and government public relations. The term ‘hegemony’ in the context of political hegemony also needs to be explained as it relates to the discussion of political public relations.
Somerville and Ramsey (2012) noted that government public relations can be practised by two different actors. They said any discussion of public relations in the political realm naturally addresses two areas that is carried out by two main actors, namely public relations practices run by the government, and the use of public relations and public affairs by non-government actors in the political process. In the context of political public relations, this thesis focused on the concept of government public relations as the use of propaganda and public relations by the government and/or a president (not by public institutions) in order to achieve their missions and goals.

In the history of government public relations in Indonesia, it has two different divisions and functions. In the era of Sukarno and Soeharto, government public relations transformed into government propaganda carried out by two government institutions and led by ministers, namely the State Secretary that provided information about the activities of the President and the State, and the Department of Information (Deppen), an institution originally intended to distribute government information to the public. In the post-Soeharto era, the Deppen was disbanded –partly because the government institution had already had a negative image. The reason is that the Deppen used to function as a government propaganda tool, including to control the mass media. The government then re-established a similar institution with a new name, i.e. Department of Communication and Informatics (Depkominfo), and it seems that the government wants to restore the real function of government public relations. These two government agencies, Depkominfo and the State Secretary, each
carry out or contain the role and function of public relations, so that both are treated here as government public relations.

Correspondingly, Sanders (2011) observed that government communication has been equated with chief executive—presidential or prime ministerial—communication. Canel and Sanders (2012) emphasised that even though the term ‘government communication’ is often used to refer solely to the top level executive communication, it can also be used to refer to institutions established by government to do its work at national, regional, and local levels. To capture this multi-layered of the concept, this thesis used the term government communication introduced by Canel and Sanders (2012) as follows.

Government communication refers to the aims, role and practice of communication implemented by executive politicians and officials of public institutions in the service of political rationale, and that are themselves constituted (p. 85–86).

Similar to the concept of public relations, the concept of political communication also has many definitions. Some of them are used in this thesis as stated by Norris (2011) who defines political communication as “an interactive process concerning the transmission of information among politicians, the media, and the public. The process operates downwards from governing institutions towards citizens, horizontally through linkages among political actors, and also upwards from public opinion towards the authorities” (p. 319). Chaffee (1975) simply argued that political communication is “the role of communication in the political process” (p. 15). Likewise, McLeod, Kosicki, and McLeod (2002) defined political communication as
“the exchange of symbols and messages between political actors and institutions, the general public, and the news media that are products of or have consequences for the political system” (p. 217). A prominent aspect in the concept of political communication aforementioned is ‘communication’ which in this sense is a political process that exchanges symbols. Political public relations, which also plays significantly in the political process, thus constitutes political communication.

Kiousis and Strömbäck (2014) contend that political public relations could be differentiated with political communication as the former is not only about ‘communication’ but also ‘actions’ that “explicitly involves a wider group of major stakeholders than usually conceptualized by political communication, such as industry lobby groups, party members or activists, issue competitors, think tanks and party donors” (p. 250). The scholars said further that the intentional and objectives driven is also partly separates political public relations from political communication. Therefore, even though the fields of political communication and political public relations overlap theoretically, “conceptually and in practice, they do not always equal each other” (Kiousis and Strömbäck, 2014, p. 250).

Furthermore, the term ‘hegemony’ in the context of political hegemony is treated here as “domination without physical coercion through the widespread acceptance of particular ideologies and consent to the practices associated with those ideologies. Hegemony includes the notion of ‘moral and philosophical leadership’” (Roper, 2005, p. 70, cited in Bocock, 1986). This is in line with Bates (1975) who said that the premise of hegemony theory is that man is not dominated by force alone, but also by ideas; while the state has a major advantage in the struggle for hegemony,
because of its power based on superior organisation and control of information and means of communication. He asserted that the ‘normal’ exercise of hegemony in a particular regime is characterised by “a combination of force and consensus variously equilibrated, without letting force subvert consensus too much, making it appear that the force is based on the consent of the majority” (Bates, 1975, p. 363).

**Historical Background of Public Relations and Propaganda**

The twentieth century is described by Welch (2013) as the propaganda century, with the emergence of mass media (and therefore mass audiences) and technological advancements, which allowed film, radio and other forms of media production to play a significant role. This section addresses the historical and theoretical aspects that bridge as well as distinguish public relations and propaganda. This is important as a foundation for further analyses in the next chapters to understand how, why, and for what purpose the Indonesian presidents use propaganda and public relations. The continuity between the use of propaganda techniques and political public relations strategies under the Yudhoyono administration are further discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

In much public relations scholarship, the term ‘propaganda’ is considered to have emerged in 1622. The term referred to a church’s missionary efforts when Pope Gregory XV tried to denounce the global spread of Protestantism (see, for example, Bernays, 1928; Jowett and O’Donnell, 2012). “The Vatican established the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, meaning the sacred congregation for propagating the faith of the Roman Catholic Church” (Jowett and O’Donnell, 2012, p. 2). Thus, prior to World War I, the term ‘propaganda’ initially reflected religious aura and was
associated with religious activities (Miller, 2005). Wartime propaganda, and in particular the association of propaganda with the Nazi regime and social control, tainted the term ‘propaganda’ and then the field of public relations among communication and media scholars (Myers 2015; Weaver, 2016).

Edward Bernays had published his work since 1923, and with another book Propaganda (1928) he attempted to explain the link in terms of manipulation and control of the public’s mind in order to generate acceptance of an idea or commodity. Learning from Bernays’s works, Hitler realised the power of propaganda and then built his political party by using propaganda as a tool to gain political power. The most important point that Hitler learned in winning support through propaganda was that propaganda must be simple but able to attract the attention of the masses. Moreover, “it had to concentrate on as few points as possible, which then had to be repeated many times, with emphasis on such emotional elements as love and hatred. ‘Persistence is the first and most important requirement for success.’” (Welch, 2002, p. 12).

Elsewhere, Welch describes propaganda as a “distinctly political activity” (2013, p. 2) and identifies ‘legitimate and functional uses’ for propaganda, including informing citizens and explaining government policy and decision making (2013, p. 29). In tandem, he acknowledges the role of censorship, that is “the suppressing of information or opinion offensive to the values of the authority” as “a negative form or propaganda” (2013, p. 25). Welch defines propaganda as:

the deliberate attempt to influence the public opinions of an audience, through the transmission of ideas and values, for a specific persuasive purpose that has
been consciously thought out and designed to serve the self-interest of the propagandists, either directly or indirectly (2013, p. 2).

Jowett and O’Donnell (2012, p. 17) contend that propaganda has many forms and can be categorised as white, gray, or black propaganda based on its accuracy of information. They describe ‘white’ propaganda as containing information that has a clear source and the message tends to be accurate. Jowett and O’Donnell (2012, p. 18) describe the information broadcast by Radio Moscow and VOA during peacetime are examples of this category where the information is reasonably close to the truth. But information derived from a false source and that spread lies, fabrications, deceptions, and is based on emotion alone could be called ‘black’ propaganda. Hitler’s propaganda during World War II (Jowett and O’Donnell, 2012, p. 18) and Cold War propaganda (Moloney, 2006, p. 70) are examples that can be categorised as ‘black’ propaganda. Another term to describe propaganda is disinformation which is usually considered ‘black’ propaganda (Jowett and O’Donnell, 2012, p. 23).

‘Gray’ propaganda lies somewhere between ‘white’ and ‘black’ propaganda. The practice of ‘gray’ propaganda is not limited to government. They asserted communication activities that tend to fall in the ‘gray’ propaganda are varied, such as “companies that distort statistics on annual reports, advertising that suggests a product will achieve result that it cannot, films that are made solely for product placement, and television evangelists who personally keep the money they solicit for religious causes” (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2012, pp. 20-23). Moloney (2006, p. 71) argued that public relations is ‘white’ or ‘gray’ propaganda and defined it as ‘weak’ propaganda. Therefore, the typology of propaganda suggests that not every
communication activity identified as ‘propaganda’ aims to manipulate, spread lies or is based on emotion alone. However, this thesis argues that public relations practices, in corporate and especially in political sectors, are difficult to avoid and detach from propaganda techniques, because the techniques and strategies used by public relations practitioners have many similarities and traits as propaganda.

Furthermore, Jowett and O’Donnell (2012) noted that ‘spin’ and ‘news management’ are popular terms today that imply propaganda and it refers to a coordinated strategy to minimise negative information and present in a favorable light that could be damaging to self-interest. “Spin is often used with reference to the manipulation of political information; therefore, press secretaries and public relations officers are referred to as ‘spin doctors’ when they attempt to launder the news” (Kurtz, 1998, cited in Jowett and O’Donnell, 2012, p. 3). Jowett and O’Donnell, 2012 asserted that intentional effort is usually associated with clear ideology and institutional objective. While the purpose of propaganda is to convey an ideology to an audience with a related objective.

Whether it is a government agency attempting to instill a massive wave of patriotism in a national audience to support a war effort, a terrorist network enlisting followers in a jihad, a military leader trying to frighten the enemy by exaggerating the strength of its army, a corporation pursuing a credible image to maintain its legitimacy among its clientele, or a company seeking to malign a rival to deter competition for its product, a careful and predetermined plan of prefabricated symbol manipulation is used to communicate an objective to an audience. That objective endeavors to reinforce or modify the attitudes, the behavior, or both of an audience (pp. 3–4).
In 1923, Bernays popularised the term ‘public relations’ through the first scientific public relations work *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, and scholars identify him as the first real political consultant, who introduced the basics for modern political public relations practices (Blumenthal, 1980, pp. 12-13). Bernays titled the new propaganda specialist ‘public relations counsel’ and described the role of the specialist as “a creator of news for whatever medium he chooses to transmit ideas. It is his duty to create news no matter what the medium which broadcasts this news” (Bernays, 1923, p. 171). After returning from a First World War conference, Bernays suggested “if you could use propaganda for war you could certainly use it for peace” (cited in Sanders, 2009, p. 57). This implies that propaganda and public relations, as well as other methods of persuasion, are tools that can be used in contradictory ways, depending on the intention and who uses them.

In 1928, Bernays published his second book *Propaganda*. He assumed the new propaganda had a very different form from those prevalent in World War I (p. 28). However, his efforts to explain the link in terms of manipulation and control of the public’s mind in order to create acceptance of an idea or commodity provoked confusion and criticism. Myers (2015) argues that Bernays’ effort to distance his new propaganda from the propaganda associated with Germany in the First World War failed. Myers asserts, “his attempt failed and in modern usage propaganda is still largely associated with manipulative communication practices” (2015, p. 552). In 1947, Bernays wrote an article entitled *The Engineering of Consent*. According to Cutlip

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6 The Engineering of Consent is an essay written by Edward L. Bernays first published in 1947 and a book he published later in 1955 with the same title.
(1994), the article showed the perfect principles for public relations, “but are corroded by the offensive term *engineering of public opinion* that connotes manipulation of the public, a manipulation that most public citizens innately fear; a fear that makes them wary of the work of the practitioner, even today” (pp. 354-355). Nevertheless, Gonçalves ascertains that Bernays supports the relevance of promoting or manipulating ideas, values, events or people because ultimately the purpose of this counsel of public relations efforts would “contribute to higher telos: the social order” (2014, p. 100-101).

In developing an early theoretical model of public relations, Grunig and Hunt (1984) sought to distance ethical and professional public relations from propaganda. The dominance of the ‘Grunigian paradigm’ together with the strong vocational orientation of public relations education have contributed to the framing of public relations by scholars outside the discipline as spin, manipulation and deceit (McNair, 2006; Weaver, 2016). However, these models have been roundly criticised by critical scholars within the public relations discipline, in part because of the failure to consider power and the privileging of organisational and corporate interests but also because of the failure to address the particular social, cultural and political contexts of public relations activity (Edwards & Hodges, 2011; L’Etang, 2008a, 2009; McKie & Munshi, 2007; Moloney, 2006; Motion & Weaver, 2005; Roper, 2005). Weaver argues ‘sweeping and dismissive generalisations about the unethical nature of public relations and propaganda’ are problematic and identifies the need for research that offers a better understanding of the role of public relations in ‘shap[ing] social culture, public opinion, political processes and globalisation’ (2016, p. 268).
For nearly a century, scholars and practitioners have been offered hundreds of public relations definitions (Harlow, 1976; see also, Broom & Sha, 2013; Heath, 2013; Coombs & Holladay, 2014). Many of these definitions emphasise the management function of public relations, among others, managing relations with the media (McNair, 2011), the management of credibility (Stacks, 2011), and the management of communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Various interpretations of public relations indicate the elasticity and breadth of public relations as a subject and profession. Consequently, it is difficult to explain or redefine the concept of public relations adequately. Indeed, there is always personal preference and other factors to a person in constructing a concept or theory, as Heath (2009b) said: “the way any person defines public relations, sees, and assumes it to be rewarding of their time, ingenuity, talents, ethics, and sense of personal self-worth” (p. 17). In order to shed light on the role of public relations in governmental institutions for this study, I chose to use a definition of public relations proposed by Heath and Coombs.

Public relations is the management function that entails planning, research, publicity, promotion, and collaborative decision making to help any organization’s ability to listen to, appreciate, and respond appropriately to those persons and groups whose mutually beneficial relationships the organization needs to foster as it strives to achieve its mission and vision (2006, p. 7).

There are key elements in the above definition which imply that public relations is a profession that plays an important role in any organisation. Related to the management functions as identified in the concept, I particularly underline the role of public relations in the planning and decision making process by taking into
account public aspirations, respond appropriately to its public, and establish mutually beneficial relationships. The concept of public relations in a general perspective, as mentioned here, can be distinguished later with the concept of public relations and its characteristics in the political realm. One section in this chapter will note the existence of other dimensions which are important aspects of political public relations.

**Paradigms and Approaches in Public Relations**

In the last decade, researchers and scholars began to highlight the importance of conducting a multiple or a combination approach to public relations (see, for example, Edwards, 2011; L’Etang, 2009; Tooth, 2009). Edwards (2011) said the emphasis of certain approaches applied in researching public relations has led to excessive competition between paradigms. She maintained that the potential for cross fertilization between different approaches is also limited. Therefore, a new formulation of the notion of public relations or multiple paradigms is needed because the nature of public relations research is increasingly varied (Edwards, 2011).

Other scholars also recommend using a combination of approaches and methods to analyse the multi-faceted problem of public relations. L’Etang (2009), for example, asserts that multi and interdisciplinary research such as mixed method, ethnographic and case study-based research is needed to unpack the complexity of public relations as a concept and practice. L’Etang (2009) argues “only such collaborative efforts can begin to capture a better understanding of this intriguing practice” (p. 14). Likewise, Toth (2009) suggests that a review of three different perspectives of public relations, namely rhetorical, critical, and Excellence perspectives, along with system perspective, as she proposed earlier (in Toth, 1992)
can provide some complementary understandings. She said these pluralistic studies demonstrate an understanding of public relations as a potential force in society through the strength of the body of knowledge in public relations, and the differences of the three theories can show the complementary nature. Toth maintains “we should consider all theories as we seek answers to how and why public relations should work for a more fully functioning society” (2009, p. 48).

The dominant paradigm. Various attempts to neutralise the negative connotations of public relations and its association with propaganda and manipulation, as stated in the previous section, have been undertaken by several public relations scholars. The work of Grunig and Hunt in *Managing Public Relations* (1984) was developed and publicised as the first normative public relations theory to propose an ethical version of the discipline (Gonçalves, 2014). This theory is based on theoretical premise about the value of public relations and derived principles of how the function should be organised to maximise this value. In this work, Grunig and Hunt (1984) captured the enormous variation in public relations practice and they define public relations as “management of communication between an organization and its publics” (p. 6) and identified four modern practice models. The scholars used the four models to both describe the historical development of public relations and as a set of ideal types that described how contemporary public relations is practised. Grunig and Hunt (1984) named these as press agentry or publicity model, public information model, two-way asymmetrical model, and two-way symmetrical model.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) contended that three of the four models, i.e. publicity model, public information model, and two-way asymmetrical model, are categorised
as asymmetrical communication practices. The fourth model, the two-way symmetric model, is normatively superior and thus preferable to the others because it has a dialogic focus and seeks to establish mutual understanding in a balanced relationship between organisations and publics. Grunig and his team then developed the two-way symmetrical model to become Excellence theory (Grunig et al., 1992). Grunig (2001) explains that practitioners using the two-way asymmetrical model began to conduct scientific research to determine how to persuade publics to behave in the way the client organisation wishes. With the two-way symmetrical model, practitioners use research and dialogue to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviours of both the organisation and its publics (Grunig, 2001, p. 12).

Excellence theory relies on principles of systems theory to offer solutions to the problem that organisations create for their publics. Grunig and Hunt considered that public relations is an organisational subsystem (1984, p. 8). Systems theory provides a framework through which to view organisations and their relationships with the environment. In practice, system theory runs by input-transformation-output mechanism and its transaction with the environment. To be more specific, Hazleton describes the application of public relations in an organisation as a series of events containing input from the environment, transformation of input into communication goals, objectives, and campaign, and output, in the form of messages to target audiences (1992, p. 34). Another important aspect related to the system theory is to measure technical and managerial roles and the effectiveness of public relations in an organisation. Hazleton and J. Grunig et al. developed public relations competence theory which found that public relations competence is different from interpersonal...
competence, and therefore, “the basic assumption of the theory is that competence is contextual” (Hazleton, 2006, p. 218).

Critiques of dominant paradigm. Shortly after Grunig and Hunt introduced the four models of public relations, the theory became the focus of much research and stimulated many studies of public relations. The Grunigian paradigm with its functional approach and systems theories, became popular theories and then the dominant paradigm for public relations research. These theories became the target of criticism from several academics who wanted to develop alternative theories and call for both more inclusive and broader perspectives. L’Etang (2004), for example, acknowledges that many academics adopted this evolutionary model, but argues that “it fails to take account of significant cultural and political factors in non-U.S. settings, and its monolithic application in deductive research and status as a worldview has inhibited the development of research grounded in the daily practice of public relations” (p. 9). Elsewhere, L’Etang also criticises the Grunigian paradigm that sought to globalise public relations practices into ‘four models’ based on common practice and history that only occurred in the US. “The ‘four models’ have been proselytised in an enthusiastically evangelical way, to the detriment of the field as a whole” (L’Etang, 2008b, p. 327).

Murphy (1991) criticised the Excellence theory and noted that the symmetry model has limitations, especially when the theorists contrasted their theory by using a game theory approach. Murphy also underlined the fact that only a few public relations departments practised two-way symmetrical public relations and questioned whether the purely symmetrical model accurately represents
organisational behaviour. Instead, many of them used a combination of tactics, most notably two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. Murphy (1991) asserted, “This may explain why researchers have so seldom found it in practice, and in turn this suggests that a pure symmetrical model may not be the most accurate one possible to describe organizational behavior” (p. 123). Thus, the Excellence theory is normative rather than positive theory. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) themselves acknowledge these criticisms as they conceded,

Although we think that organizations should practice two-way and symmetrical communication when their environments are complex and turbulent, many—if not most—organizations with such environments do not practice public relations in the way our theory predicted. We have concluded, therefore, that the theoretical relationship between the models of public relations and an organization’s environment and structure is more normative than positive (p. 298).

The above criticisms against the dominant paradigm show that public relations should not be framed in certain models because, in practice, there are always differences in pluralistic societies with diverse cultures and historical backgrounds, and thus, a better understanding of public relations requires and certainly can be done through pluralistic studies. In the last two decades, a number of public relations scholars offer a variety of social theories and critical approaches in researching public relations. *Handbook of Public Relations* (Heath & Vasquez, 2001) can be seen as a major turning point for the public relations discipline. The key contributors, among others, are Cheney and Christensen, 2001; Grunig, 2001; Heath, 2001; Leeper, 2001; Leitch and
Neilson, 2001; and McKie, 2001. Then, in *Public Relations and Social Theory* (Ihlen, van Ruler, & Fredriksson, 2009), public relations scholars provide and develop many alternative public relations theories, which originated from sociologists, such as Berger, Bourdieu, Foucault, and Habermas. Also, in a recent publication, *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Public Relations* (L’Etang, McKie, Snow, & Xifra, 2016), some critical scholars offer many different approaches, such as through history (L’Etang, 2016), feminism (Fitch, 2016), critical rhetoric (Ihlen, 2016), and critical discourse analysis (Motion & Leitch, 2016).

**Rhetorical approach to public relations.** Rhetoric has been adopted as one of the most important theories of public relations. Verčič (2004) noted that philosophers have discussed human society for 2,500 years. “It was Plato who articulated this position and it was he who proscribed rhetoric, one of the predecessors of modern public relations” (Verčič, 2004, p. 3). Kennedy (2007) revealed that the study of rhetoric began in Greece in the fifth century BC. He refreshed that democratic government emerged in Athens based on the assumption that all citizens have equal rights and obligations to participate in their own government, while decisions on public policy were made by the majority vote of all adult male citizens.

Based on Aristotle’s accounts, it is narrated that every citizen is expected to speak on their own behalf in many respects, including if they need to seek redress in court for some mistakes or if they are summoned to court as defendants, as there were no professional lawyers in Greece. Kennedy said, “To do so effectively, they needed to be able to speak in public” (2007, p. ix), and therefore, it may stimulate everyone to learn the rhetorical skill to survive. This is highly relevant to ‘going public’ theory,
proposed by Samuel Kernell who suggests that the modern presidents should go public, instead of bargaining and persuading the Congress to influence policy (as argued by Neustadt in Presidential Power, 1964) as the repertoire of modern leadership and modern technology makes it possible. Kernell (1993) argues, “modern presidents resort to rhetoric when the public is not supporting their policies rather than thinking about changing their policies” (p. 90).

A relevant theory for this political rhetoric strategy was proposed by sociologist Peter M. Hall, who coined and developed the term ‘political impression management’ as the art of making the candidate look electable and competent. According to Hall (1972), the analysis of political impression management can be initiated with an assumption that the basic element of politics is ‘talk’, and it can be manifested into political rhetoric, for instance, “the use of public discourse to persuade” (p. 51). Hall asserted that political actors should be able to understand how the process of political conversation in determining “how the audience is activated (or perhaps deactivated or deflected)” (p. 51). Hall contended that politicians always get public attention because they are potentially always on stage. Hence, every aspect of behaviour can be part of a public performance that must be managed and controlled to maximise support. Hall argued: “Many of his activities will be essentially symbolic, i.e. for the purpose of creating the desired identity in order to draw the audience into his drama” (1972, p. 61).

Heath (2001) said that rhetoric is in accordance with scientific methods and social assumptions because it can be used to explain the process of communication and community development. He argues that rhetoric helps management to win the
discourse and to guide how they are involved in the debate issues, manage risks, and respond during a crisis. Heath stated: “Rhetoric helps us to understand how ideas pose rhetorical exigencies that require responses by public relations practitioners who strive to create meanings that justify norms and build relationships vital to society” (2001, p. 33). Elsewhere, Heath (2009b) contended that rhetorical theory “helps us understand the process of decision making, collective efforts, and the give and take of conversation, debate, advocacy, accommodation, negotiation, and collaborative decision making” (pp. 23-24).

Given that rhetoric can play a key role in managing issues and rests on the fact that society is a ‘marketplace of ideas’, Burke (as cited in Heath, 2009, p. 24) claims that rhetorical tradition can be regarded as ‘Wrangle in the Marketplace’. And for this reason, Burke (as cited in Heath, 2009) concludes that democracy institutionalises “the dialectic process, by setting up a political structure that gives full opportunity for the use of competition to a cooperative end” (p. 24). Heath (2009) maintains that each moment’s work in public relations, by this rationale, “competes for time and space with many others ... The theory and ethics that drive rhetoric center on the rationale for suasive (sic) discourse, the art of influence and being influenced” (p. 24).

Likewise, West and Turner (2010) said the audience seems to have not always been easily deceived into accepting and believing everything presented by the dominant forces, particularly in modern society with the advancement of communication and information technology. Sometimes audiences will use the same resources and strategies as dominant social groups. West and Turner (2010, p. 369) argue that to some extent,
individuals will use the same practices of hegemonic domination to challenge that domination. This is what Gramsci called counter-hegemony… it suggests that audiences are not necessarily willing and compliant. In other words, we—as audience members—are not dumb and submissive!

Thus, in a modern democratic society, there is always the possibility that the government dominance can be undermined and people can win the battle of ideas in the process of public policy discourse.

**Critical approaches to public relations.** This thesis uses critical approaches to public relations based on certain criteria and refers to some critical works wrote by the critical public relations scholars (see, for example, Edwards, 2014; L’Etang et al., 2016; L’Etang & Pieczka, 2006). To be more detailed, the term ‘critical’ in this context refers to Morrow and Brown (1994)’ views who pointed out that the scope of ‘critical’ are including of (1) work that challenges current assumptions in the field; (2) work that alters boundaries and produce a ‘paradigm’ shift; (3) work that critiques policy or practice in the field; and (4) work that specifically draws for inspiration on the intellectual sociological project known as Critical Theory (as cited in L’Etang, 2005, p. 521).

*A critical view of propaganda and public relations.** As discussed earlier in this chapter, the term ‘propaganda’ emerged in the early seventeenth century when its interpretation tended to be positive. However, it became negative after Hitler and his Nazi Propaganda Chief Joseph Goebbels adopted Bernays’ *Crystallizing Public Opinion* and the dictator used the techniques and methods to “psychologically manipulate the
propaganda audience through means such as the constant repetition of a few relatively simplistic points” (Weaver, Motion, & Roper, 2006, p. 10).

Public relations is often equated with propaganda and tends to be associated with negative connotations, such as lies, spin, deception, and manipulation (see, for example, McNair, 2004; Miller & Dinan, 2007, 2008; Moloney, 2006; Myers, 2015; Robertson, 2014; Weaver, Motion, & Roper, 2006). Public relations practitioners were deeply concerned with these pejorative connotations and sought to separate the practice of public relations with propaganda. Grunig and Hunt (1984) contributed significantly in the efforts to separate propaganda with public relations in the development of their four models, and advocacy of two-way symmetrical model as ethical and professional. The problem is that there are still many unethical practices of public relations, both in the corporate sector and in the political realm, as Dinan and Miller (2007) stated: “there are still a lot of bad things around” (p. 16). This makes Grunig’s two-way symmetrical model, which was deemed ethical and best practice public relations utopian and normative. In regard to the development of this issue, there are challenging questions that need to be answered as it continues to be a debate among practitioners and scholars. For example, is there any substantive difference between public relations and propaganda? Can both terms be interchangeable in our understanding and in their use? The complexity of this problem and debates that arise even to define public relations and propaganda as two different concepts is then questioned by L’Etang (2006): “if they are the same, how are they different?” (p. 23).

Furthermore, Stauber and Rampton (1995) believe that public relations is all about propaganda. L’Etang (1998) and Puchan (2006) suggest that public relations and
propaganda are interchangeable. Moloney (2006) argued that public relations is weak propaganda, and that the nature of public relations messages is propagandistic. L’Etang (2004) also notes that propaganda was a neutral term at the start of the twentieth century since theorists such as Bernays (1923), Lippman (1925) and Lasswell (1934) saw no problem with trying to organise the responses of mass audiences. Others emphasise that public relations is not identical with propaganda, public relations is just one type of propaganda, and not all of public relations practices are propaganda (Lasswell, 1927; Ellul, 1965; L’Etang, 1998; Fawkes, 2014).

Weaver, Motion and Roper (2006) investigate the relationship between propaganda, public relations, truth, power, and public interest. Weaver et al. reviewed the history of propaganda and its contribution to the mobilisation of public opinion. The scholars then explored the nature of propaganda and the passive audience drawing on Jowett and O’Donnell and their account of ‘persuasion’ as “an arena ethical influence”, while propaganda was defined as “the self-interested attempt to manipulate the behaviour of others” [emphases in original] (Weaver et al., 2006, p. 12).

According to Weaver et al., the description by Jowett and O’Donnell was an attempt to distinguish propaganda from legitimate practices of persuasion and influence. However, Weaver et al. argue that “Jowett and O'Donnell's explanation of ethical persuasion could be seen at work in 1930s Germany, because supporters of Nazism viewed Hitler as potentially fulfilling societal needs by offering a way out of a crippling national economic depression” (2006, p. 13). The scholars then contend that propaganda in itself is not unethical. Rather, they argued,
whether propaganda is ethical or not has to be assessed in relation to the context in which it is practised, the ends to which it is used, the quality of transparency in terms of the persuaders' openness about the 'ends' they are seeking to achieve, and, as far as one is able to judge, the consequences of those ends (Weaver et al., 2006, p. 13).

Departing from the fact that propaganda has become increasingly discredited as an unethical tool for the manipulation of public opinion, Weaver et al. also review Grunig’s theories which attempted to distance public relations from propaganda. The scholars synergise Grunig's theories which involve dialogue with organisational stakeholders and Habermas’ theories of public sphere and ‘communicative action’, as well as Foucault’s conceptions of truth, power, and knowledge, and Fairclough’s discourse theory. Weaver et al. (2006) argue that “the critical discourse theory view of public relations, and indeed propaganda, provides a means of understanding the significance of the public relations contribution to the formation of hegemonic power, constructions of knowledge, truth, and the public interest” (p. 21). In short, they conclude that by using critical theory they find “no substantive difference between propaganda and public relations” (Weaver et al., 2006, p. 21).

A critical view of the role and effects of public relations. Critical approaches to public relations provides many perspectives and based on a very wide range of theoretical approaches (Edwards, 2014). Some critical works focused on how public relations practitioners perpetuate the ability of the dominant group to maintain their hegemony, and how public relations interferes in the public sphere, dominating the news agenda and excluding other voices from public debate (Davis, 2000; Edwards,
investigate public relations practices by using discourse theory, particularly the work of Michael Foucoul and Norman Fairclough. Critical scholars also examine the discursive and symbolic work executed through public relations, such as Bourdieu, Foucoul, and Habermas.

Jürgen Habermas, an influential media sociologist from Germany is a theorist who focused his work on public relations with his conception of public sphere. Habermas generates critiques of public relations with another conception, namely communicative rationality, in relation to deep structural changes that have eroded the public sphere. Habermas (1989) said the integration of the public and private realms entailed a corresponding disorganisation of the public sphere that once was the go-between linking state and society. Habermas (1989, pp. 177–8) argues,

Publicity is generated from above, so to speak, in order to create an aura of good will for certain positions. Originally, publicity guaranteed the connection between rational-critical public debate and the legislative foundation of domination, including the critical suspension of its exercise. Now it makes possible the peculiar ambivalence of domination exercised through the domination of non-public opinion: it serves the manipulation of the public as much as legitimation before it. Critical publicity is supplanted by manipulative publicity!

For Habermas, the aim of speech is to reach agreement on action and how to act, where all participants in conversation should accept a set of responsibilities as a result of taking part. “Participation in fair process and acceptance of the outcome
becomes, in itself, a legitimating process, which Habermas extends beyond face-to-face talk into mediated communication” (cited in McKie, 2013, p. 230). Regarding this structural factor, it is worth noting Herman and Chomsky’s Propaganda Model (1988) as political economy theory posits that the way in which news is structured, including through the influence of media ownership and government sourcing, creates an inherent conflict of interest that acts as propaganda for undemocratic forces.

Democratic norms of public participation in decision making and freedom of expression are acknowledged. Bohman (2015) argues that such norms are often explicit in exercises of power for various ends, such as wealth, security, or cultural survival. This kind of power, he said, “violates the communicative freedom expressed in ignoring the need to pass decisions through the taking of yes/no attitudes by participants in communication. Habermas calls such speech that is not dependent on these conditions of communicative rationality ‘distorted communication’” (Bohman, 2015, para 17).

Related to Habermas’s identification of distorted communication, Motion and Weaver (2005) observed that critical approaches to the study of public relations are centrally concerned with the issues of power. They said one of the main tasks for the critical public relations scholar is “to investigate how public relations practice uses particular discursive strategies to advance the hegemonic power of particular groups and to examine how these groups attempt to gain public consent to pursue their organizational mission” (p. 50). Correspondingly, Edwards (2009) argues that public relations practitioners perpetuate the ability of the government and corporations to maintain a privileged position in society, usually by dominating the news agenda and
ignoring minority voices from public debate. “They have highlighted the dominance of corporate and government communications in the industry and the industry’s dependence on these clients for its survival” (Edwards, 2009, p. 158).

In recent literature, Heath and Xifra (2016, p. 206) underscore significant works of other critical public relations scholars (for example, Lamme & Russell, 2010; Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Gregory & Halff, 2013) on how public relations practitioners use communication to create power – and power to create communicativeness. For instance, Heath and Xifra (2016) draw on Coombs and Holladay’s work and point out that public relations practitioners justify their view by creating discourses, and when practitioners win the discourse, hegemony is created and the public is subject to the power of the organisation. Gregory and Halff (as cited in Heath & Xifra) also recited Gramsci’s thought that “dominant classes exercise power in different spheres, including the economic, political, and cultural” and extend it “to the state and civil society. It was in these spheres that hegemony was created and maintained” (p. 206).

**Conceptualising Political Public Relations**

Historically, public relations has contributed and played significant roles in the political process both at the level of individuals and organisations. Scholars have found that public relations involvement and practice to be as old as politics and society itself (Martinelli, 2011). Strömbäck and Kiousis (2013) note that a pamphlet in ancient times, written in 62 BC by Quintus Tullius Cicero in the form of a letter to his brother Marcus about how to campaign and win elections, may have been the first publication of electioneering and political public relations. Since 1869, the concept of
‘marketplace of ideas’ was proposed by the British philosopher John Stuart Mill who argues that people should be allowed to speak and exchange ideas freely (Martinelli, 2011, p. 34). In the context of political communication, where freedom of expression and press freedom often make the message conveyed by political actors difficult to hear amid opinion contestation, the role of political consultants or public relations practitioners becomes essential to promote their clients’ messages and images.

Political public relations is an interdisciplinary field that encompasses political communication, political marketing, public affairs, persuasion, and public relations (Gonçalves, 2014; Newman & Verčič, 2012; Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2011). In modern practice, experts share the view that public relations and political marketing have many similarities, particularly in professional activities, but need to be bridged because there is a gap between theory and research in both fields. Newman and Verčič (2002) identified that both public relations and political marketing have a focal client (an individual or organisation); develop around issues (that interest ‘publics’ or ‘markets’); research-driven (based on public opinion polling); and are gaining in importance in elections and in government. And in political realms “they are both usually concealed behind the title of ‘political consultants’” and “have been criticised in the media as being corruptive for the spirit of democracy” (Newman & Verčič, 2002, p. 2).

In contrast, the latter similarities appear to conflict with other realities given that political marketing and public relations have shown an important role in ‘democratising’ political communication. As Newman and Verčič argue that both political marketing and public relations can be regarded as “lubricants that enable
political machinery to run smoothly” (2012, p. 3). The scholars suggested that political consultants (of political marketing and public relations) make the political process become bidirectional and participatory by allowing candidates and politicians to connect to their constituencies and learn on and about them (Newman & Verčič, 2002, p. 3).

In the political sphere, political communication scholars typically understand public relations primarily in terms of media and image management (Moloney, 2006). For example, writing in relation to the UK’s New Labour movement in the 1990s, McNair identified a shift in political public relations activity that contributed to the framing of such activity as ‘spin’:

the management of public opinion—the attempt to persuade, influence and manipulate others’ views on the meaning of an event or issue—is as old as the political process itself. What is new is the intensity and the degree of professionalism with which it is conducted by all social actors, from terrorist to trade unions, and prime ministers to pop stars (2004, p. 327).

This spin became synonymous with manipulation and “lacking truthfulness” (McNair, 2004, p. 328). And the activities are “created by government and political communication specialists, referred to as spin doctors” (Tomić & Grbavac, 2016, p. 84). At the same time, through journalism and popular culture, the processes associated with political public relations have become widely recognised by the general public (McNair, 2004). To be more specific, the practice of political public relations can be identified in various sectors by all organisations and individuals, including political parties and candidates, governmental and public sector agencies,
think tanks, unions, commercial businesses, as well as various interest groups and non-profit organisations that are more or less engaged in efforts to influence political processes or outcomes (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2011).

There is limited international scholarship that investigates political public relations from public relations perspectives; indeed, Strömbäck and Kiousis note that much political communication research is “decoupled from public relations” and tends to be researched by political communication scholars who frame such activity primarily as spin (2011, p. 6). Likewise, some public relations scholars also emphasise that the activity of political public relations is often associated with communication spin and “non-ethical communication, whose aim is media manipulation and manipulation of the public” (Tomić & Grbavac, 2016, p. 84). Somerville and Ramsey (2012) contended that a Habermasian public sphere ideal is still relevant today primarily with the existence of spin doctors as part of political public relations activities in political communication. Other public relations scholars construct political public relations primarily as media management, Froehlich and Rüdiger, for example, define the main goal of political public relations as “the use of media outlets to communicate specific political views, solutions and interpretations of issues in the hope of garnering public support for political policies or campaigns” ([emphases in original] 2006, p. 18). Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) maintain political public relations differs from political communication in that it is purposive and identify the need for more research into the field. The scholars offer a useful definition of political public relations as:
the management process by which an organization or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals (Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011, p. 8).

There are two key words in the above political public relation definition: influence and reputation. These two elements are absent in the public relations definition proposed by Health and Coomb, while efforts to influence public opinion and behavior in political public relations, as well as in Jowett and O’Donnell’s propaganda definition are crucial. Thus, it can be argued that the persuasive dimension and reputation dimension are pivotal and interrelated in the concept of political public relations.

Contemporary governments routinely use public relations not only in communicating their policies but also to maintain their reputation and popularity. As such, political public relations is simply ‘part of the infrastructure of modern political communication’ (McNair, 2004, p. 337). Ward (2003), for example, points to a growing institutionalisation of public relations in the Australian government sector with the appointment of ministerial media advisors and the establishment of media units and public affairs teams throughout the 1980s and 1990s and L’Etang (2004) links the development of public relations in the UK closely with government. It is therefore important to understand the role of public relations in political processes.

Taylor and Kent (2007) argue that to various degrees, all governments use both political public relations and propaganda: “Persuasion becomes propaganda,
however, when citizens are systematically deprived of competing messages, fed lies and deception, and not given the opportunity to voice competing positions or seek alternative solutions to problems” (p. 146). To distinguish political public relations efforts from propaganda, Taylor and Kent simply suggest looking at the means of communication and the intent. They explain that there are many propaganda techniques, such as appeals to authority, bandwagon appeals, fear, glittering generalities, name calling, ‘plain folks’ appeals, testimonials, transfers, and slippery slope argument that “typically involves attempts to generate conditioned reflexes that replace reasoned actions, employing controlled use of the media and unethical rhetorical techniques” (Taylor & Kent 2007, p. 146).

In the Indonesian context, there is little literature on political public relations but there are several scholarships whose elements and topics are related to the field of discussion, such as in political communication, political marketing and public relations, so that I might be able to use some of them as references in this thesis. Research in public relations (in corporate sector) and its development in Indonesia, for example, there are works by Ananto (2004), Simorangkir (2011) and Yudarwati (2011; 2014) as I quote elsewhere in this thesis and include them in the reference section. Moreover, in the field of political communication, there are several related studies, such as media-elite interactions in the post-Soeharto era (Andres, 2016); the Yudhoyono presidency (Aspinall, Mietzner, & Tomsa, 2015), political communication in Asia (Willnat & Aw, 2009); David Hill (2007) wrote about the press in New Order Indonesia; and Yudhoyono also wrote about his communication strategies, his memories and experiences during two-period as sixth Indonesia's president. There are
several works that highlight the fields of political and marketing communication, such as political marketing and branding written by Silih Agung Wasesa (2011). Nyarwi Ahmad also wrote about the management of political communication and political marketing (2012) and the marketisation and campaigns of political parties and leaders (2017). These works are related to other research, such as the role of polls and political consultants by Muhammad Qodari (2010); election campaign in Indonesia by Andreas Ufen (2010). And there are some studies that emphasise political campaigns and political public relations in social media in Indonesia, such as works by Muninggar Sarawati (2016) and Effy Rusfian and Lestari Nurhayati (2015). In Harsono Suwardi (ed., 2002)’s work, some scholars wrote about politics, democracy, and communication management. Muhammad Yuanda Zara (2016) wrote about Indonesian propaganda during 1945-1949 and nation-state building. Whereas the only research in the field of presidential communication management is the book I wrote in 2004 entitled, Presidentital Communication Management: From Soekarno to Megawati (in Indonesian).

**Summary and Application**

I have established a theoretical framework and outlined three major approaches to public relations in this chapter, i.e. system, rhetoric and critical. These approaches are relevant and are considered most suitable to explore and analyse the development, practices, and effects of political public relations that have just flourished in Indonesia. Of the three main approaches described in this chapter, systems theory is useful as a theoretical basis to investigate how President Yudhoyono and his predecessors institutionalise political public relations into government
organisations. In addition, the system perspective can also be used to examine whether or not public relations, with the significant changes in government organisations, can make organisations more effective, and why the government needs to institutionalise political public relations. While the rhetorical approach is employed to assess the performance, strategies, and speeches of the president and their subordinates in communicating with the public and the press, as well as building their public image, reputation, and legitimacy. As Heath (2001) said, rhetoric helps us to understand how ideas pose rhetorical exigencies that require responses by public relations practitioners who strive to create meanings that justify norms and build relationships vital to society.

From a different perspective, the critical approach is used here to analyse the practices and social-political impacts resulting from the harnessing of political public relations under the Yudhoyono presidency. As this becomes the central theme in this study, the focal task of this thesis is to explore the interplay between propaganda, public relations, and political hegemony. Thus, the theoretical framework in this thesis is also built to explain the differences and similarities of propaganda and public relations, and to assess how these two concepts become inextricably intertwined. In addition, this task is important as the first step to develop the concept and perspective on political public relations as described by international academics in this chapter, because there is no adequate research on the concept and the perspective of political public relations in the Indonesian context.

From a historical review of public relations, I have demonstrated that the concept of public relations is rooted in propaganda. Both of these concepts have many
similarities, as well as negative connotations after propaganda strategies and techniques were widely used in World War II. Various attempts were made to neutralise the pejorative connotations. Some significant efforts, among others, were the works of Bernays (1928), who sought to distinguish (wartime) propaganda from public relations by developing his ideas about public relations which he called ‘new propaganda’. Grunig and Hunt (1984) also tried to distance ethical and professional public relations from propaganda. They use four models to illustrate the historical development of public relations and as a set of ideal types that demonstrate how contemporary public relations is practiced. Moreover, Moloney (2006) argues that public relations is weak propaganda, which he associates with the practice of ‘white’ and ‘gray’ propaganda. Taylor and Kent (2007) also argue that to various degrees, all governments use both public relations and propaganda. Elsewhere, Moloney (2004) challenges researchers to pairing public relations and propaganda in their research, as he argues that, “with capitalist, liberal democracy having won the global ideological contest..., we can safely ‘democratisre’ propaganda and, therefore, public relations” (p. 91).

In contrast, scholars of critical public relations in much literature generally rejected these separation efforts as they argued that there is no substantive difference between propaganda and public relations (Weaver et al., 2006). Some of them believed that public relations is all about propaganda (Stauber & Rampton, 1995). Others suggested that public relations and propaganda are interchangeable (L’Etang, 1998; Puchan, 2006). Conceptually and empirically, all of these assumptions, as described in this chapter as literature reviews, are convincing and justifiable to underlie the
characteristics and perspectives of propaganda and public relations. Of course, each assumption has a certain point of view to observe public relations and identify problems emerging from certain cultural aspects and case studies.

Indonesia certainly has its own perspective on propaganda, public relations, and political public relations. For this reason, even though this thesis focuses on the development and practice of political public relations under the Yudhoyono presidency, I will review (in Chapter 4) the government communication strategies and its past developments to gain a broader perspective. As mentioned in the previous chapter, propaganda is often carried out in one-way top-down communication, contains some truth but manipulative, and mostly in coercive means, including censoring news in the mass media during the dictatorships of Sukarno and Soeharto. In the post-Soeharto era, propaganda is also frequently used by the government, but its techniques and strategies have undergone significant changes. Using the qualitative-interpretive methods, I would argue that in the modern-contemporary Indonesia, Yudhoyono and his apparatuses often used propaganda in their communication but the techniques have been softened gracefully and in more sophisticated manner. In other words, political public relations used under the Yudhoyono presidency were largely using propaganda techniques or propagandistic.

Unlike Bernays (1928) who renamed public relations as ‘new propaganda’ and Moloney (2006) who considered that public relations is weak propaganda; this thesis would argue that political public relations is essentially ‘soft propaganda’. That is, theoretically and empirically, the practices of political public relations under the Yudhoyono presidency were substantially soft propaganda. It is definitely
propaganda but it was done in sophisticated and subtle ways. To confirm this argument, I will implement it in three stages of research, i.e. exploring the historical aspect of political public relations in Indonesia (in Chapter 4), analysing and interpreting the participants’ perspectives (in Chapter 5), and identifying the propaganda strategies and techniques carried out by Yudhoyono and his government officials in a single case study (in Chapter 6).
Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology and research design used in this study. The central task of this thesis is to examine how President Yudhoyono and his administration harnessed political public relations, both in gaining and maintaining power. The main reason for selecting the Yudhoyono tenure (2004-2014) as the focus of this study is because it is a milestone in the intensive use of political public relations in Indonesia. In addition, this use of political public relations is, I argue, significant given the terms of three previous Indonesian presidents, i.e. Habibie, Wahid, and Megawati were relatively short (1998–2004).

The complexity of this thesis lies not only in the multifaceted roles and activities of political public relations. Since the president’s office in the state secretariat is the largest and most complex political organisation, many aspects of government communication in the office are also very complicated, including the interaction among the president/government apparatus, citizens and their key publics (such as journalists, politicians, and NGOs). I was aware of this challenge and overcame the research task by focusing only on the most important and relevant aspects of the government public relations in Indonesia, and then choosing and implementing the right methodology and research design. Some scholars, for example, L'Etang (2009) suggested that a multi-approach and case study-based research are needed to uncover
the complexity of public relations as a concept and practice. To do this research properly, I chose the strategy recommended by Toth (2009) who suggests to conduct a pluralistic study that combines several approaches to public relations. These approaches are used to answer research questions that will be explained in the following section.

Rationale, Research Questions, and Purpose

Since Indonesia proclaimed its independence on August 17, 1945, propaganda and indoctrination of political ideology domineering government communication in almost the entire Sukarno and Soeharto administrations, which only provided little space for the press and the public to express their voices (see, for example, Dhani, 2004; Maters, 2003; McGlynn, 2000). However, the transformation of political system from authoritarianism to democratic government significantly eliminated the oppression of press freedom and freedom of expression in the country. Propaganda with coercive means that is often used by the government in authoritarian regimes is now increasingly abandoned. Although the communication techniques remain propadandistic, the new government in this reformation era has begun to use political public relations as a tool to empower their political communication.

In addition to the long debate about the differences and similarities of propaganda and public relations, scholars have begun to popularise the concept of political public relations in the recent decades, especially those practised by political organisations and individual actors in democratic countries. Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) noted that even though political public relations has a long and prominent history, and continues to be highly important in the process of political
communication, to date there is not much theoretical or empirical research on political public relations. They maintained: “Most public relations theory and research centers on public relations strategies and tactics in relation to the corporate sector, while most political communication research neglects or only briefly mentions public relations theory and research” (p. 2).

The present study is carried out within this context and frame, and therefore, the thesis aims to fill the scarcity of political public relations research, especially the study that focuses on the president and presidential/governmental organisations as the object of analysis and observation. The main purpose of this study is to gain a broader perspective on the development, practices and effects of political public relations in Indonesia. To do this, I have established four research questions as follows.

1. How is political public relations perceived from the Indonesian perspective?
2. How did political public relations develop and institutionalise under the Yudhoyono presidency?
3. How did Yudhoyono harness political public relations to maximise political and public support?
4. In the context of Yudhoyono’s presidency, what are notable impacts of political public relations on the broad political environment in Indonesia?

The purpose of this chapter is to show the overall research design and implementation. In the previous chapter, I have explained that there are many relevant approaches to public relations that can be used to conduct research and analyse problems that arise in public relations practices. However, I chose three major approaches to public relations that I considered most appropriate in examining public
relations in the political sector, namely system, rhetorical, and critical. These approaches also become the theoretical basis and instrument for answering research questions. In addition, a historical approach to public relations in Indonesia is also applied to support all the answers that related to the above research questions. The combination of these approaches is fruitful to show different views and perspectives to political public relations.

The first research question aims to capture the perceptions of those interviewed about the concepts and practices of political public relations in Indonesia. To answer this question, I first explore and discuss the development and practices of political public relations in Chapter 5. I also try to capture the scope and activities that are considered as political public relations in the Indonesian context. To get a greater perspective and in the context of new model of government communication, I also explore the practices of government communication in the past that were once carried out by the authoritarian regimes of Sukarno and Soeharto, as well as presidents in the post-Soeharto era. Thus, a historical review of propaganda and public relations is important to broaden our insights and develop a new concept of political public relations.

The second research question asks the rapid development of political public relations in Indonesia in the early 2000s as a continuation or evolution of government communication in the past. The development was marked by the first direct presidential election (2004) and the first regional head elections (2005), the growth of the political consultancy profession, and the government efforts to establish and institutionalise political public relations within the government organisations. The
system theory and approach is suitable for answering this question to understand how and why political public relations is important to be institutionalised in political organisations, and it will be explored and analysed in Chapter 5.

The third research question asks some communication strategies and political public relations practices mainly used by President Yudhoyono and his government apparatus. To answer this question, this thesis will highlight and analyse the performance of Yudhoyono and division of work of the president’s specialist staff in the task of managing presidential communication. Hall (1972) argued that every aspect of behavior can be part of public performance. Therefore, the (communication and actions) performance of Yudhoyono and his specialist staff members, as well as other political actors such as media owners and professional political consultants, became the object of this study. I will critically analyse and also use rhetorical and systems approaches to answer this research question. The analyses and arguments regarding these issues will be found in Chapter 6.

The final research question seeks to identify the implications of political public relations used by President Yudhoyono and members of his communication specialists. Related to the findings in this thesis that Yudhoyono was relatively successful but was considered too slow in implementing difficult government policies, there were questions that emerged at the macro, meso and micro levels, i.e what are the real and potential social and political effects of the utilisation of political public relations? Does the use of political public relations not ignore the interests of the majority of the public? And theoretically, what is the role of political public
relations in the decision-making process? These questions will be answered in Chapters 5 and 6 by using a critical approach.

**Research Design**

**Qualitative approach.** This study uses a qualitative approach based on the type and form of research questions stated above. The justification for employing the qualitative approach in this study is, among others things, because qualitative methods can be more useful for identifying and answering questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant, and thus not amenable to counting or measuring (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & de Lacey, 2016). Moreover, this thesis does not aim to explain the phenomenon in public relations based on what is already known or in variables or causal relationship, as was done in the positivism research. Rather, this study explores and analyses the complexity and transformability of contemporary communication relations. This refers to Silverman (2013) who suggests that the appropriateness of choosing the research design ultimately depends on the research problem that a researcher is seeking to analyse.

Daymon and Holloway (2011) write that qualitative methods may reach its potential when the approach is used to examine “complexity, power relations and the co-construction of meaning in a holistic or critical sense requires a different, more flexible type of research where the process of discovery is blended with intuition” (p. 5). Moreover, they emphasise that qualitative researchers try to express the views and meanings of research participants to understand the world in their terms. Daymon and Holloway (2011) said, the main purpose of qualitative inquiry is to express and
interpret what it means to be involved in or influenced by public relations. They continue, “this includes how stakeholders and practitioners make sense of communication activities, relationships and their worlds, and the subsequent implications for individuals, communities, organizations, professions and ultimately society” (p. 14).

**Interpretive paradigm.** Given that research on political public relations in presidential organisations in Indonesia is very rare, exploratory study is thus justified to investigate the problems and phenomena contained in the research questions above-mentioned. Moreover, this research uses an interpretive paradigm to investigate the practices and impacts of political public relations during the Yudhoyono presidency. According to Martin and McIntyre (1994), an interpretive approach claims that social practices, institutions, and behaviour are intrinsically meaningful, and their meanings are constituted by the meanings that social actors give to them. The scholars argue, “Social phenomena can be understood only by unravelling the meaning that constitutes them, a process that involves understanding the social phenomena from the actor’s point of view” (Martin & McIntyre, 1994, p. 159).

Neuman (2011) suggests that an interpretive approach is ‘a practical orientation’ that focuses on “how people manage their practical affairs in everyday life, or how they get things done” (p. 76). This qualitative research, therefore, works best with an explorative-interpretive approach given that exploration of public relations practitioners and journalists’ experiences are the main source of data in this study. Daymon and Holloway (2011) also note that efforts to achieve an
understanding of how meaning is constructed and re-constructed through communication relationships that they learn in their ‘natural’ or ‘local’ setting is the main concern of interpretive researchers. One of the interpretive research characteristics of paradigm is the need to understand the world, as it is from a subjective point of view and seeking explanations in the frame of reference of participants rather than objective observers of these actions. According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), interpretivists believe an understanding of the context in which any form of research is conducted is critical to the interpretation of the data gathered. The justification for choosing an interpretive paradigm in qualitative research thus follows the rationality of available choices. For the same reason, it was also done when choosing case studies and text analysis techniques as components of this research methodology. Table 3.1 below shows several options of the research paradigm and its associated elements.
Table 3.1 Comparison of Research Paradigm

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<th>Research paradigms</th>
<th>Research approaches</th>
<th>Research methods</th>
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<td>Positivism</td>
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<td>Surveys</td>
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<td>Quasi-experimental and</td>
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<td>Ex-post facto research</td>
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<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Biographical</td>
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<td>Text analysis</td>
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<td>Critical Theory</td>
<td>Critical &amp; action-oriented</td>
<td>Ideology critique</td>
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<td>Action research</td>
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**Case study.** A complex and long-term government problem will be examined as a single case study in this research. It offers an example of how Yudhoyono and his administration, previous presidents and other politicians used political propaganda or political public relations. The single case study highlights some pieces of evidence and analyses public relations or propaganda practices and strategies employed by Yudhoyono during his presidency, both in presidential daily activities and in the presidential political campaign. Therefore, this case study is a starting point for extending the issue from several perspectives. Using a single case instead of a few cases is common and has been done by qualitative researchers who want the depth of the case and do not aim to compare with other cases. As Stake (1995) noted, “The study of the particularity and complexity of a single case…. Case study research is not
sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case” (pp. xi, 4).

This exploratory research employed case study as a research strategy because the established research questions and other related questions are mostly how and why questions. Scholars explain that ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are more explanatory and likely to suit the use of case studies (Rowley, 2002; Yin, 2003). Such questions, Yin (2003) says, “deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence—such as individual life cycles, organisational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries” (p. 6). Similarly, Creswell (2013) defines case study research as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded system (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes (p. 97).

Stacks (2011) also notes that a richness of data and understanding are the benefits provided by the case study, which is not available by using other methods. Stacks (2011) points out further that “its major advantage is the ability to explain in hindsight what and how well the public relations campaign or program was done” (p. 165). Of the several alternative approaches available in conducting qualitative-interpretive research, this study does not use phenomenological and ethnographical
approaches. Using prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field and external audits may be best for ethnographic and phenomenology research, but not for this research. This study is not designed to explore cultural phenomena in which researchers observe society and also does not examine the structure of experience and consciousness.

The case study in this research is about the government’s policy to increase oil prices, an unpopular policy that was first implemented under the Soeharto administration. It enables a comparison between President Yudhoyono and other presidents who faced the same problem. This case was chosen primarily because President Yudhoyono and his administration officials used political public relations to persuade the public to accept an unpopular government policy. In addition, I argue that Yudhoyono and his campaign team used the fuel price issue to boost the president’s popularity in the 2009 presidential election, through both political advertising and by issuing a popular counter policy by providing Bantuan Langsung Tunai, BLT (Unconditional Cash Transfer) as compensation for poorer constituencies in 2008.

I deliberately chose this fuel price policy as a case study because of its complexity. Its implementation occurred four times during Yudhoyono's presidency (2004–2014) and was also used as a political commodity during the 2009 presidential election campaign. In addition, this case is important because the oil price is still a sensitive issue for Indonesian people as any increase in the oil price immediately impacts upon the quality of life of the Indonesian consumer. The government policy of raising the domestic oil price to world parity became a controversial issue because
the government almost never explained nor informed the public transparently about
the subsidy calculation. Therefore, to get a better understanding on how Yudhoyono
gained public support from this government program is a suitable case study. Using
text analysis as the main method in discussing the case of government policy to
increase oil prices, the data from this case study was mostly derived from various
documents that I collected while writing this thesis.

Data Collection

This thesis uses semi-structured interviews as the main source of data and
complements the data through the collection of text-based documents as the
secondary source. I conducted a semi-structured interview with 20 participants who
had various backgrounds in accordance with the information needed to answer
research questions. Given that the topic in this research is concerned with presidential
communication, the selected participants are those who worked within and around
presidential organisations, had close relationships with, were employed by the
president, or those who have expertise and insights in political public relations and
propaganda in the Indonesian context. This study analyses the perceptions of key
informants: political actors, practitioners and communication experts. In addition to
this primary data sources, I also collected documents as the secondary research data.

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews were employed to gain a detailed
understanding of key events and activities associated with political public relations in
Indonesia. All the interviews were conducted in Jakarta, Indonesia, from December
2015 to February 2016. The field work took place after conceptualising the thesis
framework, mapping the problems, and acquiring formal approval from Murdoch University’s Human Research Ethics Committee to conduct this research. All interviews took place in Jakarta because it is not only the capital city of Indonesia that was the center of government but also the centre of the public relations industry in Indonesia.

*Elite interviews.* As I noted earlier, this study requires specific interviewees, particularly those who have a close working relationship with presidents or have expertise and insight into political public relations and propaganda. Therefore, elite interviews are needed to obtain adequate information. Although the term ‘elite’ has been widely used, Fitch (2015) observed there is no precise meaning of elite interviews due to many interpretations. Darbi and Hall (2014) said “the concept of ‘elite’ means many things to different people in many different contexts” (p. 835). Yet, Desmond (2004) provides a definition of ‘elite’ where politicians are the subjects of the study. He argues: “Elites are those exercising the major share of authority, or control within society, organizations and institutions. Elite status stems from the control of human capital, decision-making and knowledge resources” (Desmond, 2004, cited in Darbi & Hall, 2014, p. 836). Given the status, position, expertise, and influence of participants in this study, the interviews can be categorised as elite interviews.

There are many advantages in doing elite interviews. Beamer (2002), for instance, says that elite interviews enable researchers to generate highly reliable and valid data, and this research method has long been a staple of state politics research. He added that to conduct elite interviews, the researcher needs to prepare and follow through with systematic interview and analysis procedures, well thought out
instruments, and also needs appropriate target respondents. Beamer (2002) concludes, “When done properly, elite interviews offer a rich, cost-effective component in a research design that can produce a valid and unique data resource for state politics studies” (p. 95). In the context of elite interview research, Fitch (2015) noted that “interviews and personal accounts can offer rich insights, but only if a critical stance and authorial reflexivity are adopted” (p. 141).

Interview participants. As noted earlier, twenty participants from several professions and backgrounds were selected and interviewed in this research. They included public relations practitioners, journalists, political consultants, communication experts, presidential spokespeople, and legislators. The complete list of participants is included as Appendix. The participants were divided into three groups based on their previous jobs and positions. The aim was to explore their retrospective experiences on the practice of political public relations during the Yudhoyono presidency.

The first group of participants (see Table 1 in Appendix A) consisted of nine persons, five of whom officially worked in Yudhoyono’s presidential office and as government officers in a day-to-day activity. The Yudhoyono administration has never formally formed an institution, department or bureau under the name of department of ‘political public relations’, public relations division or a like, nor assigned certain specialist staff members formally to work in such a department. However, the criteria for selecting interview participants are determined based on the duties of the government employees who are directly involved and are responsible for presidential and government communications, both in the political and public
communication sectors during the Yudhoyono presidency. The presidential spokespersons and some other presidential specialist staff members met the criteria for they were doing the roles and functions of government public relations. This is a politically appointed position and the presidential staff reports directly to the president/vice president. In addition to managing government communication, such as news management and media relations, they also provided input and context in the president/vice president speeches and organising events attended by the head of state. Dino Patti Djalal, Firmanzah and Dewi Fortuna Anwar were also selected as interview participants in this study based on these criteria and their experience. Freddy Tulung and Ahmed Kurnia were chosen based on their positions and responsibilities in government public relations and also to get information about the government institutions that have a function to provide public information.

In addition to recruiting several army generals, who were officially appointed in the organisational structure as ministers and presidential specialist staff members, Yudhoyono also has a number of other military officers who have worked to assist him in the president's communications strategy, but they are not in the government organisational structure. They worked in silence and were not detected by the public or journalists. Therefore, a small sample was chosen in this study because of the expected difficulty in obtaining participants like this. I was aware of their existence from an anonymous participant information, but unfortunately, I did not get access to interview them. Yudhoyono trusted these military officers in helping him carry out tasks in political public relations. However, in the second term of his tenure Yudhoyono eventually recruited professional communication specialists or political
consultants. Nevertheless, due to a non-disclosure agreement with the client, participants who had worked for Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla as political consultants and took part in this research asked me not to record (off-the-record) some of their information.

The other four participants (Silih Agung Wasesa, Adjie Alfarabi, Wida Septarina, Syafiq Assegaff) were selected and included in this group as they worked for Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla during the presidential election campaign or advised the president in political communication consultancy but did not work routinely in day-to-day activities. Similar to the military officers, I also sent interview invitations for interviews with political consultants/pollsters’ agencies. However, even though only one pollster was answering the invitation (Adjie Alfarabie), I believe the information obtained from him and three other political consultants were adequate, not to mention the primary data and available documents related to the roles and activities of pollsters and political consultants. All participants in this group were recruited based on their role in supporting or working for government public relations and/or Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla as the candidates for president and vice president respectively. These participants are in one group. I named this group as ‘the insider’ because they are known as internal assistants and advisers, or those who are generally confidants of the president (or vice president) and held various roles in assisting the president and the government in managing presidential communication.

The second group of participants (see Table 2 in Appendix A) consisted of seven people, three of whom work as academics and political communication experts (Syamsuddin Haris, Ikrar Nusa Bakti, M. Alwi Dahlan) and a Member of Parliament
of Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), a political party headed by Megawati Soekarnoputri and was the only opposition party during the Yudhoyono administration (Jalaluddin Rakhmat). Syamsuddin Haris and Ikrar Nusa Bakti are political communication experts who are professors at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI). The other three participants have experience as current or former public relations practitioners in Indonesia and also holds the position of chairperson of the national or international public relations association (Prita Kemal Gani, Tipuk Satriotomo, and Sinta Soetardjo). M. Alwi Dahlan and Prita Kemal Gani were two important participants in this study as they provided broad insights based on their rich experiences and backgrounds. Besides having much experience as public relations practitioners, they are both former Chairpersons of the Indonesian Public Relations Association (Perhumas). Alwi was also a former Minister of Information during the last period of Soeharto and is now professor emeritus in communication at the University of Indonesia. While Prita has been developing an educational institution in public relations for decades, including in providing education about government public relations, and currently she is also the President of the ASEAN PR Network. Participants in this group were not directly involved with the Yudhoyono presidency. Therefore, I identify this second group as experts and commentators from both the public relations industry and academy and named the group as ‘the outsider’. I interviewed them to gain their perspectives and insights on how the Yudhoyono administration, and that of previous presidents, exercised political public relations. The last three participants in this group were also selected based on their previous or current role as the chairperson of public relations associations (ASEAN PR Network;
Perhumas, and APPRI, Association of Public Relations Company Indonesia, in order to get contemporary professional accounts relevant to public relations industry and education in Indonesia.

The last group of informants (see Table 3 in Appendix A) consists of four current or former senior journalists and editors (Heyder Affan, Mr. X, Ahmad Kusaeni, and Retno Indarti). Interviewing journalists and editors in this research provides significant insight and allowed me to explore Yudhoyono and his media relations strategy in neutralising negative news and controversies that occurred in a number of cases. Moreover, the information I expected from this group was to get the participant views about the performance of the president's specialist staff, especially in carrying out the tasks of news management, crisis management, and media relations. A list of all participants from the three groups is attached in Appendix A. Participants in this research were offered and wished the option of being identified. Only one participant wanted to remain anonymous (Mr. X).

Selection procedure and demography. As stated above, some participants in group 1 were directly involved in the political process or related to the Yudhoyono presidency for at least one term. Therefore, I categorise or name this group as ‘the insider’. Included in this list are individuals from several professions, such as public relations practitioners, presidential spokespersons, political advisors, presidential speechwriters, and presidential media relations. Participants in group 2 were not directly involved with the Yudhoyono presidency but as public relations experts and political communication experts, they can offer useful insights into this study. Therefore, I categorise or name this group as ‘the outsider’. They were recruited as
they have much experience in, and knowledge of, the public relations industry in Indonesia. Therefore, they can offer insights related to the landscape and the rapid development of political public relations in Indonesia.

Participants in the last group, consisting of journalists and editors, were recruited based on criteria that they have 20 years or more of professional experience. They covered the presidential elections and/or have been reporting the president's daily activities at the presidential Palace or elsewhere. The reason for this criterion is to ensure that the informants are people who have experienced both the early period of the post-Soeharto era, as well as the Yudhoyono presidency.

There is no exact number considered as appropriate and proportional for qualitative research. Mason (2010) said frequencies are rarely important in qualitative research, and ultimately qualitative research is very labour intensive, thus analysing a large sample can be time-consuming and often simply impractical. Jette, Grover, and Keck (2003) also suggested that expertise in the chosen topic could reduce the number of participants needed in a study. Baker and Edwards (2012) noted that academics find it difficult to determine how many qualitative interviews are considered adequate and appropriate. But they underlined the experts’ answer that it depends upon certain matters, such as epistemological, methodological and practical issues to take into account when conducting research projects. P.A. Adler and P. Adler (2012) stated that the number of people required for a qualitative research project may vary to be considered adequate, from one to one hundred or more, but their best suggestion is ranged between 12 and 60.

Of the twenty participants interviewed in this study, only six are women. This
gender composition reflects the reality that the majority of government and presidential public relations officials, including presidential spokespeople and specialist staff to support the president’s political communication and information in Indonesia, are men. A similar circumstance also occurs in regards to political public relations practitioners or and political consultants, where men outnumbered women significantly. In this regard, I have discussed and mapped a number of important players in political consultancy in Chapter 6. Nevertheless, gender is not a theme that is the focus of this research and is beyond the scope of the research undertaken for this thesis.

I firstly contacted my professional networks as the first participants to be interviewed. They are political journalists/reporters at the presidential palace, political experts, and public relations practitioners. These informants recommended other key informants and I obtained access from them through their professional networks. Initially, I gained easy access to some elite informants and found my own professional network advantageous in facilitating this access. I acknowledge that by using snowballing, early participants can act as gatekeepers. Nevertheless, informants recruited for this research are credible and authoritative in their respective field since they had direct experience as Yudhoyono’s spokespersons or the president’s specialist staff members, or were senior practitioners who have experience as political consultants, or those who are holding important positions in public relations associations.

One challenge of recruitment was that a number of potential participants did not respond to my request to participate in this research. In total, I identified 30
potential participants. Six potential participants declined to reply after they received a list of questions from me, as they requested beforehand. I also submitted an interview request letter to Yudhoyono through one of his former aides and through one of his close relatives, but received no response. The specific information I sought on Yudhoyono’s attitudes, views, and strategies had been widely shared in his 807-page book. I also drew on secondary sources, such as books by a number of professional writers and journalists, including both Yudoyono’s spokespersons, Dino Pati Djalal and Andi Mallarangeng. The remaining participants were happy to be interviewed and shared their experiences especially in their direct involvement with the Yudhoyono administration at the first term, the second term, or both. The final number of participants interviewed in this study was 20. I decided this amount after convinced that I had obtained rich data from the interviewees and after consulting with my supervisors. Moreover, I concluded this fieldwork after I ensured that I have interviewed the samples that represent all target groups and key persons successfully and believed that I have obtained rich information. Table 3.2 below shows the summary of the participants’ number based on three main types of work, namely 1) group of government public relations staff, communication specialist; 2) group of journalists/editor; and 3) group of politician and expert. Therefore, the number is different from the three groups I classify in Appendix A which is based on insider, outsider, and journalist groups.
Table 3.2 The Summary of the Participants’ Number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PR Practitioner/Political Consultant, Yudhoyono’s Spokesperson/ Specialist Staff/ Government Public Relations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists/Chief Editor</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Communication Expert and Member of Parliament</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview procedures. Participants were invited to take part in a semi-structured interview estimated to require about 60 minutes or more. Each interview was conducted in a place of each participant’s choosing. These interviews were held in the participant’s office, home, or any public place that they felt was appropriate around Jakarta, Indonesia. Subsequently, when the interview took place, the researcher explained the nature of the research and the possible risks. All the interviews were recorded. The researcher also took notes during the interview. Participants were reminded that they had the right to decline to answer any question and, upon review of the transcript, to withdraw any answers or amend.

To gain a clearer understanding between the researcher and the participant, all but one of the interviews were conducted in Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia). The exception (with Dino Patti Djalal) was conducted in English. It is worth noting other interviewees sometimes mixed their answers in Indonesian and in English. During the interviews, some key informants mentioned and compared the earlier practice of political public relations with the current situation. For instance, citizens who lived nearby in the presidential Palace, in central Jakarta, were outraged by a terrorist attack.
when the interviews took place. Two informants (Dewi Fortuna Anwar and Dino Patti Djalal) commented on the bomb blast and provided analysis of the news on mass media; and they also compared the reaction of governments to terrorist activity, those of Yudhoyono and the incumbent president Joko Widodo.

In order to deal with sensitive issues, I also anticipated the participants’ reluctance to answer certain questions and did not push them to respond. Most of the interviewees answered all of the questions. At the end of the interview, the researcher provided the participants with contact details should they later wish to withdraw any data or information given or if they wish to recommend other potential participants for the research, and to provide any follow-up points of information. Overall, the interviews were aimed at unpacking the historical background, the rapid development, the exercise, and the professionalisation of political public relations in Indonesia during the Yudhoyono presidency. The findings are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. I also contacted again two of the participants in the interview list via the internet application (whatsapp) as I needed additional information and clarification on a particular issue that I missed to ask during the interview. Of course, it was agreed beforehand that I might need to contact them again for some additional information, and they did not state their objection. All the text conversations in those short messages service (SMS) were saved well.

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7 There was a security issue at the time I conducted the interview (field work) in Jakarta. See the news of Jakarta bombing, for example, in: Jakarta attacks: Bombs and gunfire rock Indonesian capital http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35309195
Data Management and Analysis

Organising data. After finishing each interview, I made a full transcription and translated the interview into English. To increase the validity of research, member-checking is implemented in this research. I sent the transcripts to participants for checking, providing feedback, or amending if needed. Three out of 20 participants offered feedback to suggest some minor changes about their past positions and amended two to three sentences. Others only gave a limited response and indicated approval to the transcript. Involving the participants is pivotal in qualitative research, as well as soliciting their views of the findings and interpretation (Creswell, 2013). Stake argues that the participant should play ‘a major role’ and also should be asked to examine the rough draft of the researcher’s work and to provide alternative language, critical observations or interpretations (cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 252).

Text analysis. This study uses text analysis as a data collection strategy. This thesis relies on collecting data from documents to complement interviews and stand alone as one of the main research procedures. The term ‘documents’ - also called ‘text’ - in the context of this study refers to Daymon and Holloway’s explanation (2011) which consists of “words and images in written, printed, visual, multi-media and digital forms. They may occur naturally, recorded without researcher intervention or produced by research participants at the request of the researcher” (p. 277).

In this secondary data analysis, the documents I collected include books, journal articles, research reports, news archives from traditional and online media, presidential and government press releases, President Yudhoyono’s official website and social media, state secretariat’s website, government report, presidential decrees
and initiatives, political and election news, commentaries and analysis, Internet sources relevant to research topic, political advertising, and presidential speeches. As described above, this qualitative research uses the interpretative-exploratory paradigm and collects data through interview and text analysis techniques.

**Data condensation and presentation.** All information gathered from fieldwork (documents and interviews) was analysed, clustered and synthesised related to the theme/topic and the focus of the study. Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) called this process as data condensation, as they avoid to use the term ‘data reduction’ because that implies weakening or losing something in the process. This data condensation refers to “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus (body) of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials. By condensing, we’re making data stronger” (p. 12).

Creswell (2014) who emphasises that the process of qualitative research involves “emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data” (p. 4). The process of data condensation in this qualitative research, then, is inductive and deductive. Initially, this will start inductively, which means that I will find patterns, themes, and categories directly from the data, rather than imposing themes on the data I decide before starting my analysis. Then the qualitative research process became deductive because along with the development of my research, I developed the work propositions and ideas that I tested at the next stage of data collection and
analysis. This might involve searching for new data that confirms my argument. I will also use the literature to link my data with other relevant research findings or theoretical ideas. Given that the interview sample I obtained in the fieldwork was relatively small (20 participants), and also there is a number of confidential information (off the record) that needs to be removed but there are some materials that can be used as well and inserted as information background (anonymously after being interpreted), then I do the process of data condensation manually. I am aware the efficacy of NVivo program can help researchers to develop/organise their database. However, I prefer to cluster and synthesise my interview data one by one. To avoid confusion and overlapping theme/topic, I highlight the general theme and special issue by using various colors. From the process of data condensation, I initially set the general topics and themes of this research and then drew a number of specific issues derived from the raw data of the interview, which I describe in full in Table 3.3 below.
Table 3.3 List of General Themes and Specific Issues in Data Condensation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General themes</th>
<th>Specific issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept and perspective of Government communication,</td>
<td>Government public relations, political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government public relations</td>
<td>communication, propaganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political public relations</td>
<td>History of political public relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The development of political public relations</td>
<td>- In the Sukarno and Soeharto era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- In the post Soeharto era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Popular/polling surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalisation of political public relations</td>
<td>Department of Information (Deppen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department of Communication and Informatics (Depkominfo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>President’s specialist staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Military officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propaganda as political public relations</td>
<td>Strategies and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Image building/management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Media interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Presidential rhetoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Distracting public attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Half truth/manipulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Management of crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of political public relations</td>
<td>Political and economy stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision making process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political hegemony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After classifying all the raw data from the interview and documents, the next task is presenting these data by connecting each theme or topic and issue with the relevant topic in the document’s text analysis in each chapter that examine and answer the established research questions. To do this, I applied thematic analysis to interpret and then analyse these data. Thematic analysis refers to “the process of identifying themes in the data which capture meaning that is relevant to the research question, and perhaps also to making links between such themes” (Willig, 2014, p. 147). This strategy helps me to identify patterns in the data. Figure 3.1 below summarises the diagrammatic representation of the research methodology.
Figure 3.1 Research Methodology


Trustworthiness. Describing and interpreting qualitative data in a sufficiently precise way is not easy. In part, as Mruck and Breuer (2003) said, “it is so difficult because the demand to exclude the researcher’s subjectivity” (p. 3). In contrast to Mruck and Breuer, most qualitative researchers argue that the researcher’s subjectivity is a strength. Silverman (2013) contends that reliability and validity of observation arise only within the ‘positivist’ quantitative research tradition. Silverman (2013) argues “once we treat social reality as always in flux, then it makes no sense to worry about whether our research instruments measure accurately” (p. 301). Even though validity is not like objectivity (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), many perspectives exist regarding the importance of validation in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013, p. 244). Creswell (2013) views that validation is important as a distinct strength of qualitative research, as he suggests, “the detailed thick description, and the closeness of the researcher to the participants in the study all add to the value or accuracy of a study” (p. 250).

Furthermore, Creswell (2013) writes that qualitative researchers frequently use eight validation strategies. These strategies known as: 1) prolonged engagement and
persistent observation in the field, 2) triangulation, 3) peer review or debriefing, 4) negative case analysis, 5) clarifying researcher bias, 6) member checking, 7) rich, thick description, and 8) external audits (Creswell & Miller 2010, cited in Creswell 2013, pp. 250-252). Of the eight procedures that are recommended to increase trustworthiness, six were used in this study. Two strategies were not adopted because they did not correspond to the approach and the nature of this research. This research employed triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis (case study), clarifying researcher bias (reflexivity), member checking, and rich, thick description.

Creswell (2013) explains that in triangulation the “researcher makes use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” (p. 251). The research reported in this thesis used at least two kinds of analytical triangulation, i.e. triangulation of qualitative sources and theory or perspective triangulation. Patton (2015, p. 661) defines triangulation of qualitative sources as “checking out the consistency of different data sources within the same method (consistency across interviewees), while theory or perspective triangulation is “using multiple perspectives or theories to interpret data.”

As mentioned earlier, this research implemented peer review or debriefing strategy in that one chapter of this study was presented at a conference and then reviewed and published in a peer-review journal. The aim was to receive feedback from the audience and reviewers and thus establish the quality and validity of this research. A second chapter was presented at an international conference with the same objective. Negative case analysis as another validation strategy is implemented
in this research by using a case study, which will analyse the exercise of political public relations in Indonesia during the Yudhoyono presidency.

**Ethical Considerations**

As discussed earlier in this chapter, there are potential ethical problems that require careful consideration, understanding, and preparation in the process of conducting qualitative research. This research is no exception, especially regarding the topic of presidential/government public relations that the participant might make statements that contain sensitive issues unintentionally, which could potentially damage their privacy, their career, and the credibility of the figure being discussed. Thus, confidentiality is crucial in this study.

**Confidentiality.** Before doing fieldwork, I expected many of the interviewees in this study would have resisted disclosing their identity, but to my surprise they did not. Indeed, most of them offered specific information that should not be made public but needed to tell me as background information. I respected their decision when they kept telling me to treat such information as off the record. This information was not included in transcripts. A few days after the interview, one informant called me to request for anonymity and amended his answers as if the information did not come from him. This event prompted me to review carefully the other issues about confidentiality that may arise in the use of data. For instance, if the description of my analysis is so detailed that others could identify the participant who wanted to remain anonymous.

In the early process of reflexivity, I highlighted sensitive issues made by the informant to protect their identity or if I felt that my interpretation of their story would
be problematic. So, I would not only give the participants an opportunity to examine the full transcript of the interview in written form before they were made public but I also sent back their quote/statements that I used in my research analysis. I did this even if the participant had signed an informed consent agreement that they were happy for their names and roles to be used in any publication; they would not want to receive a copy of the transcript of the interview; and they would not want to receive a copy of any comments to be used in any publication.

Finally, to make sure all participants fully understood the consent, risks, and other requirements I read all the interview conditions and their rights in Indonesian language. As an Indonesian national who worked in, and is familiar with the Indonesian political system, research procedures, and requirements, potential ethical problems have been minimised.

Reflexivity. Explaining the researcher’s background is essential in qualitative research as a standpoint of the researcher’s position, as well as conveying the research problem. Creswell (2013) argues that, “Clarifying researcher bias from the outset of the study is important so that the reader understands the researcher’s position and any biases or assumptions that impacted the inquiry” (p. 251). There are several tendencies highlighted in doing a social study, such as topic preference, the approach, and researcher’s social location. As a critical-interpretive researcher, I should acknowledge this tendency in this work particularly given my professional background and academic experience. From 1996 to 2004, I worked as a general and political journalist who was frequently covering and reporting political issues, including presidential activities. Therefore, I could observe political communication
at the site of the events during that time and witnessed many crucial events in the transition era, such as the fall of Soeharto from power and other political and economic crises during the administration of Presidents Habibie, Wahid, and Megawati. However, I could only observe the two-term of the Yudhoyono presidency as I changed my career to become a lecturer in 2005.

Based on my experience as a journalist, assistant correspondent, and reporter both from local (The Indonesia Times) and foreign media (Voice of America, VOA, and Nippon Hoso Kyokai, NHK) for more than eight years, I obtained many opportunities to share my knowledge and experience on journalism and mass communication at private colleges and universities in Jakarta. In addition to teaching mostly mass communication, I also taught public relations, but only related to my experience as a journalist and associated knowledge gained from my master’s degree at the University of Indonesia. According to Schwandt (2007), social circumstance and interaction will affect the ontology or worldview and the assumption in which the researchers operate their search for new knowledge. “It is concerned with understanding the kinds of things that constitute the world” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 190). Therefore, the researcher’s subjectivity plays a pivotal role in directing the whole research process.

To deal with this potential problem, I employed reflexivity as a research strategy to avoid bias, preference, and partiality in this work. Reflexivity is treated here as “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, ‘the human instrument’” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005 as cited in Lincoln et al. 2011, p. 115). Therefore, reflexivity is relevant in this qualitative research because “it involves turning back on
oneself in order that processes of knowledge production become the subject of investigation” (May & Perry, 2014, p. 109). I believe my professional background and academic experience have shaped this thesis and provided access to elite participants. Berger (2015) observes that the application of reflexivity in communication research methods has gained a central position and become a broader debate about the ontological, epistemological and axiological components themselves, intersubjectivity and colonisation knowledge. Consequently, Berger (2015) suggests, “researchers need to increasingly focus on self-knowledge and sensitivity; better understand the role of the self in the creation of knowledge; carefully self monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on their research; and maintain the balance between the personal and the universal” (p. 220).

**Strengths and limitations.**

The strengths of this thesis are in the originality of the topic itself. After exploring literature throughout the writing process of this thesis, I found that this research is the only and the first study in English and Indonesian that extensively explores the development, utilisation and practices of political public relations in Indonesia, especially focusing on the president as the central object and observation of the research. Previously, I had studied the same research topic, at the master degree level, but I realised that my previous research had significant weaknesses and shortcomings, especially in the theoretical framework building and research methodology. Therefore, this study not only offers a study of the history of propaganda and political public relations in Indonesia, since the days of Indonesia’s independence until the post-Soeharto era, but also the expansion of the concept of
political public rations itself and the study of communication/public relations strategies in the political realm, especially in the context of Indonesia's new democracy.

However, I identify at least two potential limitations in this study related to the research design. First, I chose a case study approach in this research because it offers some benefits such as the richness of data and understanding that is not available through other methods. Stacks (2011) argues that the major advantage of the case study approach is the ability to explain in hindsight what and how well the public relations campaign or program was done. Stacks (2011) noted that case studies can run hundreds of pages and the research “should utilize data from historical/documentary research, interviews, and existing quantitative data. Finally, the case study, when approached from a grounded perspective, may actually result in new theory, theory grounded not in conceptual and abstract associations but in actual practice” (p. 165). However, the case study does have a significant limitation in that it cannot be generalized to other problems, situations, and opportunities with any degree of validity or reliability (Stacks, 2011). But when case studies are used as examples of how good or bad public relations has been practiced, this limitation is overcome (Stacks, 2011).

Another limitation is in getting access to interview a number of key persons that have been planned before doing the field work. As I noted in the thesis abstract and elsewhere, a number of military officers and professional political consultants have assisted the president in preparing and managing his communication strategy. However, only a few presidential specialist staff members and public relations
practitioners were successfully interviewed. Some of them did not give a response to the invitation of an interview even if I tried many times, while four key persons who had important roles in the presidential communication were excluded from the study on the basis they were involved in legal problems. In addition, it is likely that this is due to the working mechanism of political public relations itself which at certain levels and tasks, they work in silence and secrecy that the public or even journalists cannot detect. However, I was fortunate to overcome this limitation by getting information from an anonymous source and also from other important references written by Yudhoyono and his own professional political consultants.
Chapter 4
A Historical Review of Political Public Relations in Indonesia

Introduction

This chapter provides a political and social context underpinning the development of political public relations in Indonesia. It explores what the government has done in the past in terms of the practice of propaganda and government public relations, from the Sukarno era to the Megawati presidency. It is important to discuss the historical background of political public relations in Indonesia as not much research has been conducted to draw public relations history in Indonesia and what its relevance is to the same activities in the present. More importantly, discussions about propaganda during the Sukarno and Soeharto eras provided a broader perspective on how the government changed their communication form and strategy.

The exploration of propaganda and public relations history in Indonesia in this chapter is divided into three main periods. The first period is the Sukarno era (1945–1966) when the government and president often used propaganda as nation-building, and in an effort to fight Dutch attempts to recolonise Indonesia, as well as Sukarno’s revolution and his *Demokrasi Terpimpin* (guided democracy) against the so-called neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism. The second period is the Soeharto era (1966-1998) which highlights the efforts of the ‘New Order’ regime in maintaining power through various forms of anti-communist propaganda and indoctrination with the ideology of *Demokrasi Pancasila* (five pillars democracy).
The third period is the post-Soeharto era (1998–onwards) that emphasises the practice of political public relations from Presidents Habibie to Megawati in the context of political reform and the democratisation process towards consolidated democracy. This section aims to show how the presidents and governments in the post-Soeharto era restyled their political communication, from one-way and top-down communication to the participatory and egalitarian model, and paid attention to the public’s aspirations in the process of policy-making. But before all the above issues are addressed, this chapter will first review the literature on public relations historiography, including attempts to write the history of public relations in Indonesia, as a starting point in analysing historical events related to the practice of political public relations and propaganda.

**Propaganda and Public Relations History in Indonesia**

Histories are profoundly important to theorisation about public relations (Fitch & L’Etang, 2017). Yet, one of the important issues in writing public relations history is to make a decision about when public relations really began and where (Bentele, 2015). The effort to build an overarching history of public relations in Indonesia is problematic, not only because the scholarship is scarce, but there is also no single definition of public relations. Some interview participants (Gani, Satiotomo, Septarina, and Wasesa) confirmed that until recent years, there have been no empirical

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8 Public relations practitioners, Silih Agung Wasesa in his capacity as Deputy Chairperson of APPRI and Edhy Aruman as Deputy Chairperson of Communication and Publication of Perhumas, they both confirmed that until now there has been no definition of public relations as a concept widely used and accepted by the public relations association and intellectuals in Indonesia (S. A. Wasesa, personal communication, May 23, 2017; E. Aruman, personal communication, May 23, 2017).
studies on the history and mapping of the public relations industry in Indonesia. Consequently, it is rather difficult to determine when public relations emerged for the first time in Indonesia.

Early evidence suggests that public relations may have started during the colonial period, when three Indonesian nationalist organisations, Budi Utomo, Indische Party and PNI, the Indonesian Nationalist Party, were established in the first three decades of the twentieth century. As pointed out by Yudarwati (2014), these three prominent political organisations marked a resurgence of national identity. Yudarwati maintains: “Their use of propaganda to raise the Indonesian nationalism against the Dutch colonialism and communication with people indicated knowledge of PR techniques to build identity and support” (2014, p. 49).

Some public relations scholars, such as Ananto (2004), Simorangkir (2009) and Yudarwati (2011) argue that the modern practice of public relations in Indonesia was introduced in the early 1950s when multinational companies entered the country. According to Ananto, the state-owned oil company Pertamina was one of the first companies to use public relations as a communication channel between organisations and clients, suppliers, distributors, and consumers (2004, p. 264). Yet, there is also an opinion that public relations began in Indonesia shortly after the country declared its independence on August 17, 1945. Ananto said, this happened “when the nation felt the need to publicise Indonesia’s independence to the world” (2004, p. 263).

Likewise, Prita Kemal Gani also noted that public relations has been used in the era of Sutan Sjahrir, one of revolutionary independence leaders. She said that in August 1945 or just before Indonesia proclaimed its independence, Japanese General
Haneda had informed Sukarno that there were atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Japan would withdraw all of its troops, thus Indonesia had to prepare for its independence. Therefore, Gani added, Sukarno assigned Sutan Sjahrir to go to neighbouring countries to convey that Indonesia would soon be an independent country. “So, when they proclaimed independence, not only Indonesian people but other neighbouring countries also recognised the independence of Indonesia. PR techniques were already used in those activities” (Interview with Prita Kemal Gani, December 28, 2015).

The few published Indonesian public relations histories begin with the modern nation-state and link the development of public relations firmly with political developments. More recently, Yudarwati (2014) links the emergence of modern public relations in Indonesia with the emergence of a national (Indonesian) identity in the growing resistance to Dutch colonialism. She identifies five distinct eras pivotal for understanding the development of public relations in Indonesia, starting from the nation identity era (1900–1942), Japanese occupation (1942–1945), the Sukarno era (1945–1967), the Soeharto era 1967–1998, and the Reformation era (1998–onwards). Yudarwati (2014) draws on the Grunigian paradigm to discuss Indonesian public relations, assuming that only with the modern, democratic, Reformation era of greater transparency and a free press can public relations flourish, in clear contrast to the one-way communication style and nation-building propaganda of earlier periods.

Halff and Gregory (2014) also noted that Indonesia and most Asian countries have similarities in their public relations development, which first emerged as part of post-colonial nation-building. They argued that unlike the public relations industries
of the US and Europe, whose early emergence was marked by the dominance of the civic expert system, “the historiographies of public relations in Asia-Pacific and South Asia locate the origins of the profession at the emergence of the governance expert systems during nation building” (Halff & Gregory, 2014, p. 401). In the context of nation-building and ideological propaganda, Gunn (1979) emphasised that there is a kind of continuity that was carried out from the Sukarno era to Soeharto, at least at the symbolic and institutional level. He argued, “The conscious creation of a national ideology by both Sukarno and Soeharto can be viewed as a task of nation-building or the welding together of a national consensus” (p. 751).

Nation-building continues to remain relevant in the 21st century (Alesina & Reich, 2015) and may pertain to the government communication in contemporary Indonesia. However, the historical aspect of public relations and propaganda in this chapter does not explore further on the continuation of nation-building propaganda in the post-Soeharto era. This thesis explores and provides a history of political public relations in Indonesia as an effort to develop perspectives and shed light on the government communication changes in Indonesia. Further research might explain this phenomenon, such as whether government propaganda as part of or aimed for nation-building ceased when Indonesia entered the democratisation process in the post-Soeharto era.

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9 Alesina and Reich (2015) defined nation-building as “a process which leads to the formation of countries in which the citizens feel a sufficient amount of commonality of interests, goals and preferences so that they do not wish to separate from each other” (p. 3). They noted that state-building and nation-building have sometimes been used interchangeably, and to avoid confusion, Alesina & Reich (2015, p. 3) contend that “state-building generally refers to the construction of state institutions for a functioning state, while nation-building the construction of a national identity, also for a functioning state”.
The Sukarno Era (1945–1967)

Indonesia’s first president, Sukarno, is well known as a great orator and a popular leader. Under Dutch occupation, Sukarno was involved in political organisations, writing his own speeches, communicating his political views, and leading the independence movement (Dhani 2004). Sukarno’s speeches were pure Indonesian nationalism (Tickell, 2001), and the Dutch police arrested him on December 29, 1929 due to his anti-colonialist speeches. In a political trial, Sukarno was charged with spreading hatred to the public and violating the law of Articles 153 bis, 153 ter, 161, 169 bis and 171 of the Penal Code. These articles were known as Haatzaai-artikelen (‘hate-sowing articles’ or articles prohibiting the spreading of hostile opinions).\(^\text{10}\)

Sukarno wrote and conducted his own defence in the 1930 trial in Bandung, which later became prominent under the title of Indonesia Menggugat! or Indonesie Klaagt ann! (Indonesia Accuses!). Before the judges, Sukarno rhetorically questioned the indictments due to the subjective or biased interpretation of certain acts that were levied on him. He said, “‘what is to be regarded as a violation’, ‘the stirring up of unrest’, ‘what is considered false news’ . . . We Indonesian politicians have criticised and protested against them from the moment of publication. We consider them a real impediment to ‘freedom of assembly’” (Soekarno and Paget, 1975, p. 3). Sukarno’s plea consisted approximately two-thirds of explanations and analyses about

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\(^{10}\) *Haatzaai-artikelen* is a set of criminal laws used by the Dutch during the colonial era. These laws and most of the articles in the law book are still used by the Indonesian authorities which criminalise ‘public expression of hostility, hatred or contempt toward the government’ and prohibit ‘the expression of such feeling or views through the public media’. The Dutch Indies authorities started to apply the law on March 15, 1914. These articles were the reproduction of the British Indian Penal Code, a criminal law code enforced in India while still colonized by British colonialism (McGlynn, 2000).
imperialism, its operation, and its implication on Indonesia, and the rest discussed how Indonesians might actually rid themselves of imperialism (Soekarno and Paget, 1975, pp. lii-liii). The judge eventually sentenced Sukarno to four years in jail, but his defence was then heard in the Netherlands who ordered the authorities in Indonesia to reduce his sentence to two years (Adams, 1965; Soekarno & Paget, 1975). After being released from Sukamiskin prison in Bandung, Sukarno was rearrested just eight months later as he continued his political activities. Consequently, he was exiled to a remote area in Ende, East Nusa Tenggara and then in Bengkulu, Sumatra, until the arrival of the Japanese troops to replace the Dutch occupation of Indonesia in 1942 (Vickers, 2013, pp. 84-85; Adams, 1965).

Even though Sukarno strongly protested the imposition of the Haatzaai-artikelen in the 1930 court, he paradoxically used these ‘elastic articles’ to silence journalists and his political opponents when he later became president. McGlynn (2000) said the ‘hate-sowing’ articles were reused when Indonesia became independent and the rulers merely reformulated them in Indonesian guise, and the ‘tradition’ of repressive censorship was perpetuated. In fact, these articles were not only used by the Sukarno and Soeharto authoritarian regimes, but also by the democratic governments in the post-Soeharto era to suppress criticism against the government until 2007 when the Constitutional Court revoked the hate-sowing articles (Faiz, 2016).

The establishment of government public relations. In August 1945, Sukarno became president the day after proclaiming the nation’s independence. As noted in Chapter 1, Sukarno established Kementerian Penerangan (Ministry of Information) shortly after taking office and it was among ten of the most important ministries
established by Indonesia’s founding fathers. Prior to the formation of the ministry, the Dutch colonial leaders had established an office known as Voorlichtingsdienst, which literally means information service, and this Voorlichtingsdienst was also applied in a number of ministries’ organisations (Dhakidae, 1991, pp. 436-436). Therefore, Voorlichtingsdienst is similar to a government public relations department. However, the role and name of the institution were changed from time to time, such as Department of Indoctrination, which was supposed to be Department of Revolution during Sukarno’s Guided Democracy, rather than government public relations (Dhakidae, 1991, p. 436).

In September 1945, the first allied forces arrived in Jakarta and they brought with them the foreign press. Sukarno attended the first press conference as president, which was organised by his ‘press officer’, a schoolboy who suddenly found himself in charge of war correspondents (Adams, 1965, pp. 225-226). There is no further information about the performance of Kementerian Penerangan that was established at that time, their work in Sukarno’s first press conference, and who the ‘press officer’ was. Nevertheless, the conference ran well, as Sukarno told Cindy Adams: “My ‘Press Officer’ made up some type of card and stamped it with some sort of seal, which meant nothing since nobody’d ever seen it before ...But this was our first attempt at officialdom and the reporters went away satisfied” (Adams, 1965, p. 226).

Wartime propaganda and rhetorical presidency. Sukarno led the nation after the proclamation of independence in 1945. During his presidency, Sukarno experienced various wars and upheavals both against foreign troops and local rebellions from some parts of Indonesia. There were also some regional uprisings,
ranging from the rebellion of PKI, the Indonesian Communist Party, in Madiun 1948 (also known as PKI Musso); Darul Islam (DI); Tentara Islam Indonesia 1949–1962 (TII, the Indonesian Islamic Army); *Pemerintahan Revolusioner Republik Indonesia* 1958–1961 (PRRI, the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia) and *Perjuangan Rakyat Semesta* 1957–1960 (Permesta, the Struggle of the People) and *Republik Maluku Selatan* (RMS, the Republic of South Moluccas). In short, Sukarno often conveyed political propaganda in wartime as he tried to unite all elements of the nation as a form of civilian struggle, not only against the Dutch colonial and local rebellions but also in the context of cold war or ‘revolution’ against ‘neo-imperialism’ and ‘neo-colonialism’.

It is understandable, therefore, that wartime propaganda as an instrument of mobilisation is indispensable to a government in arousing and gathering popular support. Propaganda also intensified in attempts to form public opinion, explaining the strategy of struggle, identifying the ‘enemy’, and at the same time undermining the enemy’s morale. As a nation’s leader who often spoke rhetorically, scholars considered Sukarno a skilled manipulator of men and of symbols. Ricklefs (2001), for example, said “He offered Indonesians something to believe in, something which many hoped would give them and their nation dignity and pride” (p. 312).

Rossa (2014) also noted that “Sukarno tried to embody the entire nation in himself” (para. 17) and promoted national unity to the masses mainly through radio and newspapers. But, in the last years of his tenure, Sukarno was keen to establish television in Indonesia, which he saw as more effective than radio in communicating with a largely illiterate population (Kitley, 2000). As president, Sukarno not only
communicated his extraordinary nation building vision, but he also urged Western countries to stop imperialism and colonialism (Vltchek & Indira, 2006). Sukarno was therefore considered as an enemy by almost all Western capitalist countries, who wanted to depose Sukarno from the mid-1960s (Vltchek & Indira, 2006, pp. 61, 68).

In the midst of crisis and widespread rebellion in the late 1950s, Sukarno changed to a more authoritarian and repressive style of government when he created ‘Guided Democracy’ (Ricklefs, 2001; Tickell, 2001). This kind of democracy is clearly different from what is understood by the US and other Western countries. According to Sukarno, Indonesian democracy is based on the 1945 Constitution with its indigenous modus operandi of *musyawarah* (deliberations) and *mufakat* (agreement), rather than on majority voting (Adams, 1965, p. 278). Sukarno explained why he implemented Guided Democracy as follows.

In Guided Democracy the key ingredient is leadership. After hearing the general views and contra views, The Guider summarizes the points into compromise palatable to each faction. No one side wins totally to the exclusion of the others. Only strong leadership is capable of synthesizing the final decision; otherwise the system will not work. ... It’s still democratic because everybody has given his comment. To call this Communistic is ridiculous … Revolution needs leadership. Without it there is panic and fear. It is because we are still in an economic revolution that I shall not allow destructive criticism

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11 During wartime and in the parliamentary democracy system, Indonesia experienced political instability and it was reflected in the cabinet changes and reshuffles up to a dozen times in the era of parliamentary democracy. According to Sukarno’s spokesperson Roeslan Abdulgani, President Sukarno wanted to overhaul the political system as the parliamentary system proved unsuitable in Indonesia. Sukarno then gave the *Konstituante* (Indonesian state institution assigned to form a new constitution to replace the 1950 Provisional Constitution, UUDS 1950) an opportunity to realise the president’s wishes, but they did not reach agreement. The *Konstituante* was finally disbanded, and by a Presidential Decree of 5 July 1959, Sukarno reinstated the 1945 Constitution and established a Guided Democracy (Schuuring, 2002, pp. 54-55).
of my leadership nor do I permit freedom of the press. We are too young a country to encourage more confusion than we already have (1965, p. 279).

In an effort to create political stability and to ensure that the Guided Democracy works well, Sukarno declared *Staat van Oorlog en van Beleg*, SOB (State of War and Siege Ordinance) as had been earlier applied by the Dutch authorities) in March 1957 and intensified its repression of political opposition and strictly controlled news media by arresting journalists, banning newspapers, and jailing journalists, writers and political opponents (Kingsbury, 2003; Tickell, 2001). Sukarno noted that he will give freedom to write whatever the journalists like to publish as long as “it’s not destructive to the safety of the State” (Adams, 1965, p. 280). Under martial law, military authorities were given full authority to intervene in civil affairs, including censoring newspapers if they wrote about revolts or engaged in political activities with the intention of opposing the government, and even applying *Persbreidel Ordinantie* or revoking the newspaper license for violation as it had been applied and is a legacy of the Dutch authorities (Kingsbury, 2003; Maters, 2003).
Sukarno was a civilian president, but he often wore a military style uniform as a symbol of a strong leader (Picture was taken from https://penasoekarno.files.wordpress.com/)

Sukarno increasingly launched his propaganda and encouraged people to continue the revolution against imperialists after obtaining support from the US and Britain for his response to regional revolts (Vickers, 2013, p. 153). The threat of discontinuance of assistance from the US was greeted by Sukarno with a propaganda slogan: ‘Go to hell with your aids’, and fortified Indonesian people to be self-sufficient and creating another slogan Berdikari, an abbreviation of berdiri di kaki sendiri which means standing on (our) own feet (Vickers, 2013; Weinstein, 2007). In 1963, Sukarno waged a military, political, and psychological conflict with Malaysia, known as the Indonesia–Malaysia Confrontation (1963–1966) or just Confrontation or Konfrontasi
On September 30, 1965, the PKI was involved in an attempted coup d’état, called Gerakan 30 September (G30S, September 30th Movement). However, the coup failed prematurely and triggered chaos. Sukarno, who often propagates ‘Nasakom’ ideology (short for Nationalism, Religion, and Communism) to the nation and the world, refused to take a firm stand against PKI. Rather, Sukarno ultimately issued a warrant famously known as Supersemar, an abbreviation for Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret (the warrant of 11 March), after being urged by three generals, Basuki Rachmat, Amir Mahmud, and M. Jusuf who met Sukarno at Bogor palace. The warrant instructed Major General Soeharto, as the Commander of Army Security Command, to take whatever measures he ‘deemed necessary’ to restore order and security (Kristiadi, 2001).

Once the warrant was in his hand, Soeharto immediately dismissed PKI and its associated organisations, undertook a massive propaganda campaign, and started to ban newspapers belonging to PKI and other media outlets linked to the communist party. According to Benedict Anderson (1999), Soeharto and the military authority dispersed misleading information about the coup attempt and the torture and slaughter of six army generals through the news media. Anderson noted that on October 4, 1965, Soeharto and his group received official autopsy results issued by the military and civilian forensic experts on the bodies of the Army Generals who were killed on October 1. After the corpses were discovered and autopsied, it was reported
that the Generals were shot, and their corpses were damaged because they fell into a deep well in Lubang Buaya, an empty area near the Halim military-base airport. But on October 6, the mass media, controlled entirely by Soeharto’s authority, launched the news that there had been a sadistic torture of the army generals (Anderson, 1999; Easter, 2001).

Sukarno demanded journalists write only about true events and consider their role in building the nation; however: “the great orator was rendered voiceless: his speeches rarely entered the media. The army not only had the guns, it had the newspapers and radio” (Rossa, 2006, p. 200). The dissemination of propaganda and misinformation by the military and anti-communists quickly aroused public anger and led to the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people in the already polarised society in Indonesia (Anderson, 1999). David Easter (2001) pointed out that the British intelligence took a significant role in conveying black propaganda and misleading information before and after the September 30th Movement. He revealed, “The Foreign Office and Commonwealth Relations Office routinely supplied the BBC with telegrams from British overseas delegations that contained information on the Confrontation” (Easter, 2001, p 91). Easter maintained that London encouraged the destruction of the PKI and strengthened the Indonesian military leaders during this period. He stated, “For Britain the tumult in Indonesia presented an excellent opportunity to disrupt the Confrontation campaign and smash the PKI, and it quickly made use of its enhanced propaganda machinery” (Easter, 2001, p. 94).

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12 Robert Cribb (2001) estimates the death toll ranges from 100,000 to two million, with a figure of 500,000 as the most plausible.
The Soeharto Era (1967-1998)

Although Sukarno remained president until 1967, Soeharto effectively took control of the military in late 1965. In March 1967, General Soeharto was appointed acting president by Indonesia’s supra-parliament (MPRS, the Interim People’s Consultative Congress), and within the year effectively controlled the country (Feith, 1968). Soeharto began to overhaul the presidential organisation by placing almost all military officers in important and strategic positions soon after he was officially made president. Military officers occupied various new positions ranging from Menteri Sekretaris Negara, Mensekneg (State Minister/State Secretary), Sekretaris Pribadi, Sespri (private staff), Asisten Pribadi, Aspri (personal assistant), Asisten Urusan Media Massa (Assistant for Mass Media Affairs), Inspektur Jenederal Pembangunan, Irjenbang (Inspector General of Development), Sekretaris Pengendalian Operasi Pembangunan, Sesdaolopbang (Secretary of Control of Development Operations) and many other positions (Dhani, 2004).

Before entering the era known as Orde Baru, or New Order, Sukarno and his successor, Soeharto attempted to perpetuate the Constitution. According to Vickers (2013), they “enshrine the Constitution as sacred and unchallengeable, identical to the Five Principles of the nation, the ‘Pancasila’. Sukarno thus declared his new system ‘Pancasila Democracy’” (p. 148). Soeharto maintained this Pancasila (the five principles) as the “basic credo to which all Indonesians had to adhere” (Liddle, 1999, p. 40) or the sole foundation (asas tunggal) that all organisations should follow: “Pancasila had officially been accorded the status of ‘source of all sources of law’” (Stockman, 2008, p. 62).
Pancasila was not only considered a slogan, but it is the basic philosophy of the state that is written in the Preamble to the Constitution, and should be practised in everyday life. For that purpose, the Soeharto regime required all students, civil servants and military and government officials to follow the upgraded Pancasila, largely known as *Penataran P4, Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila*, or the Four P course, the guidance of appreciation and practice of Pancasila (Syukur, 2008, p. 243). Anyone deemed to be opposed to the government or against the law is considered to have acted as *tidak pancasilais* (non-Pancasila) or not Pancasila-minded. Soeharto thus made Pancasila, as an ideology and guidance for society, to be one of powerful tools and propaganda strategies. Journalists had to carry out their duties as *Pers Pancasila*, meaning that the press should be based on Pancasila with a principle of *bebas dan bertanggungjawab* (free and responsible), drawing on the last model of four press models of Siebert et al.: free and social responsible journalism (Hill, 2007a).

Following the failure of a coup attempt in 1965 where the PKI was considered to be involved in the coup and as an attempt to eliminate the influence of communism, the military authorities banned 46 out of 163 Indonesian newspapers (Hill, 2007a). The New Order regime began to loosen media control in the late 1960s. However, when student demonstrations and riots occurred in Jakarta on January 15, 1974, known as *Peristiwa Malari* or Malari incident (abbreviation of *Malapetaka Lima Belas Januari*, or Fifteenth of January Disaster), the regime again became repressive. They were quicker to act when citizens expressed dissent and restored strong control on the media. They even cancelled media print and publishing permits (SIC and SIT), and used the inherited Dutch laws to imprison journalists, obliging them to practise self censorship.
(Forum Keadilan, 1993; Hill, 2007a; Setiono, 2008). After the Malari incident, the Soeharto regime cancelled twelve newspapers and magazines’ printing and publishing permits and imprisoned some journalists (Hill, 2007a). Hill (2007a) noted that the disbanded media are those media that supported the emergence of the Soeharto government and enjoyed opportunities to engage in vigorous debates and rhetoric, both amongst themselves and the new government. “They were able to take advantage of relatively cordial government-press relations over the early New Order period to highlight dissatisfaction with a government, which they had basically blessed since its inception” (Hill, 2007a, p. 37).

In 1978, the government banned the licence of Kompas, Sinar Harapan and five other newspapers for six months due to ‘exaggerated’ reports of student protests. Prior to allowing these newspapers to reappear, the media owners were asked to sign a declaration that ‘they would put the public and state interests above their own and those of the newspaper; and they would maintain the “good reputation and authority of the government and national leadership”’ (Tickell, 2001, p. 1181). In 1994, the New Order regime revoked again the publishing permit of three print media, Tempo, Editor and Detik, as they criticised Habibie's controversial decision to buy the naval fleet of former East Germany (Schwarz, 2000). It was followed by the arrest of three journalists and one activist the next year and using the Dutch Haatzaai-artikelen, the hate-sowing articles of Indonesia’s criminal law to imprison them simply because the journalists and the activists were “exercising their fundamental right to freedom of expression and association guaranteed under Indonesia’s own Constitution and international
human rights standards” (Amnesty International, 1995, p. 1). Thus, Menteri Penerangan (Menpen, the Minister of Information), and Menteri Negara/Sekretaris Negara, Meneg/Sekneg (State Minister/State Secretary), who was usually the president’s spokesperson, could deliver all government propaganda without significant challenge until the end of Soeharto tenure in 1998.

‘Deppen’ as Government Public Relations. As pointed out above and in Chapter 1, Sukarno established Kementerian Penerangan after Independence Day. It then became Departemen Penerangan, Department of Information or Deppen. After the transfer of power from Sukarno to Soeharto, the new administration intensified this government institution and it served as the government’s public relations (GPR) department. In the Soeharto era, Deppen’s role was not only to control all privately-owned media, but also to maintain two government electronic media outlets, namely TVRI and RRI as the government’s propaganda tool. The New Order regime thus advanced the methods of control and propaganda techniques that were more sophisticated than the Sukarno totalitarian regime. All private television and radio should relay from TVRI and RRI, the government’s national broadcasting media, in a special coverage so-called liputan khusus when Soeharto was speaking to common people or explaining policies to specific audiences. Given that Deppen was under the coordination of Ministry of Political and Security, Deppen was then regarded as a department of ‘politics’ rather than a ‘technical’ department. Deppen was therefore

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13 After three publications were closed down by the government, dozens of journalists formed an independent association of journalists, namely Asosiasi Jurnalis Independen, the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), and published its own magazine, Forum Wartawan. As the government only recognised and allowed PWI, Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia (Journalists’ Association of Indonesia) as the only journalists’ organisation in Indonesia, Soeharto regime arrested three of AJI members and sent them to jail in 1995 (Schwarz, 2000, p. 320).
the government apparatus to serve the government interest, and not a public service for public information needs.

**Figure 4. 2 Soeharto’s Propaganda**

Soeharto (centre) dialog with common people at *panen raya* (great harvest) in Subang, West Jawa, April 2, 1994. Deppen organised this meeting and they usually ordered all TV stations to broadcast the event throughout the country (Picture was taken from: Screen capture of Soeharto’ youtube account video. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=502&v=L6_4YqgsrKU).

In contrast to Sukarno, who easily interacted with world leaders with his rhetorical skills and fluency in at least in five languages, the effort to build a true image for Indonesia during the Soeharto tenure could not be done smoothly. Deppen was largely effective in producing and disseminating government propaganda for the purposes of maintaining Soeharto’s power within Indonesia but not abroad. When the government became aware that it was difficult to influence world opinion on certain domestic policies, particularly those linked to the basic principles of human rights, Soeharto hired public relations agencies from the US to assist the Indonesian government. The aim was to develop a positive image and reputation in the world
community, as well as to secure Indonesian foreign policies. In the 1990s, Soeharto disbursed millions of dollars to leading US public relations firms (Pilger 1994; Cohen 2000; Leith 2003). The Soeharto regime paid Hill & Knowlton to promote a respectable image for Indonesia internationally in economic and trade matters (Pilger, 1994). The government then turned to Burson-Marsteller, signing a contract worth US$5 million, to take a more aggressive stance in defending its East Timor policies (Cohen, 2000; Pilger, 1994). The promotion of Indonesia’s international reputation extended to corporations. The parent company of Freeport Mining played “a vital political role for Suharto, acting as a high-profile PR agent and becoming one of the most outspoken and successful lobby groups for Indonesia in the United States” (Leith, 2003, p. 80).

These public relations efforts were intended to address criticisms from many countries in response to Soeharto’s invasion of East Timor in 1975. The limitation of Soeharto’s governmental communication for foreign affairs is in line with Verčič’s (2004) assertion that “totalitarian regimes may hire public relations services abroad, but they don’t allow their subjects to freely practice PR” (p. 1).

**Peacetime propaganda under authoritarian regime.** Another strategy and propaganda technique of the New Order regime to control the press is through government policy to require every publisher of the print media to have two permits, the Permit to Publish (SIT, *Surat Izin Terbit*) issued by Deppen, and the Permit to Print

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14 For the first five years of invasion, as many as 80,000 people died due to violence and as a result of poor conditions, especially in detention camps in East Timor (Cribb, 2001). Initially the invasion was backed by the US and Australia in order to deter communist influences in the region. However, despite the public relations efforts, Indonesia often received protests to what was called an extraordinary crime against human rights in many international forums.
(SIC, *Surat Izin Cetak*) endorsed by KOPKAMTIB, the military security authority (Hill, 2007a). The former permit was later replaced with a Press Publication Enterprise Permit (SIUPP, *Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers*) (Hill, 2007a). This licensing policy, that has been implemented since the era of colonialism and continued by the Sukarno regime, was a serious threat to the print media because every time the media criticised the government, the permits could be revoked. According to Arismunandar, a former *Kompas* journalist who was fired for criticising Soeharto, it was very difficult and took many years to obtain the license. During the 32 years of Soeharto’s rule the government issued only about 300 licenses. However, Arismunandar added, the practice of limiting the number of licenses in the Soeharto era cannot all be blamed to Deppen as the license was obtained through the recommendation of PWI (the Indonesian journalist association) and SPS (the Union of Newspaper Publishers), which were dominated by the owners of the established media. This move becomes a kind of ‘cartel’ or ‘oligopoly’, which precluded the emergence of new competitors in the print media business (Arismunandar, 2006a).
In addition to addressing speeches on the formal and informal events, Soeharto also actively used various propaganda strategies to create his public image. The New Order regime’s strategy of spreading its propaganda messages ranged from screening violent and horror movies, such as *Pengkhianatan Gerakan 30S/PKI*, to the moderate and subtle, such as using history schoolbooks, banknotes, and a series of family drama and puppet plays. During the Soeharto tenure, the most powerful and systematic propaganda was to maintain public fear of communism and prevent the PKI from rebuilding. Thus, anyone who tried to oppose the government or questioned the

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15 Propaganda messages in various media were developed by one of Soeharto’s creative aides as Assistant for Mass Media Affairs Brigadier General Gufron Dwipayana, who was polishing the public image of Soeharto. He was also the Head of the State Film Center (PPFN), which produced *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* and developed a puppet story *Si Unyil* and a family drama *Keluarga Rahmat*, which were used by the government to insert their propaganda (Kitley, 2000; Sen, 1994).
Soeharto policies could be labelled as against the New Order, and the authorities controlled opposition movements through fascist-style corporatised organisations (Liddle, 1999).

Soeharto’s New Order regime not only manipulated the nation’s history to justify the regime (Krisnadi, 2010), but also censored films and books alongside the making of propaganda movies, such as Janur Kuning (Yellow Coconut Leaves), Serangan Fajar (Attack at Down), and Pengkhianatan Gerakan 30S/PKI (Treachery of 30 September Movement/PKI), which created a heroic image of Soeharto (Krisnadi, 2010). Of these films, Pengkhianatan is the most propagandist film, sponsored by the Soeharto regime. The four-and-a-half-hour movie depicts action from the September 30th Movement, ranging from Sukarno in a seriously ill condition and the kidnapping, torturing, and slaughtering of six army generals to Soeharto’s rapid defeat of the coup attempt. Soeharto used this anti-communist propaganda movie as a pretext to prevent the revival of PKI.16 The Soeharto regime required Pengkhianatan to be a compulsory screening film for all schools and government departments, and on every September 30 from the mid-1980s to 1997, state-run television TVRI broadcast the movie and it was relayed to all private television stations (Sen and Hill, 2007).17

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16 Since its founding on May 23, 1920, the PKI has carried out three rebellions. The first in 1926–1927, the second in Madiun in East Java on September 18, 1948, and the third in Jakarta, on September 30, 1965 (Pauker, 1969; McVey, 1965).

17 Minister of Information of the Habibie administration Yunus Yosfiah decided to stop broadcasting Penumpasan Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI movie in 1998 as it was no longer relevant to Reformation era (Rini and Evan, 2012).
The Post-Soeharto Era (1998–onwards)

The long oppression and tight control of press freedom and freedom of expression under the Sukarno and Soeharto regimes finally ended when Soeharto resigned on May 21, 1998. After 32 years in power, Soeharto handed over his office to Vice President B. J. Habibie at the Presidential palace in Jakarta. Henceforth, the Reformation era begins the process of democratisation and an overhaul political and communication systems in Indonesia.

The Habibie presidency. Habibie was Minister of Research and Technology for 20 years before he was promoted to Vice President on March 11, 1998, along with Soeharto’s re-election for the seventh term. The transfer of power brought important consequences for Indonesian people. Indeed, the public welcomed the political reform with euphoria, but at the same time, it left the country to an uncertain fate as Habibie’s leadership was considered weak due to his lack of political experience.\(^\text{18}\)

As president, Habibie had to face great challenges since the transfer of power came suddenly amidst economic crisis and political chaos. In addition, people rejected Habibie’s leadership because students and other reformers thought Habibie was part of the New Order regime. One significant challenge Habibie had to address how he communicated with people and the press in the new political system. With the increasing democratic aspirations of the people, the Habibie administration clearly needed a new political communication strategy.

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\(^{18}\) When urged to resign, Soeharto expressed his doubts and asked if Habibie was able to replace him. According to Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Habibie was deeply hurt by this comment and Soeharto’s remarks that underestimated Habibie was a turning point for Habibie to confront Soeharto directly (see also, Schwarz, 2000, p. 361-363).
When Habibie assumed power, he began the process of democratisation by issuing many new laws. In order to facilitate change, Habibie felt compelled to renew and amend Soeharto’s well-established policies. During Habibie’s short tenure (May 21, 1998–October 20, 1999), there was substantial regulatory reform underlying the milestones in the process of democratisation and influencing the prospect and fate of political public relations development in Indonesia. Significant new laws were issued, including, Law No. 40 of 1999 which stipulated that the government can no longer interfere with the press. Indonesian people were also gaining freedom to assemble and organise themselves politically as ruled in Law No. 2 of 1999. The Habibie government also simplified the provisions of issuance of licenses for the print media (SIUPP) and facilitated the requirement for the private sector to establish broadcast media. In addition, Law No. 22 and 25 of 1999 enabled the decentralisation of government and administration in Indonesia. These substantial reforms took place during the Habibie administration and became a milestone of the democratisation process in Indonesia.

Habibie’s quick actions to enhance democracy were apparently not accompanied by professional communication staff and an adequate public relations strategy. He failed to build a new system of communication management to improve his presidential communication and to gain his public trust. Habibie’s spokesperson Dewi Fortuna Anwar revealed how weak the information and communication management systems were within the presidential organisation (Dhani, 2004). According to Dewi (as cited in Dhani, 2004), when appointed as a spokesperson for foreign affairs in 1998, she found that the State Secretariat did not yet have a solid
infrastructure but only a ‘primitive’ organisational system. Dewi said that there was only a limited number of staff to handle the communication and information management and there were no presidential staff monitoring news reports. She recalled that there was a press secretary and staff members in the State Secretariat, but their tasks were administrative. For instance, she said, these staff only took care of the journalists’ access and not public affairs, and that become one of the weaknesses of the system in the presidential organisation. Of course, the president was entitled to appoint some new staff or hire professional public relations agencies, but as Dewi said, the budget was the main problem because there was no provision in the law of who will pay the salary of specialist staff members or communication specialists.

In terms of the government’s role in public communication and media affairs, the Minister of Information during the Habibie presidency, M. Yunus Yosfiah, noted that his role was greatly reduced during the Habibie tenure because there is no obligation or special task for him and his department to disseminate political propaganda and control the media (see Dhani, 2004). The minister said that President Habibie told him that no more censorship of information applied since the Reformation era. President Habibie emphasised to Yunus that every news media freely broadcast news according to each editorial policy. But freedom must be accompanied by moral responsibility, respect for human rights, and applicable rules (Dhani, 2004, p. 90).

In such circumstances, Habibie allowed his government to be criticised by many people and the press without attempting to counter the criticism. He once told the media: “Let’s them enjoy democratisation and I just do my job” (“Sandungan
menuju presiden,” 1999). It is therefore not surprising that President Habibie appeared weak and incompetent. Dewi noted that Habibie did not give priority to his personal image and the obsession to keep his position was not quite visible. Habibie saw that there are substantial changes that he must do, and even though the changes may not make him popular, he feels he has to do that (Dewi Fortuna Anwar, cited in Dhani, 2004).

Conversely, Schwarz (2000) asserted that Habibie actually had a desire to refashion his image after realising the lack of popular support for his government. For example, Habibie described himself as a transitional president and noted that it will be his legacy to bring Indonesia into a more democratic future. Habibie also claimed that he completely understood democracy as his studies in Germany had taught him the virtues of democracy, and most importantly, in the efforts to grab public sympathy, he called to speed up a new parliamentary election in mid-1999 and the selection of a new president by the end of 1999 (Schwarz, 2000, p. 371), rather than at the end of his term in 2003. Thus, Habibie had made significant breakthroughs in many sectors during his tenure. Unfortunately, he still failed to convince parliament members, and his accountability speech was rejected in a plenary meeting of the House of Representatives. In response, Habibie decided to resign from nominating himself to be elected president. According to Schwarz, “Habibie’s core problem was

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19 This statement relates to President Habibie’s controversial decision when offering two options to East Timor people to determine their own fate, i.e. extensive autonomy or popular consultation. Although he was aware that the policy was very risky and done without the approval of the Parliament, Habibie insisted as he was supported by all ministers, with the exception of foreign minister Ali Alatas. Habibie’s political decision, which led to the separation of East Timor from Indonesia, came under fire from many parties which has been one of the reasons for the parliament to reject his accountability speech.
that he lacked legitimacy as president. No amount of pleasing rhetoric could overcome this fundamental weakness” (2000, p. 372).

The Wahid presidency. Abdurrahman Wahid continued the process of democratisation and political reform when he was elected president on October 20, 1999. One of his first important and controversial policies was to dissolve *Departemen Penerangan* or ‘Deppen’ (Department of Information). President Wahid had several reasons to close down the Deppen. He argued that the decision was in accordance with his longstanding principle that the government should not intrude in the domain of public affairs and the people have too long suffered at the hands of the government (“Bicara keras,” 1999). In other words, the institution did “more harm than good, both because of its Stalinist approach to the control of information and because of its entrenched practice of extorting money from media outlets” (Barton, 2002, p. 190).

Consequently, the government concentrated the management of presidential and public communication and disseminated all the information from the office of president. To do and support these responsibilities, Wahid reformed the government institutions and replaced many positions, previously occupied by military officers. Firstly, he created a new formal position in the president’s office, *juru bicara kepresidenan* or Presidential Spokesperson to Wimar Witoelar, Yahya Staquf, and Adhi M. Massardi. The employment of presidential spokespersons reduced reliance on the Minister of State Secretary to convey information on state affairs. And as the position of Minister of Information was removed, the spokespersons would also speak on behalf of the president to explain the government affairs and policies. Subsequently, President Wahid assigned Ratih Hardjono, a former correspondent for *Kompas* daily
in Australia, to become SekretarisPresidenor the Secretary of President, another new position for what previously known as kepala rumah tangga kepresidenan (head of the presidential household) during the Soeharto and Habibie administrations (Suratno, 1999). The president also appointed another journalist from Tempo magazine, Wahyu Muryadi, to become the Head of Protocol Bureau. Dharmawan Ronodipuro, a diplomat and columnist, was installed as the Head of Press and Media Bureau or the Press Secretary (Suratno, 1999), and Indrawati Tamin, a communication expert and former officer from the Ministry of Information as the Deputy of Press Secretary. In addition to Ratih as the Secretary of the President, Wahid was also supported by three other secretaries, namely Marsilam Simandjuntak as the Cabinet Secretary, Budi Santoso as the Secretary of Military, and Bondan Gunawan as the Secretary of State Control and the Secretary of State (“SekretarisPresiden,” 2000).

Although Deppen’s performance was deemed undemocratic by civil society, its dissolution without taking into account the broader implications was arguably due to a hasty policy. The bigger challenge arose when the government needed to apply less populist policies and face public rejection. Since the government had no alternative communication systems, the policy to raise fuel prices without sufficient explanation and persuasion, for instance, frequently lead to public unrest. Consequently, President Wahid often became the target of criticism by his political opponents, news media and civil society. More importantly, as I have argued elsewhere, political public relations during Wahid’s tenure was done inappropriately and disorderly, or even ignored by the president himself (Dhani, 2004). For instance, when President Wahid (also known as Gus Dur) wanted to speak in public, he refused
to be managed by presidential staff and protocol: “Gus Dur did not want to be bound by very formalistic protocol rules. He forgot that he was a president. I think that’s the point,” says Dharmawan Ronodipuro, one of Wahid’s spokesperson (cited in Dhani, 2004, p. 133). As a result, polemics between the president and political elites in parliament were frequent and people were increasingly confused by the president’s messages and government communications.

President Wahid was supported by three spokespersons, who regularly spoke to the journalists and other presidential staff members. However, the system of presidential communication and the flows of information were not well formed during the post-Soeharto era, not until the Yudhoyono tenure. The appointment of these presidential staff was apparently not accompanied by auxiliary support staff with a plain and clear working mechanism and division of labour (Dhani, 2004). Ratih told the author (cited in Dhani, 2004) that the lack of coordination among the president’s spokespersons and other staff caused contradictory information to be distributed to journalists.

The chaotic situation in press conferences was frequent because President Wahid was always willing to respond to questions from journalists and was ill-disciplined. In addition to responding to journalists’ questions with jokes, President Wahid often made controversial statements and even allegations, including those

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20 President Wahid’s Secretary Ratih Hardjono and President’s Protocol Wahyu Muryadi shared similar opinions that President Wahid sometimes asked his staff to gather journalists simply to convey informasi kacangan (unimportant information). The presidential staff did not even know what the president wanted to convey to reporters, so they did not have any preparation (Dhani, 2004, p. 133).

21 The official presidential spokesperson during the Wahid presidency was only three, but some say four or more because other presidential staff such as Dharmawan, Indrawadi, and Marsilam are also considered presidential spokespersons (Dhani, 2004).

22 This is based on my personal observations to President Wahid directly at the presidential palace and elsewhere when I was a journalist.
pointing at his own cabinet members. For instance, when he was abroad President Wahid made controversial comments about General Wiranto’s dismissal plan as *Menko Polkam* (Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security). The president stated that he has known that some generals conducted secret meetings in Jakarta to keep Wiranto’s position (“Sekretaris Presiden,” 2000). This was different from the president’s previous statement in Jakarta as he denied the same issue. After returning home, President Wahid denied again his comments saying that he was asked by the foreign journalists, and was misinterpreted. However, the president confirmed that Wiranto would remain *Menko Polkam*. But, in the middle of the night, the president called in two journalists and told them that he had just sacked General Wiranto as *Menko Polkam*, and this information was exclusively given only to the two journalists. The next day, all newspapers reported that Wiranto remained *Menko Polkam*, but the headline of the mainstream newspapers *Kompas* and *Media Indonesia* was to the contrary (Dhani, 2004).

As a result, the lawmakers summoned all the president’s secretaries and their staff to inquire about the president’s information sources which sparked public argument as to why there was no adequate clarification from presidential staff about the accuracy of the information.23 The members of parliament also wondered what the role of Gus Dur’s daughter was in the State Secretariat as she always accompanied her father and gave information to foreign media (“Sekretaris Presiden,” 2000). In a parliamentary hearing, one member even accused Ratih, the Secretary of the President

23 Member of Commission I Aisyah Aminy of F-PPP asked the president staff members of who are the whisperer of Gus Dur, because most of his statements abroad cannot be proven (see, “Sekretaris Presiden,”, 2000).
of being an agent of foreign intelligence and urged her to resign. Ratih strongly denied this allegation but ultimately, she could not stand the growing criticism and resigned from her post a month later. The retreat of Ratih, who has also been criticised by the clerics because of the tight management of presidential activities, which hampered them in meeting the president, led to a decline in the managing of the president’s communication.

When members of the presidential staff were asked about their loose management of presidential press conferences, they blamed the lack of a clear system addressing the division of labour between them, as well as the stubbornness of the president who often refused to follow protocol (Dhani, 2004). Dharmawan, for instance, noted that he was once boycotted by journalists when he was considered too strict in conducting the presidential press conference. Ratih Hardjono and Wahyu Muryadi shared similar opinions that President Wahid sometimes asked his staff to gather journalists simply to convey informasi kacangan or unimportant information and spoke impromptu to the journalists. Likewise, Dharmawan said that he often had no idea what the president wanted to convey to the reporters, so he did not have any preparation when organising a press conference. Muryadi also noted that Gus Dur once stated: “I am the president; it should be the protocol serving the president, not the president serving the protocol” (Dhani, 2004, p. 133).

These issues clearly contributed to the disruption of presidential information and communication. I argued that the lack of political communication systems during

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24 Ratih Hardjono was then married to a former Australian diplomat Bruce Grant. She is currently working as public affairs consultant in Jakarta (see, Ratih profile at https://www.albrightstonebridge.com/team/ratih-hardjono and http://mirahsakethi.com/our-founder/).
the Wahid tenure undermined his legitimacy and public trust. As a result, the Wahid government did not last long. Finally, President Wahid was dismissed by the Parliament in July 2001, and his Vice President Megawati Soekarnoputri became president. Wahid’s impeachment came after he ignored the second censure sent by the Parliament, which was not predominantly related to unpopular policies, such as reforming the fuel subsidies, but rather to allegations concerned with two corruption cases (“Megawati appeals,” 2001). Nevertheless, the alleged corruption cases were not the only issue with Wahid’s impeachment. I argue that the President’s erratic and maverick leadership style (Barton, 2002) and controversial remarks he frequently made in public during his presidency (Fealy, 2010) contributed to his inability to maintain political stability and therefore the public trust. The inconsistencies in conveying information, the weak of political lobbying in the parliament, and the lack of communication strategies against the allegations of scandals reported by the news media ultimately undermined the legitimacy of the president. After a long dispute, parliamentary members eventually forced him to step down as Indonesia’s fourth president.

**The Megawati presidency.** After President Wahid was ousted by the Parliament, Vice President Megawati Soekarnoputri inherited the presidential office and ruled the country until October 2004. The situation gradually changed to be slightly ‘relaxed’ after Megawati was became Indonesia’s fifth president. Perhaps Megawati’s non-communicative behaviour aimed to avoid escalating problems, and that could be one of the factors that reduced the frequency of chaos in society. But,
riots and anarchies sporadically emerged everywhere, especially when the government implemented unpopular policies.

Megawati is the eldest daughter of Sukarno who became a political elite and a symbol of popular resistance against the Soeharto regime. Even though she was less charismatic and flamboyant than her father, Megawati survived and declared a new party, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) as a counterpart of her previous party, Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) that had been infiltrated by the New Order regime. Following Soeharto stepping down in 1998, Megawati’s PDIP party won the first free parliamentary election in the country. However, Megawati failed to become Indonesia’s first female president in the 1999 presidential election as she was unable to gain enough votes for a majority. But, the following day, Megawati did gain support from the majority of the parliament members to become vice president (Suh and Tesoro, 2009). Megawati eventually became Indonesia’s fifth president after the parliament dismissed President Wahid.

As with previous presidents, Megawati restructured government institutions at the beginning of her presidency. The Megawati administration removed the position of presidential spokesman previously made by President Wahid. Thus, all information relating to government policies was provided by three Coordinating Ministers. They were Menko Polkam, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono who oversaw nine departments; Menko Bidang Ekonomi (Coordinating Minister for the Economy), Dorodjatun Kuntjoro-Jakti who coordinated fourteen departments, and Menko Bidang Kesejahteraan Rakyat [Menko Kesra] (Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare) Jusuf Kalla who supervised eight departments. President Megawati also assigned State
Secretary Bambang Kesowo to convey information about state affairs to journalists. In addition, the president revived a new institution similar to Deppen. However, the new government agency, the State Ministry of Communication and Information, had a different role from Deppen and was only based in the capital Jakarta.

In an interview with the author, Minister of Communication and Information of the Megawati administration Syamsul Mu’arif explained that the duties and responsibilities of the new ministry differed from Deppen because its roles were to develop communication systems and strategies and disseminate information nationally (Dhani, 2004). For example, they initiated and made electronic governance policy or e-government, and facilitated and monitored a number of regulations, such as the Broadcasting Act. According to Mu’arif, Megawati’s administration wanted to build a new communication and information system. Mu’arif said this transformed system was required for the development of democratisation and reformation. The problem is, he noted, the government had done the deconstruction but had not been able to reconstruct a new system. “We eliminated the old system, but we have not built a new one. This is called the transition process. This transition process has a lot of weak things” (Syamsul Mu’arif, cited in Dhani, 2004, p. 178).

With the restructuring of government and presidential organisations, President Megawati clearly expected that she did not have to speak publicly because all communication about government and state affairs could be managed by her Coordinating Minister and State Secretary. As a result, government communication and particularly presidential communication were eventually confined to media relationships or merely functioned as government ‘publicity’. The practice of political
public relations, such as efforts to build a public image of the president and their
government or manage news stories and crises were infrequent and insignificant
during the Megawati tenure. Since President Megawati rarely talked to the media
during her term, credit for achievements were often taken by Yudhoyono and Kalla
as the Coordinating Ministers. The case of the first Bali bombings of October 12, 2002,
which killed 202 people from 21 countries, is a notable example because President
Megawati did not offer any public response when it happened. Megawati visited the
site the following day, but she did not condemn the terrorist incident as a concern of
a president (“Bali death toll,” 2003). As a result, politicians and local and foreign
media criticised Megawati for her perceived weakness in handling the crisis. One
Australian media outlet, for instance, said “The president's aloof and
uncommunicative style has failed to inspire her nation as it cries out for inspirational
leadership in the aftermath of the bombings” (“Hopes for international,” 2012).

In spite of her strengths and weaknesses, Megawati, however, deserves credit
for her efforts and her desire to pass laws on direct presidential and legislative
elections. After signing the new election law, President Megawati gave a mandate for
the Komisi Pemilihan Umum, KPU (the Commission of General Election) to hold
presidential elections near the end of her term in 2004. With the enactment of the new
law and the decision to hold a presidential election in 2004, Megawati and other
political elites interested in the president’s contest began to prepare themselves.
Ahead of the election, several political consultants emerged and conducted surveys
and popular polls. The consultants were hired to advise the candidate in presidential
debates and other political campaigns. The practices and strategies of political public relations will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

Yudhoyono and Kalla from the Megawati administration campaigned together in the presidential election. By using more sophisticated political public relations strategies, they outperformed their rivals and won the 2004 presidential election. Political public relations developed rapidly after Yudhoyono became the sixth president of Indonesia. Since the beginning of his administration, Yudhoyono quickly reformed the presidential office and used various strategies in communicating with the press and public. The beginning of the Yudhoyono–Kalla presidency, therefore, marked important milestones in the modern practice of political public relations.

Conclusion

This chapter offered a history of Indonesian political public relations which shows that nationalist political propaganda was used massively by the Sukarno and Soeharto authoritarian regimes. This chapter also serves as a contextual background for the next chapters so that we can compare how the president/government used propaganda or communicated with the public in the past and what are new formulations of political public relations in contemporary Indonesia. Beginning in the early 1940s as the struggle to maintain independence against the colonialists, scholars considered that government propaganda that was often disseminated by both Sukarno and Soeharto emerged as part of post-colonial nation-building (see, for example, Halff and Gregory, 2014; Yudarwati, 2014).

Although the ultimate goal could be the same, i.e. maintaining power and hegemonic control, propaganda during the Sukarno and Soeharto administrations
had distinct roles and objectives. For Sukarno, his wartime propaganda was designed to increase the nation’s spirit for struggle and undermine enemies’ morale. While in the Soeharto regime, propaganda was directed at reducing resistance to the government policies and maintaining political stability, mostly with a coercive way which was supported by the military power. Both Sukarno and Soeharto regime also used Deppen as a government agency to control media content and suppress freedom of expression. But the Soeharto regime Soeharto has carried out propaganda in a deeper, continuous, and systematic manner. The regime required all television media to broadcast violent and horror movies, such as Pengkhianatan Gerakan 30S/PKI (Treachery of 30 September Movement/PKI), and thus dispersed fear as a form of ideology propaganda in society. This anti-communist-themed film promotes the brutality of the communist party which slaughtered army generals and also anti religious teachings, and thus become a pretext for the public needs to rely on the government.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated many other forms and techniques of post-colonial propaganda practised by authoritarian regimes, both in war and peace. The dictatorial regimes used power with fully support from the military to strengthen its political and ideological propaganda, not only to unite the fragile nation or function as nation-building but also perpetuate their hegemony power. Therefore, theoretically and empirically we can see clear evidence in this chapter how the communication was used to create power, how the power was used to create the communicativeness, and the role of propaganda in creating and maintaining fear and thus (ended with perpetuating) political hegemony.
Transfer of power from Soeharto to Habibie marked the end of the heavy government use of oppressive or ‘hard’ propaganda. In addition to abandoning the post-colonial propaganda, new governments in the post-Soeharto era allowed press freedom and freedom of expression, as well as creating an atmosphere for the growth of political public relations, a relatively new term that being used by international scholars to replace the term ‘propaganda’. This chapter shows the milestones of government communication in Indonesia, from propaganda to political public relations, and the precursor to the formulation of a new term that I refer to as ‘soft propaganda’, where the new governments in a new democratic system continue to practice propaganda, but in subtle and sophisticated ways.

This chapter concludes that the expansion of political public relations in Indonesia coincided with the country’s political reform, including liberalisation of the press, freedom of speech and expression, as well as advances in information and communication technologies. The findings reported in this chapter confirm that the emergence of modern political public relations in Indonesia is closely linked to the broader democratisation of the country, including significant shifts in the electoral process. The rapid development of political public relations began just before Yudhoyono was elected president. In addition to exploring the development, practices and effects of political public relations in Indonesia, the following chapters will also discuss the similarities and differences between ‘hard’ propaganda, largely practised by the Sukarno and Soeharto authoritarian regimes, and ‘soft’ propaganda, particularly those implemented in Indonesia under the Yudhoyono presidency, which is a new perspective or a new paradigm shift in the political public relations concept.
Chapter 5
Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter describes and analyses the primary data from interviews and relevant documents to answer the research questions. It also discusses the phenomena and problems related to the questions. To do so, this chapter is organised in three sections. The first section discusses the development of government communication in Indonesia. As a continuation of the previous chapter, this section focuses on the development of political public relations under the Yudhoyono presidency, particularly during his first term in office. In this section, I explain the main factors that pave the way for the development of political public relations in Indonesia. The section also explores the phenomenon of political consultants that have emerged since the early 2000s, including their roles and influence on the rapid growth of political public relations in Indonesia. Other important developments were also discussed in this section, such as the institutionalisation of political public relations and the reform of the presidential organisation after Yudhoyono took office.

The second section discusses the practices of political public relations under the Yudhoyono presidency. In this section, I explore the core practices of political public relations and discuss how Yudhoyono and his officials applied them to maximise political and public support. However, the discussion will be short because it will overlap with the discussion in the next section. I argue that Yudhoyono intensively harnessed political public relations during his presidency with the aim of maintaining
his good image and thus perpetuate his power. Compared to his immediate predecessors, Yudhoyono applied more professional communication strategies and was particularly adept at managing his presidential persona to his advantage, and that was one of the pivotal factors leading to perpetuate his political hegemony.

After discussing the development and core practice of political public relations in the previous two sections, the final section will synergise important views of the participants and analyses other facts, which can be used as fundamental premises for developing a new concept of political public relations in the Indonesian context. I would argue in this section that the term ‘political public relations’ is basically ‘soft propaganda’.

**The Development of Political Public Relations**

*From propaganda to political public relations.* As described in the previous chapter, Sukarno and Soeharto’s authoritarian regimes used political and ideological propaganda largely by suppression for decades since the beginning of independence until Soeharto resigned from his power (1945-1998). Supported by the military power, their nation-building propaganda was directed to reducing resistance of government policies and maintaining political stability. During the Soeharto era, the electoral system was also specifically designed so that people could only vote for a political party they preferred, not the candidate. Then the winning party determines who will become president through a MPR (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*, People’s Consultative Assembly) plenary meeting. Since the elections held in 1971 to 1997, Golkar (*Golongan Karya*, the Fungtional Groups), Soeharto’s political party, has always won by gaining more than 60% of the votes. Soeharto maintained this political system
and political propaganda during his presidency, and these were some important factors that enabled him to maintain power for more than three decades (1967-1998).

After the fall of Soeharto, the system of presidential and legislative elections was then adjusted to the new political system and social development. However, in the post-Soeharto transitional period (1998–2004), Presidents Habibie, Wahid, and Megawati never seemed to care about the marketability of their public persona because their appointment as president was still the same as in the Soeharto-era electoral system. Nevertheless, the propaganda model of Soeharto’s authoritarian regime began to be abandoned and the new governments began to look for new communication forms, systems and strategies in accordance with public demands and democracy.

Political public relations began to develop when President Megawati signed and passed Law No. 23/2003, which regulated direct presidential elections or pilpres (an abbreviation of pemilihan presiden). This electoral reform law at the head of government level was followed by another Law No. 23/2004, which regulates the head of regional elections or pilkada (an abbreviation of pemilihan kepala daerah), so that the appointment of regional heads, i.e. governor, mayor, and head of regency is no longer decided by the central/regional government, but through direct elections.

Consequently, political elites have to prepare their communication strategy if they want to participate and win in the pilpres or pilkada elections. Starting in 2004, the Indonesian people were able to vote for their national and regional leaders in the direct elections. All politicians who have desires to become a president or a head of regional candidate needed to prepare their communication strategies carefully to
explain their programs through *pilpres* and *pilkada* debates that were broadcast live on national television in the campaign season. This is an important factor in explaining the rise of political consultants and public opinion surveys in the context of political public relations in Indonesia, a phenomenon that began to develop shortly before Yudhoyonoved Indonesia’s sixth president in 2004.

Although at first it has not shown significant development, the growth of political consultants in Indonesia in the early 2000’s marked the milestone of the development of political public relations in Indonesia. To get a broader view of that growth, I have drawn a figure below which might help us to trace the chronology of the government communication in Indonesia and the stages of its development from the use of propaganda in the Dutch colonial era, propaganda to maintain independence in the Soekarno era, propaganda in the Soeharto era, to political public relations in the post-Soeharto era.

*Figure 5.1 The Chronology of Political Public Relations in Indonesia.*
The emergence of political consultants. Indonesia entered a new stage of government public relations when President Megawati passed a new law about presidential election in 2003, which was followed by another law for the head of regional election. The implementation of these government policies on national and regional direct elections triggered the emergence of political consultants, who not only provided political consultancy but also offered polling and public opinion surveys as well as designing communication election campaigns for their clients. Technically, within the framework of democracy, consultancy on politics can be done anywhere, in many occasions and in any institution. Political consultants, therefore, can be associated as communication specialists who provide services as communication adviser/managers and develop communication strategies for the benefit of their main clients, i.e. political party organisations and political elites interested in nominating themselves in the general elections.

From the first democratic legislative election in 1999 to the first presidential election in 2004, local survey institutions demonstrated progress in terms of the sophisticated methodology used in polling surveys, even though in the beginning political elite remained sceptical of its strategic significance (Mietzner, 2009, p. 101). At the beginning of the Reformation era, presidents and politicians might not really know or be aware of the importance of political consulting services. As I noted earlier, Indonesian elites and political parties have largely ignored the importance of image building and knowing the public’s preferences when voting in the ballot box as the electoral system was still the same as in the Soeharto-era. This may be because the public and politicians seldom read popular surveys and analyses in the mass media.
During the Soeharto era, there were only a few institutions that carried out political surveys and that almost never became public consumption. Even if there were surveys made by the government, the results could be inaccurate given the election had been highly manipulated by the regime. In other words, these surveys would have been pointless and misleading when carried out in an authoritarian regime because the voting pattern in the survey was not based on free choice but determined by systematic pressure from the government (Qodari, 2010).

The demand for political consultancy was increasing in Indonesia as the presidential election must be conducted every five years, and there are hundreds of regional elections – from governor, mayor, to head of regency, in 33 provinces – since 2005. Political consultants are also needed when candidates must appear in publicly broadcast debate programs, such as a presidential debate that presents the rhetorical skills of candidates in presenting discourse or arguments. Politicians began to believe in public opinion research after Yudhoyono’s victory in the 2004 presidential election (Interview with Adjie Alfaraby, January 16, 2016; Ufen, 2010). The election outcome could be predicted accurately by a survey institution and thus politicians understood that campaigns should be organised differently in the future (Ufen, 2010, p. 22).

In the early 2000s, the emergence of political consultants that began to develop in Indonesia was facilitated by the existence of broadcast media to channel political messages. Television plays a significant role in disseminating political campaigns,

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25 Conducting and publishing a popular opinion poll by a private institution or mass media could become a serious problem during the Soeharto era, as the government could revoke the license of the publisher and imprison its editor (see, for example, Schwarz 1999; Mietzner, 2009).
26 The Indonesia Institute of Science (LIPI) noted that Indonesia had implemented 1,300 regional direct elections in the first 10 years (2005 – 2015) in post-Soeharto era (see “Direct elections under,” 2016).
whereas narrow-casting through multiple channels is still atypical. However, professional consultants have also demonstrated their essential role by using more sophisticated tools and competing with party executives for the implementation of the campaign. Therefore, the year 2004 was not only the birth of the new electorate system in Indonesia, but also facilitated breakthroughs in popular survey and political interaction between political actors and their potential constituents and that became key elements to improve the quality of democracy and pave the way for the development of political public relations in Indonesia.

The development of political public relations continues with the increasing number of new players in this sector. Founder and director of Lingkaran Survey Indonesia, Denny Januar Ali, said that after the presidential election in 2004, and then the pilkada elections, which started in 2005, his organisation was overwhelmed with requests from politicians and business people (Hidayat, Desyani, Irmawati, and Pay, 2012). The survey and political consultancy business grew rapidly in Indonesia because all the candidates for governor, mayor, and head of district (Bupati) were in dire need for pollsters to determine their popularity and electability (Hidayat et al., 2012, p. 36).

Another factor that triggered the rapid growth of political consultants and their polling surveys was the emergence of the awareness of politicians and political parties about the benefits of the survey. Before the 2004 election, local experts relied heavily on public opinion surveys intended to measure the candidate’s electability and popularity. For political consultants, this polling data initially served as a basis for determining communication strategies in elections. But after the election, the pollsters
developed their business by providing clients with various services through a mix of persuasion techniques, including public relations, marketing, and advertising strategies, and winning election strategies. Thus, the result of a survey is not only for politicians and political parties, but also for the businesspeople who want to provide financial support to candidates. Political consultants suggest whether the candidate has the potential to win the election, what strategies and campaign themes are needed, the frequency and duration of campaigns, and of course, the amount of money that should be provided (Interview with Adjie Alfaraby, January 6, 2016).

Ironically, the high demand for communication specialists to assist candidates in elections throughout the country was not well anticipated by public relations agencies and practitioners in Indonesia. Some informants confirmed this fact and noted that their fellow public relations colleagues, who are currently working in various companies and public relations agencies, have not played much in the political realm (S.A. Wasesa, personal communication, May 23, 2017; W. Septarina, personal communication, May 29, 2017). Silih Agung Wasesa, a senior public relations practitioner, for example, admitted that the public relations industry in the corporate sector had not provided political public relations practitioners when the need for such communication expertise was high. He stated that even though business opportunities in this field are still wide, only a few public relations agencies can and wish to do it. Wasesa recalled the perception of political players in public relations did not correspond to the market, so the political candidates preferred a political consultant, rather than a public relations practitioner. He maintains,
If we compare the number of elections and the amount of PR, there are 217 regional elections, where each district has two or three candidates, then the candidates outnumber PR practitioners or agencies since the amount of PR agencies is not too many. Meaning that if the PR industry has developed, and one area uses one PR consultant then everyone will get a job. In fact, it does not, because many of PR firms are yet to be aware of the various roles of PR. Moreover, not all PR agencies can do it, and there are PR firms who do not want to manage political PR. (Interview with Silih Agung Wasesa, January 27, 2016)

Surprisingly, the political consultants rarely have experience in the fields of public relations or journalism. There are very few public relations practitioners and former journalists, who are proficient and knowledgeable about strategies of political public relations, engaged in political consultancy (Interview with Wasesa, 2016; Interview with Septarina, 2016). In fact, most political consultants, who are ‘the big players’ in the consultancy business, have backgrounds as researchers and educators. In other words, this business opportunity was not capitalised by public relations practitioners who were more experienced in business and corporate public relations. Political public relations tactics and strategies are different from corporate public relations and the lack of understanding of political communication and networking among political elites are the main reasons of why these public relations

27 None of the names mentioned in the ‘big player’ section which I explore later in this chapter, including Denny JA, Dodi Ambardi, Saiful Mujani, and Rizal Mallarangeng had experience in public relations before becoming political consultants. Many of them were political researchers or educators who earned their PhDs from Ohio University. Rizal and Choel Mallarangeng were involved largely in politico-business affairs, and only Usamah Hisyam had ever worked as a journalist.
practitioners are not engaged in this new field (S.A. Wasesa, personal communication, May 23, 2017; W. Septarina, personal communication, May 29, 2017).

Wasesa, who had helped in managing the communication of two Indonesian presidents in the post-Soeharto era, stated that he was aware most of the political consultants that had been assisting politicians in developing their communication strategies largely came from a background in research. They could establish their own business patterns, which differ from public relations agencies because of the many opportunities in political consultancy. “Not many old players from corporate PR understood the market of politicians. My PR colleagues are likely to be hard-pressed to adapt to the politicians’ mindset” (S. A. Wasesa, personal communication, May 23, 2017).

Another senior public relations practitioner, Wida Septarina, confirmed that most political consultants sell research to their clients and that the lack of public relations people engaged with the political elite was caused by several reasons (personal communication, May 29, 2017). She observed that the first reason is a societal factor; associations of political consultants are perceived by politicians as having insights into political and party constellation. This is actually a matter of social circles. Next, there are public relations practitioners who prefer to be neutral in politics. “They were so afraid to represent certain candidates, and sometimes they were very busy working for the corporation brands ... so they do not have time to mingle in those circles”. Septarina explained that to be a political person their conversations must be gathuk (connected with each other). “If their political insight is not good, certainly, the

28 The participant could not reveal his client’s identity as he has a non-disclosure agreement.
discussion cannot be fun. In short, they don’t understand the essence of politics ... as they are not playing in that environment, afraid to think of taking sides, trying to hold their ‘image’, and so on“. The lack of political consultants is also related to the lack of interest of public relations practitioners in politics. “Not every PR person has a passion there. I believe most of their profiles are like that” (W. Septarina, personal communication, May 29, 2017).

What this discussion suggests is that although political public relations has much in common with the general theory on public relations, in practice there are many differences. The discussion above reflects those of Strömbäck and Kiousis’ (2013) notion that general public relations strategies and tactics cannot be assumed or applied equally well, or that public relations theories are equally valid, in politics as in corporate settings. At the same time, the phenomenon of political public relations in Indonesia shows differences with the growth of political public relations in Western democracies, where political consultants generally having journalism or public relations backgrounds (Kumar, 2006; McClellan, 2008).

The prominent agencies in pollings and political consultancies. A few years after Indonesia entered the Reformation era, there were a number of polling survey companies that had been established and were now big players in the political consulting business in Indonesia. Their existence has a significant influence, not only for the development of political public relations but also enliven the emergence of new phenomena in the contestation of power held through presidential and legislative elections. Saiful Mujani, Denny Januar Ali, Dodi Ambardi, and Muhammad Qodari are the pioneers in this field. Mujani and his colleagues established Lembaga Survei
Indonesia (LSI) in June 2003. Initially, they conducted research and surveys with the aim of collecting data and conveying information to parties and candidates about their positions in election campaigns. But their commitment and partnership did not last long. The forerunners in the opinion survey business finally separate and set up their own companies on the internal conflicts surrounding their organizations. During the campaign for the 2004 presidential election, two diametrically opposed camps emerged. On one side stood the ‘academic’ camp which considered that opinion polling should serve the needs of society for information and more political transparency. They were not opposed to providing politicians with information about their electoral strengths and weaknesses, nor would they refuse payment for such services. However, “they vehemently rejected the idea of advising political actors on how to run a campaign, create a particular image, or design a platform to help them beat their opponents” (Mietzner, 2009, p. 117).

Conversely, on the other camp, there were the ‘commercial’ pollsters, which had no problem with ‘selling the medicine’ and helping politicians win elections. Therefore, they were not only prepared to conduct surveys and tell the patients what illness they suffer, “but also to organize the whole campaign for parties and nominees (including media work, image consulting, drafting of slogans and advertisements, and managing staff), this camp openly offered their services to paying clients” (Mietzner, 2009, pp. 117-118). This shows a new phenomenon in the Indonesian elections, that popular polls, once viewed as scientific research methods, can now be

Before separating and setting up their respective companies, Saiful Mujani and Denny Januar Ali had been friends and both studied under the guidance of William Liddle at Ohio State University. But later there emerged a paradigmatic clash between the two camps and led to competition and eventual hostility (Mietzner, 2009).
used as a means of gaining political power. However, the pollsters did not intend, plan or even anticipate this development, but instead resulted from the changing electoral landscape (Qodari, 2010).

After Mujani and Denny split, Ambardi managed Lembaga Survei Indonesia, and Denny established Lingkaran Survei Indonesia. They both used the same abbreviation LSI. Mujani, who initially joined with Ambardi, later established his own survey firm, namely Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting. Interestingly, both ‘LSI firms’ of Ambadri and Denny were hired by Yudhoyono and provided political assistance and polling surveys in the 2004 and 2009 presidential elections (Interview with Adjie Alfaraby, January 6, 2016; Mietzner, 2009). The other important players in political public relations in Indonesia were Mallarangeng brothers: Rizal and Choel of Fox Indonesia, Muhammad Qodari of Indo Barometer, Yunarto Wijaya of Charta Politika, Andrinof Chaniago of Cirus Surveyors Group, Eep Saefulloh Fatah of Polmark Indonesia, and Usamah Hisyam of Dharmapena. Muhammad Qodari established Indo Barometer after the split with Denny and his Lingkaran Survei Indonesia in 2006. Rizal Mallarangeng and his brother Choel Mallarangeng, founder of Fox Indonesia in 2008, suddenly became big players after successfully helping Yudhoyono in the 2009 presidential campaign. Denny J.A., Dodi Ambardi, Saiful Mujani, Rizal Mallarangeng and his brother Andi Mallarangeng received their doctorates in political science from Ohio State University.

Fox Indonesia was reportedly bankrupt and no longer existed in the political consulting business after being abandoned by Choel Mallarangeng in 2010. Choel Mallarangeng was later detained for a corruption case (see Gabrillin, 2017;
Puspitasari, 2017). The other important players that contributed to Yudhoyono’s victory in the presidential election are Inke Maris and Associates and Dharmapena. Prabowo and his new party Gerindra (Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya – Greater Indonesian Movement Party) used the services of US political communication experts, such as Rob Allyn, Alex Castinallos, and advertising media consultant David Axelrod in the 2004 and 2009 presidential and legislative elections. However, these foreign consultants and political-marketing gurus were generally weak and limited in their impact in the Indonesian market (Ufen, 2010).

*The influence of political consultants and popular surveys.* As I stated earlier, the changes in the electoral system in Indonesia, from a voting mechanism in the MPR plenary meeting to a direct election, have brought dramatic changes in campaign strategies. These changes and developments are increasingly interesting, as one can see from the variety of communication tactics and strategies displayed by political elites. Political consultants contribute significantly to the new phenomena that change the atmosphere of political realm in the country. Political observers argued that some of the above-mentioned intellectuals contributed to the ‘Americanisation’ of political public relations in Indonesia soon after they returned to the country with their scientific knowledge of political/popular surveys to be applied in elections which were part of the democratisation process. (Interview with Ikrar Nusa Bakti, December 28, 2015; Interview with M. Alwi Dahlan, January 20, 2016; Ufen, 2010).

A senior political adviser and pollster Muhammad Qodari (2010) of Indo Barometer asserted that political consultants have become ‘the central locomotive of election campaigning’ in Indonesia, and suggested that “a new breed of political
advisers and consultants is not only professionalising Indonesian politics, but also becoming increasingly influential within it” (p. 123). Broadly speaking, the influence of polling on voters can be divided into three positions. In the first position, there are voters who are not affected by the polling, but there are also constituents, in the second position, that are easily affected so that the poll is said to have a ‘bandwagon’ effect. While the third position is voters who are concerned, and will choose candidates who tend to lose, so polling is also considered to have ‘under dog’ effect (Qodari, 2010, pp 127–128). In the context of direct elections in Indonesia, political elites and observers believe that Indonesia strongly holds the position of bandwagon effect (Qodari, 2010, p. 128), so that polling is increasingly marketable and get serious attention from politicians when they want to contest elections.

Although the format, method, and purpose may be different, polling survey has been done in Indonesia for a long time ago. In tracing of political surveys in the past, it was revealed that former Minister of Information in the last term of Soeharto, M. Alwi Dahlan, was one of the initiators of the survey institution in Indonesia. He had established an advertising and communication companies since 1972, namely Inscore Indonesia, Inscore Adcom and Inscore Zecha. This institution is probably the first consulting institution in Indonesia (Interview with M. Alwi Dahlan, January 20, 2016; see also Yudarwati, 2014, p. 54). Furthermore, Adjie Alfaraby, one of Lingkaran Survey Indonesia (LSI) directors, noted that the Jakarta-based Lembaga Penelitian Pendidikan dan Penerangan Sosial dan Ekonomi (LP3ES, Institute for Social and Economic Research, Education, and Information) was the first public opinion survey that started in Indonesia and published its research in 1999. Survey awareness initially did not
come from the parties or their candidates, because at that time the candidates were selected from the party’s central office. Lingkaran Survey Indonesia (LSI) made the first contract with Partai Golkar in 2005 after they developed a communication strategy to convince and explain to the party that a survey is crucial to gauge the potential voter numbers, and therefore they can decide which one of the candidates must be endorsed or recommended by the party. Moreover, LSI also convinced the politicians of the importance of public opinion surveys in knowing whether potential candidates had a realistic chance of winning (Interview with Adjie Alfaraby, January 6, 2016).

Although popular surveys may be considered unpleasant by the government in the Soeharto era, and also seems not so important by the public and political elites at the beginning of the Reformation era, political advisers/consultants with their polling surveys were now successful in gaining important role and place in Indonesia’s new democracy. Today, many political consultancy agencies in Indonesia even provide various services to clients through a combination of public relations techniques, marketing and advertising and strategies to win elections. The agencies, such as LSI, provide packages including public opinion surveys, exit polls, mentoring and other campaign programs. Therefore, with its various functions and services, the presence of political consultation agencies contributes significantly in influencing the strategy and model of political public relations in Indonesia, especially in the context of national and regional political contestation. Regarding this development, Alfaraby explains that LSI initially focused on polling surveys and political consultancy. There

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30 See footnote 25.
were two surveys they conducted, namely voter behavior surveys and candidate survey mapping. But to meet the needs of its clients, they develop their business by providing various other requests related to the election campaign.

Besides door-to-door campaigning and conducting public space activities, we also deal with the media, both in the form of production and placement. We deal with all necessary activities, from producing the ads to the media placement. That is the nature of advertising. But we also do some PR activities and creative campaign activities. For example, organising some events and attractive programs, designing the stage, which is for the candidate’s PR. (Interview with Adjie Alfaraby, January 6, 2016)

What Alfaraby noted above indicates that what LSI do as a political consultancy and political polling agency is much more than merely public opinion surveys, as their services also cover media relations, advertising, event management, and communication strategies. And that can be considered as public relations activities in the political realm. Currently, many political survey institutions and communication consultants in Indonesia, including LSI, received and managed various political consultations, and this work ranged from mapping and reading the candidate’s electability, pencitraan (image building), winning strategy, mobilisation of opinion, to exit poll after the election (see, Hidayat, et al., 2012).

In the post-Soeharto era, the publication of popular survey that aimed to show the public preference for candidate who would advance in elections was no longer considered an unpleasant practice in any circumstance. The publication of the results of this survey is often seen in traditional mass media and internet-based media. However, some of the survey results in several publications turned out to be far
different from the actual election outcomes. Hence, polling surveys are often regarded as a persuasive approach that aims to influence the voters’ opinion and behaviour. When asked about such kind of manipulative practices, Alfaraby asserted that there are always opportunities to do such manipulative practices, even those who are considered irresponsible have done so in his organisation.

“Manipulation has happened in our organisation, but it was the work of a culprit. We have since upgraded our internal monitoring mechanism to minimise the chance of cheating. That was a personal case only, and by no means is it endemic in the company. Because there are chances to do it, and to minimise the chances we always upgrade our monitoring mechanism to avoid such incidences, because once we do it, whether it is the client’s request or by someone in our organisation, our reputation will be damaged.

Thus, in addition to have a standard operation procedure (SOP) in the internal organisation, externally LSI also joined with a survey organisation in Indonesia that has their own codes of ethics. Nevertheless, Afarabi did not deny that there were many politicians who want to use the services of political consultancy agents but want to use improper ways. If the candidate’s condition is not feasible, in terms of electability, or the candidate cannot fight, then they would suggest the politician take position number two, being a deputy, or not go ahead to the election, and instead give his support to a superior candidate. Alfaraby maintains,

Nowadays, many naughty candidates play games with polling institutions because they only have a limited budget. Thus, they would pay a survey organisation demanding for a survey with certain results in order to engineer
an outcome. However, we have a strict policy during this time, meaning that we would never do it. If there are clients who come to us with substantial funds, we usually convince them that, firstly, the initial survey would be a survey that reveals the truth as they are. You don’t need to win in this survey, but it is important to know the real condition. So, if we’ve already known the map it will easier for both of us to do the next step. It’s much better than giving us funds to manipulate the survey. Firstly, it will destroy our reputation, so internally we do care about it. Secondly, it will be a bad precedent, and the bad story can spread everywhere… We need to also maintain our reputation. We prefer to work with the candidate who tends to have a chance of winning. Not the winner but the chance of winning, rather than accompany the candidate who has a chance to lose from the beginning. (Interview with Adjie Alfaraby, January 6, 2016)

When polling surveys are increasingly needed, it seems that it is difficult to avoid unethical practices carried out by candidates who collaborate with polling agencies. As Alfaraby and Qodari observed, candidates often try to intervene in the voting process to produce favourable results, and the intervention usually comes before the survey is conducted. These conditions also occurred when the client requests positive findings, or after the survey shows poor results, or when the client requests results to be manipulated. However, as Alfaraby stated above, Qodari (2010) also believes that professional survey organisations reject such interventions. “But there are undoubtedly some organisations that manipulate polling results for financial reward, endangering the credibility of the survey industry as a whole (p. 128).

In the context of its activities, the finding in this section may help us to understand that political consultancies and various services and activities that they offer to their clients can be considered as political public relations because they also
do what public relations generally do in their activities, such as conducting research to find out its public preferences, dealing with media (media relations), designing communication strategy, and organising events. However, the strategies and techniques carried out by political consultants have many differences than those generally practised by professional public relations in the corporate sector. For example, political consultancy agencies generally rely on popular surveys to find out the electability and popularity of their clients. But many of them engineered several surveys according to the interests of their clients and tried to ‘sell’ their research outcomes.

By doing this, they tried to influence constituents with the aim of directing their attitudes to vote for the preferred candidate. If these political surveys are in doubt, because they were made with a certain methodology so that the outcomes can mislead or deceive the public, then political survey publications intended to persuade eligible voters can be categorised as a form of political propaganda. Moreover, political consultants who are often called spin doctors in the mass media also rejected to be called a public relations agent. They set up their own associations with a number of members and have their own code of ethics,\(^1\) even though in practice they have not been accompanied by the implementation of sanctions and agreed upon and strong ethical standards of behaviour, and the fact that some pollsters are highly professional but others are questionable (Qodari, 2010). Other interview participants have

\^[1] There are two associations in Indonesia established by political consultants, namely Persepi (Perhimpunan Survey Opini Publik, Association for Public Opinion Survey) and Aropi (Asosiasi Riset Opini Publik, Association for Public Opinion Research).
different views regarding this issue, and I will discuss them in the final section of this chapter.

**Institutionalising government public relations.** Making presidential communication effective and powerful demands support from the president’s staff and advisors, especially in building communication strategies and providing accurate and selected information. Yet, reforms within the presidential organisation also require direction and leadership from the president who should understand communication strategies. As discussed in the previous chapter, governments in the post-Soeharto era sought to convert the government’s communication model, system and characteristics from largely propaganda to more transparent, participatory and egalitarian in order to meet democratic values. In the same chapter, I also noted that the initiative to improve the communication system inside the presidential organisation had begun since the Habibie administration. Although the system has changed frequently, the efforts to institutionalise political public relations in the government’s organisations, which aimed to improve the president and government’s communication and performance, continued during the Wahid and Megawati tenure.

Presidential spokesperson during the Habibie presidency, Dewi Fortuna Anwar asserts that governments in the Reformation era, including the Yudhoyono administration, continued to institutionalise political public relations strategies and communication systems though they are still looking for the ideal form. Indeed, reforming communication systems is not an easy task, especially for a large country with a plural society like Indonesia. However, in order to run its function properly, the government should be able to build an established communication system and
coordinated sub-systems within a large and complex organisation such as the presidential organisation. She maintains,

We are still looking for the most appropriate form regarding the structure. Which one is better: the system is part of the bureaucracy, or is it something that is a political appointee. How does it work? How about the character of the president? Because we have arrived at the conclusion that this system must be revised, but not to become a bureaucracy, because as soon as it becomes a bureaucracy then you know what the word of bureaucracy means: sluggish! ...democracy is rule driven, so this should be more flexible, and, therefore, it must be tailored to the character of each president as well. (Interview with Dewi Fortuna Anwar, January 18, 2016)

During the Reformation era, restructuring government organisations seems to be a prerequisite that needs to be done every time a new president took office. It indicates that some organisational structures are not yet well established or it was designed ad hoc. The government is still looking for the most appropriate form regarding the structure and system to be implemented. In the context of empowering government communication, the Yudhoyono presidency also did what his predecessors had done in the past, both inside and outside the presidential organisation. In this sub-section, I shed light on the institutionalisation of government public relations at the highest level of government organisation, i.e. the presidential office and briefly discuss the Department of Communication and Informatics (Depkominfo), previously known as Deppen or Departemen Penerangan.
Restructuring the presidential office. After being inaugurated as president in October 2004, Yudhoyono constantly made adjustments to his government by appointing staf khusus (specialist staff) members and establishing a new presidential communication office. Although it was often discussed in the media that Yudhoyono will form an advisory team consisting of 11 members and ready to assist the president for 24 hours (“SBY Bentuk”, 2004), eventually only nine persons were elected. Yudhoyono appointing this nine-specialist staff to assist him in specific responsibilities, including for political communication, news management and spokespersons. Inside the president’s office, Yudhoyono rationalised the organisation’s structure by changing the role and function of public relations officers, as well as setting up channels for transmitting information internally and coordinating activity and dealing with feedback. The specialist staff members who assisted the president on a daily-basis are listed below.

1) Sekretaris pribadi presiden (president’s personal secretary);
2) Staf khusus bidang hubungan internasional (specialist staff on international relations affairs, concurrent with spokesperson for foreign affairs);
3) Staf khusus bidang informasi/public relations (specialist staff on information and public relations affairs, concurrent with spokesperson for domestic affairs);
4) Staf khusus bidang komunikasi politik (specialist staff on political communication affairs);
5) Staf khusus bidang hukum dan pemberantasan korupsi, kolusi dan nepotisme (specialist staff on laws and the eradication of corruption, collusion, and nepotism affairs);
6) Staf khusus bidang ekonomi dan keuangan (specialist staff on economy and financial affairs);
7) Staf khusus bidang pertahanan dan keamanan (specialist staff on defence and security affairs);
8) Staf khusus bidang pembangunan daerah dan otonomi daerah (specialist staff on regional development and autonomy affairs);
9) Staf khusus bidang teknik dan industri (specialist staff on technical and industry affairs).32

The purpose of this presidential specialist staff appointment according to the Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 4 of 2005 is to facilitate the implementation of the tasks of the President formed by the Specialist Staff of the President, which is a non-structural institution. The Presidential Specialist Staff are supervised by the Cabinet Secretary (PP No 4/2005, State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 2005). While the specific tasks of the presidential staff are tailored to the areas and responsibilities of each staff, including those relating to media relations, media management, and agenda setting.

In the first term (2004–2009), the president installed two influential spokespersons who assisted him in communicating government policies. Andi Alfian Mallarangeng was assigned as presidential spokesperson for domestic affairs, whereas Dino Patti Djalal was appointed as presidential spokesperson for foreign affairs. In addition to being highly competent and professional in their respected fields, these two president’s spokespersons were known as Yudhoyono’s confidants as they could easily communicate with the president and access meetings. If there were issues that needed to be explained or even if there were issues that the public needed to be distracted from, Andi and Dino were able to do their jobs. It can be said that they have everything regarding knowledge, communication skills, and proximity to Yudhoyono, so they possessed full confidence.

In the second term (2009–2014), Yudhoyono installed Julian Aldrin Pasha and Teuku Faizahsyah as his new spokespersons. Anwar observed that even though Julian and Teuku also hold PhDs, and Teuku was an experienced diplomat, their personality was not as flamboyant as Andi and Dino. Moreover, these president’s specialist staff
were somewhat weaker because Julian and Teuku were not as close as Dino and Andi who were actively interacting with Yudhoyono before he became a president. No wonder that political communication in the first term of Yudhoyono was much better than the second term. (Interview with Dewi Fortuna Anwar, January 18, 2016). The replacement of the presidential spokespersons which caused the decline in the quality of political communication that came out of the palace shows that public relations competence and interpersonal competence are different but interrelated. This is in line with the basic assumption of the public relations theory that competence is contextual (Hazleton, 2006).

Other specialist staff also backed up the president as the spokesperson. Denny Indrayana and Firmanzah, for example, quite often spoke to journalists on matters pertaining to the government laws and economy and financial affairs to update the media according to newly issued policy decisions. On several occasions, Firmanzah also needed to brief the press during the ASEAN Summit. Of course, there was a presidential press conference, but updating the media in between is also part of the task of the president’s specialist staff because there were so many issues and agendas at the event (Interview with Firmanzah, January 11, 2016).

To facilitate their work, all specialist staff members were entitled to recruit at least two main assistants, and each assistant had several helpers. As a specialist staff member who helped the president on the economy and financial affairs, Firmanzah’s main job was to advise the president on economic matters, both nationally and globally. He had duties to communicate and explain economic policies to the press and public and to also represent the president in discussion forums on TV, radio, and
in seminars. He also needed to provide input for the president’s talking points, at ministerial meetings with some business actors, NGOs, and public figures and other events. Moreover, Firmanzah also helped presidential speeches related to economic matters, and had to check and recheck presidential decrees and regulations related to economics and development. Being a confidant who helps the president, the specialist staff members were aware that they were supposed to complete assignments from the President in a-24-hour cycle.

Another presidential specialist staff, Dino Patti Djalal stated that his duties as the president’s spokesperson for foreign affairs varied from providing international advice for the president, speech writing, diplomatic communication, policy advice/policy papers, talking points, and note taking. He also provided a bridge between the president and the news media. In terms of news management tasks, Djalal noted that he circulated press releases and conducted press briefings and offered backgrounds to the reporters, though not on a regular basis (Interview with Dino Patti Djalal, January 21, 2016). Two senior journalists at the palace, Heyder Affan and Mr. X, revealed that they rarely received press releases or background information from presidential spokespersons or other public relations officials (Interview with Heyder Affan, December 16, 2016; Interview with Mr. X, December 29, 2015). Based on personal experience as a journalist at the palace, I also observed that from the Habibie to Megawati administration, media relations officers seldom provided press releases and press briefings to journalists. Dharmawan Ronodipuro, former head of the Press and Media Bureau in Wahid’s administration, admitted that there is no specialist staff responsible for press releases, and releases were not made
on a regular basis because they were already busy with other tasks in dealing with the media (Dhani, 2004).

Military officers and public relations professionals. When Djalal was asked whether the government employed political public relations professionals from local or foreign firms, he stated that they did not see the urgency to use the communication professionals in carrying out their day-to-day tasks related to news management. “No, we didn’t hire foreign and local public relations consultants, because we thought we’ve got a good image already, and we didn’t know who would pay for it”. Moreover, the government perceived that the condition at that time was conducive to building and maintaining the president’s good image, and to retaining the nation’s good reputation.

We had political stability, the general election was running smoothly and orderly, and international confidence in the government in the SBY presidency was high because of many reasons. He presented himself well. So, we realised that we have to take advantage of these positive assets to rally the market, to get more investment, to get more markets, and to pursue a more active foreign policy. Presenting a good image of Indonesia is very much part of the whole strategy, internally as well as externally. (Interview with Dino Patti Djalal, January 21, 2016)

Initially, it was not clear whether Djalal and other presidential specialist staff did not know or did not want to disclose information about the use of public relations professionals in helping the president to manage his communication. Other participants were also not sure about this. However, M. Alwi Dahlan in his capacity
as Minister of Information during the Soeharto era ascertained that even if there were public relations people, these professionals did not support him formally and they were not part of the President’s daily activities. As a former high-ranking state official, Dahlan believed that some military officers and public relations practitioners helped Yudhoyono, at least in the presidential election. It was known that in the military organisation, there is ‘Dispen’ (*Dinas Penerangan*, Information Service) in the army, and there is ‘Puspen’ (*Pusat Penerangan*, Centre of Information) in the headquarters of ABRI/TNI (Indonesian Military), and this Puspen might have offered Yudhoyono advice although their educational backgrounds and ranks were typically far below that of the president.

Yudhoyono used a different campaign initially, which suggests some public relations practitioners may have assisted the president, but it was unclear who they were or how deeply they were involved. Also, it was doubted any deep involvement of public relations professionals because Yudhoyono is a military man so he was more confident with military people. “I think even if there was aid from public relations professionals, it’s just on a piece-by-piece basis. I don’t see anyone who is always advising him for this and that” (Interview with M. Alwi Dahlan, January 20, 2016). Likewise, Ikrar Nusa Bakti, a political expert of LIPI, understood that Yudhoyono employed military officers for his strategic communication. The military in the Yudhoyono presidency was still strong. A campaign organised by the military remains a powerful force, for example, in a campaign to discredit Megawati or other political opponents (Interview with Ikrar Nusa Bakti, December 28, 2015).
In addition to assigning a retired army official Lieutenant General Sudi Silalahi, as State Secretary, Yudhoyono also appointed three former Major Generals and one Brigadier General to become Specialist Staff of the President, namely Sardan Marbun, Irvan Edison, Djali Yusuf, and Kurdi Mustofa. Brigadier General Kurdi Mustofa was appointed as the President’s personal secretary and also the President’s Specialist Staff for Social Communication. Sardan Marbun, who had served in the Army Intelligence Agency, was installed as the President's Specialist Staff for Law and Corruption Eradication. Irvan Edison, former Governor of the Military Academy, served as Specialist Staff of the President of the Defence Sector, and Djali Yusuf occupied the position of Specialist Staff President of Political Communication (Obsession News.com, 2014). One participant revealed that active army officers were also involved in the president’s communication team, both in assisting the retired generals who were appointed as specialist staff, as well as working in a solid and professional team but were not exposed or detected by the media. Similarly, Soeharto placed his loyalists and highprofile civilians in his Cabinet and put his ‘inner circle’, predominantly generals and colonels, in other important positions both at the central government and in the regions (see, for example, Choi, 2006; Thompson, 2015).

Although military officers were predominantly involved in assisting Yudhoyono’s communication during his presidency, one informant, who chose to remain anonymous, revealed that Yudhoyono also hired some public relations consultants to help the president’s communication strategy. The informant said that the professionals were working silently on some occasions at the president’s office. They were undetected by news media and they were not part of the official structure
of the presidential organisation. In an off-the-record interview, the informant disclosed that the public relations people built communication and information systems inside the president’s office. On the record, the informant just said that the team was hired by Yudhoyono to help and advise the president on his communication strategy in the last two years of his second tenure. According to the informant, Yudhoyono ultimately needed public relations professionals since political communication in the country was extremely bad and the news media had severely attacked the president. In addition, the public frequently criticised Yudhoyono’s family, especially his wife for her social media posts on Instagram. The informant suggested that the public relations team’s work and strategies were supported by some military officers and was only known by Yudhoyono and his inner circle.

Depkominfo as government public relations. In addition to restructuring presidential organisation, another government institution, Depkominfo (Department of Communication and Informatics), has also undergone internal structural reforms. Previously known as Deppen or Department of Information, this institution was designed and run its role as government public relations during the Yudhoyono administration. Therefore, even though there is a public relations division that was formally established by the president and serves to assist the presidential communication, the government also maintains Depkominfo, a government institution that has been established during the Megawati tenure. However, the

33 Depkominfo still uses the term ‘government public relations’ and claims to be an institution tasked with organising government affairs in the field of communication and information technology to assist the President in organising state government. See, https://kominfo.go.id/
authority and role of Depkominfo as the government public relations, is not as strong
as compared to the Deppen during the Sukarno and Soeharto eras. One of the reasons
is that the government has issued a very liberal Press Law No. 40/1999 where no
article in the law allows the government to intervene in mass media affairs or restrict
press freedom.

During the Yudhoyono administration, the government formed a new
directorate in the board of directors of Depkominfo which had never existed before,
namely public communication and information. The focus of this new sector is to
develop communication as an educational facility in the public sphere. Unfortunately,
since the era of Megawati to Yudhoyono, the government paid little attention to this
area. In an interview with Freddy Tulung, former Director General of Public
Communication and Information (Dirjen IKP), it was revealed that the government
did not build a communication system, which it probably still needed to replace the
old system from the Soeharto era. During the New Order era, government
communication was very dominant. But in 2000, Departemen Penerangan, Deppen (the
Department of Information) was dissolved by President Wahid. Aside from being
harnessed as a government propaganda tool and suppressing freedom of the press,
Deppen also runs the broadest public communication function in remote areas. They
used TVRI (Televisi Republik Indonesia) and RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) to
broadcast their information, including political messages. But after being dissolved,
the government’s role in public communication in the reform era was also abolished.
In the name of revolution and reform, all government communication systems were
dissolved, including the roles of TVRI and RRI. Then, people no longer get educational information.

It is understandable that civil society and the news media are traumatised by what was done by Deppen in the past. But, realising that the development of information and communication technology has been advanced, and many private television and radio stations have been established in Indonesia, it is not surprising that the government was increasingly ignoring the role of Depkominfo, especially in the sector of public communication and information. This is ironic and can be considered a waste of public funds, because if the government empowers the Depkominfo in the public communication sector, this state institution may strengthen political communication and in some cases, it can help resolve the government crisis. Thus, even though all kind of information that came from above was always considered similar to the pattern of New Order, Tulung felt that there is a good value too with the top-down communication pattern.

In the democratisation era, this pattern was abolished. Therefore, even the President's spokesperson was going to lose, because the minister’s statement often didn’t match with the policy in its sector. It can be seen during SBY era, for example, in the lizard vs. crocodile case, the Gayus case, and other cases… While the news media attacked the president, some ministers gave their assessments differently. So, when a particular case appeared, all news media covered the issue and they were integrated. At the same time, the government did not make response appropriately. They even tended to escape, and nobody dared to speak. Therefore, the government public relations then was definitely not effective. (Interview with Freddy Tulung, January 12, 2016)
Another participant Ahmed Kurnia shares similar opinion as he observed that government communication has not yet been systematically coordinated and organised in Indonesia. In his position as a government public relations practitioner, Kurnia criticises that sometimes the information submitted by Minister A is different from Minister B because there is no coordination. Thus, it creates a loophole for political opponents or observers to criticise government policies. Another obstacle faced by Depkominfo which acts as government public relations is that they did not get required data and information from various ministries and state agencies, because these ministries assumed that they had no obligation to submit data and information to Depkominfo. Meanwhile, the rule said that Dirjen IKP of Depkominfo has a duty to conduct public communication. This indicates that the obligation of the Dirjen IKP is cross-sectoral, covering the broader task of the presidential spokespersons in disseminating information about public policy, but the existing regulations do not support the tasks they must carry. Kurnia maintains,

For instance, if there was a plan to raise oil prices, we have to participate in meetings, and we must help to disseminate the policy to the public. But when we asked for material from related parties, such as the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Pertamina (state-run oil company), and so on, they would not provide the data and information. And you know, we have an obligation to convey that information to the public, make a press release, framing the issue, and disseminate the information to the public. This imbalance position is clearly problematic. (Interview with Ahmed Kurnia, January 5, 2016)
In subsequent developments, there is a discourse planned by the government to separate the 'Director General of IKP' from 'Depkominfo' to enable the directorate to carry out government public relations duties and become an independent institution, which is directly subordinated to the State Secretary or President. But due to bureaucratic problems and presidential succession, the discourse was discontinued. Moreover, the above barriers all happened in the Yudhoyono era. The president installed the spokesperson team for himself, such as Dino Patti Djalal for foreign affairs, Firmanzah for economic affairs, and Andi Mallarangeng for domestic issues. “But they were merely the president’s spokespersons, not the government spokesperson that could provide information to the entire community that also need a variety of information from the government” (Interview with Ahmed Kurnia, January 5, 2016). All the above facts indicate that the presidential communication run by Yudhoyono seems to be aimed at his own interests, i.e. to increase or maintain his popularity and good image. By neglecting to strengthen public communication that has used taxpayers’ funds, it can be said that Yudhoyono's government has given little concern for the public interest.

The Core Practice of Political Public Relations

**News management.** Equally known as media management, news management is one of the core domains in political public relations (Kiousis & Strömbäck, 2014; McNair, 2011; Tomić & Grbavac, 2016). Kiousis and Strömbäck (2014) noted that media relations and agenda building perhaps the most well-known domain concerning its influence in news management. Some activities in news management are not only disseminating press releases and conducting news conference, but also
providing informal communication such as during a background briefing. In contrast, as part of news management, “the construct of agenda-building focuses on the reciprocal influence of policymakers, news media, and public opinion in the process of salience formation and transfer” (Kiousis and Strömbäck, 2014, p. 254). While in McNair (2011) words, he stated that “media management comprises activities designed to maintain a positive politician–media relationship, acknowledging the needs which each has of the other, while exploiting the institutional characteristics of both sets of actor for maximum advantage” (p. 123).

In the past, authoritarian regimes may have no significant difficulties in news management as they have tamed journalists, which was part of the strict suppression of press freedom. The Minister of Information and State Secretary strongly controlled all the mass media. Journalists who want to gain access to the presidential palace, for example, need a long time as they have to go through strict screening by the State Secretariat. Thus, during the Soeharto era, the government allowed little space to develop autonomous civil society-based organisations, suppressed opposition political parties and the press, and engineered general elections (Vedi Hadiz, 2012). In addition, these presidential palace journalists in the Soeharto era obtained special privileges from the palace (Dhani, 2004). No wonder if Soeharto’s authoritarian regime enjoyed positive news coverage.

It can be understood that political public relations which are more transparent and accountable was not really needed in such a political and authoritarian atmosphere. While Presidents Habibie, Wahid and Megawati struggled to manage the media and build a communication system, Yudhoyono showed significant progress
in media management soon after he took office in 2004. Compared to casual and relaxed arrangements when President Wahid spoke with journalists on various occasions, or the silence of President Megawati as she only rarely gave statements to reporters, the media management of Yudhoyono’s administration looked much more planned, organised, and professional (Interview with Heider Affan, December 16, 2015; Interviews with Retno Indarti, January 28, 2016; Interviews with Mr. X, December 29, 2015).

The tasks of news management have a wide scope ranging from collecting and filtering information, conducting press conferences and disseminating news material to journalists, and discussing the government agenda and its communication strategy with the president. Obviously, the goal is not only to get positive coverage in the news media and to shed light on government achievements, but also to manage issues and crises reported in the news media. Yudhoyono constantly made some adjustments in government organisations by appointing specialist staff and working in the presidential communication office. These staff members were entrusted to assist the president in news management tasks, including those relating to media relations, media management, and agenda setting. The president also rationalised the organisation’s structure by changing the role and function of public relations officers, as well as setting up channels for transmitting information internally and coordinating activity and dealing with feedback.

In conducting a press conference, it was clear that media relations official in the presidential palace treated journalists not too strictly but in an orderly manner with minor ethical rules, such as putting local journalists ahead of foreign journalists to ask
questions. The president took advantage of press conferences to include the government or his own agenda. The strategies used limited the opportunity of journalists to ask questions of the president. In addition, Yudhoyono also held regular meetings with chief editors of the news media to gather information on public issues as well as to explain his policies just for the editors’ information, which is usually not for public consumption. Based on informants’ retrospectives (Affan, Kusaeni, Mr. X, Indarti), it can be concluded that the news management run by Yudhoyono’s administration was much more disciplined, varied, sophisticated and more professional than the previous three presidents.

A senior BBC journalist Heyder Affan observed that although media relations officials always emphasised neatness, punctuality, and discipline when holding a press conference, the journalists still felt a casual atmosphere. He said “I maintained a good relationship with the president’s staff and spokespersons. For example, if I was not able to attend a press conference I could call and ask for information from the spokesperson easily”. However, on many occasions, Yudhoyono tried to present the government’s agenda through his statements and then he left without a question and answer session. On other occasions, Yudhoyono only gave journalists the opportunity to ask only three or four questions (Interviews with Heyder Affan, Retno Indarti, and Mr. X). A senior journalist from Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK), Retno Indarti, in her interview in 2016, confirmed there were no specific rules when the president’s staff conducted a press conference. The journalists were free to ask anything, with the etiquette being to allow the local journalists to ask a question first. Indarti said the president’s staff usually created a special event on certain issues but the real intention
is just for image building. For instance, when reporters were given a chance for a ‘door stop’ interview with the president, the setting was arranged by the president’s staff. According to Indarti, “Sometimes, we feel the event is being engineered … we felt there was an issue that was actually not important at all, for example, there were issues of disabled children or abandoned people somewhere … Why should the president comment on such things?”

In the first years of Yudhoyono’s first term, presidential media relations were managed to ‘control’ the journalists in the palace without certain rules and punitive actions. But as the nation’s problems escalated and President Yudhoyono continued to display politik pencitraan, the reporters at the palace began to frequently pose critical questions. The questions irritated the president and his staff. For example, Affan and another senior journalist from mainstream media, Mr. X, who wants to remain anonymous, recalled that in a joint press conference attended by Presidents Yudhoyono and Xanana Gusmao of Timor-Leste, a journalist asked whether Xanana regretted separating his country from Indonesia because his people’s lives were more difficult. This question made Yudhoyono angry and whispered to his counterpart that he did not need to respond to the question. After the conference, presidential staff told the journalist that his question was not polite, out of context, and it misunderstood the agenda of the Indonesian government. The incident then continued in Jakarta with a call from State Secretary Sudi Silalahi to the journalist’s editor. The journalist’s access to the president’s palace was not revoked, but he was later moved to the vice president’s palace. The president’s staff subsequently imposed new rules in that every journalist must first write their question and give it to a spokesperson or other staff to
be conveyed to the president. The ‘Xanana incident’ shows that during the Yudhoyono administration, the government tried to filter negative content published in the media by calling their editor, a practice that in the Soeharto era was known as *budaya telepon* (‘telephone culture’).

Akhmad Kusaeni, in his capacity as senior journalist, expressed concern regarding media management in the post-Soeharto era. In his opinion, political communication from the Palace and government institutions needed to be revitalised and revised because the news management and information system in the president’s and government offices at that time was not good enough. Kusaeni noted that, it does not have to be similar to Deppen in the Soeharto era which tightly controlled information in the news media. Information Minister Harmoko harnessed Deppen for Golkar’s interest and government propaganda. Kusaeni argued: “Indeed, it can be considered undemocratic. We are a democratic country now...But, there must be a communication system, and the government should have a spokesperson at the centre, the regional, and even at the district and sub-district level” (Interview with Akhmad Kusaeni, January 18, 2016).

The journalists’ opinion stated above demonstrates that even though it was pretty good but still far from perfect, governments in the post-Soeharto era were trying hard to dispel the impression of authoritarian practices committed by the previous regime. One of the indicators is that the government was no longer intervene

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34 *Budaya telepon* (‘telephone culture’) was a practice that occurred in the relationship between the press and government during the Soeharto era, where the government imposed restrictions on media content not through written rules but a phone call to the media editor that was usually in the form of a *himbauan* [appeal] (Hill, 2007a, p. 45).
in or punish the journalists and their media. During the Yudhoyono presidency, the media frequently criticised the government and they were allowed to criticise the president. “The challenge is how to respond to those critics without arresting the journalists. It should be managed and confrontations should be avoided” (Interview with Ahmed Kurnia, January 5, 2016).

**Image management.** Managing the public image for politicians is evidently one of the most important domains in political public relations. McNair (2011) defines image management as “the personal image of the individual politician, and how it can be moulded and shaped to suit organisational goals; and on the other, the image of the political organisation” (p. 122). In line with image management, sociologist Peter M. Hall developed the term ‘political impression management’ as the art of making the candidate appear electable and competent. Theoretically, the analysis of political impression management can be initiated with an assumption that the basic element of politics is ‘talk’, and it can be manifested into political rhetoric in various means, for instance, the use of public discourse to persuade. Politicians always get public attention because they are potentially always on stage. Hence, every aspect of behaviour can be part of a public performance that must be managed and controlled to maximise support. “Many of his activities will be essentially symbolic, i.e. for the purpose of creating the desired identity in order to draw the audience into his drama” (Hall, 1972, p. 61).

There were several image management strategies used by Yudhoyono that can be identified as propaganda practices. He often tries to maintain his popularity and public image through various means during his presidency. Writing books and songs
are two examples of how Yudhoyono built images for maintaining his popularity by using a simple method. Although already busy working as president, Yudhoyono’s ability and opportunity to write a number of books and songs compiled on five pop albums raises questions and public criticism even today (see, for example, Haryanto, 2016; Wicaksono, 2017). Suffering from falling domestic popularity, Yudhoyono, on January 25, 2010, launched his third album, entitled *Ku Yakin Sampai Disana* (I’m certain I’ll make it). Yudhoyono launched this pop album and invited several pop artists to sing his songs. But the media criticised Yudhoyono, who was under the spotlight on a major problem, namely the Century Bank case, choosing to write songs rather than focusing on resolving the case that linked his name (“Indonesia President Yudhoyono”, 2010; Freebairn, 2010). Djalal stated that Yudhoyono was obsessed with his legacy and was passionate about writing books and songs. He realised there was a lot of criticism towards him in the second term, and therefore, he sought to address the criticisms through his books and songs (Interview with Dino Patti Djalal, January 21, 2016).

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35 One serious rumour emerged in the Century Bank corruption case that some bailout funds were channeled into the account of Yudhoyono’s election campaign team. The news media harshly criticised the government as indications of the involvement of Yudhoyono, Sri Mulyani, and Boediono were seen in this case, and it was used as ammunition by Yudhoyono’s opponents and other political elites to destroy Yudhoyono’s credibility in the efforts to eradicate corruption. This case emerged after Yudhoyono won the 2009 election, but it was never proven until today. For a longer discussion, see Nicole Andres’ dissertation (2016), which includes a detailed case study on this case.
A poster displayed at the launching of Yudhoyono’s third pop album. In this poster, he conveyed the message of unity to create a safe, peaceful, just and prosperous Indonesia. Yudhoyono wrote: “In my struggle to serve the country, sometimes during my leisure time, I express my feelings in the form of arts.” (Freebairn, 2010).

Yudhoyono even pursued acknowledgements and international awards, such as *honoris causa* doctorate, World’s Statesman Award, and Nobel Peace Prize (see, for example, Noah, 2006; Yudhoyono, 2014). It is hard to deny that all these efforts were carefully prepared strategies to build his public image, to attract public attention in order to maximise popular support, as well as to distract the public from other issues.

Participants generally considered that the politics of image-building is a reality in politics that is commonly exercised in democratic countries. Some participants suggested that image-building is common for all political leaders who were elected in popular elections and is appropriated as long as they do not lie and do not commit slander, and use correct facts and accurate data. Others agree such activity is legitimate. A lawmaker from Megawati’s PDIP, Jalaluddin Rakhmat, noted that all
political leaders in the world have also done what Yudhoyono did in his position as president because they have to. “Conventionally all the presidents have been utilising PR. All presidents wherever they are, or all of the candidates who want to be selected, do what is referred now as image building, including members of the parliament” (Interview with Jalaluddin Rakhmat, January 26, 2016). While Dewi Fortuna Anwar stated that every politician who faces direct election was certainly very concerned about their image. Anwar states that usually politicians will think many times when they will make a decision regarding any policy that will affect the public directly, and therefore, we should not think cynically about the politics of image building (Interview with Dewi Fortuna Anwar, January 18, 2016).

However, there are some concerns that Yudhoyono had a tendency to overuse image-building as a political public relations strategy in order to increase his own popularity (Mulholland, 2016; “Yudhoyono a chronic,” 2010). Rakhmat also noted that Yudhoyono built his image in an exaggerated way, especially at the end of his term. Yudhoyono frequently complained or moaned (curhat) to the media and to the public. Jalaluddin suggested if the state is in crisis, Yudhoyono was not supposed to complain but to give instructions to overcome the crisis. Rakhmat questioned, “why should the President complain about his salary and various other curhat? Supposedly, he should have made a bold statement, not a complaint”. He recalled that in the beginning, Yudhoyono was seen as less assertive and too slow in making decisions. But, for Rakhmat, Yudhoyono successfully used public relations techniques in building his public image. He maintains,
The first target of SBY’s PR was that they should build an image for SBY as a strong, decisive and brave leader. And we can see that he started to manage to build such an image as a strong man, so much that he remained the ideal leader in Partai Demokrat. Subsequently, the party couldn’t find a successor for him in the 2014 presidential election. Because they thought, there was no person as strong and as brave as SBY within Partai Demokrat. And he also won twice in presidential elections. I think that’s because of his PR as well, especially in the second election. And in the second term election, he wanted to show that he is a leader who is decisive and quickly makes decisions. (Interview with Jalaluddin Rakhmat, January 26, 2016)

Despite manipulative techniques and thus negative connotations embedded in political public relations, Yudhoyono’s spokesperson for foreign affairs (2004–2009), Dino Patti Djalal asserted that image building is crucial, particularly for the government and president. Moreover, in the context of the country’s reputation, presenting a good image of Indonesia is key in a government or in the country’s international affairs as it can increase the bargaining position as well as gain benefits for home affairs. Based on his experience as a diplomat, Djalal recalled the importance of image when Indonesia continued to face difficulties in democracy issues, especially regarding human rights in East Timor, Aceh, and Papua. Ironically, there were potentially positive images, but their image was damaged because of those human rights issues, and the government did not know how to handle it.

Once our image was damaged, our ability to manoeuvre became limited. But, if you have a positive image you can punch above your weight. You can do more than your capacity. But if you don’t have it then you will suffer. No matter how good you are, no matter how good your policy, if you have a bad or
negative image, it can hurt you. (Interview with Dino Patti Djalal, January 21, 2016)

In regards to the above examples, Djalal understood that the Soeharto government had spent a lot of taxpayers' funds to hire some of the best public relations firms in the world, as I discussed in Chapter 3. The Yudhoyono administration, he said, could not afford to hire foreign public relations agencies to help create a good image internationally. “We just didn’t know who would pay for it. And we didn’t feel the need for it because we thought we already had a good image”. With such a good image, they can start a very good government, in the sense of having political stability, elections run smoothly and regularly, and they can gain the trust of the international public. Djalal appreciated Yudhoyono’s ability to present himself well so that it can be used as a positive asset to drive the market, gain more investment, and pursue a more active role in international affairs.

The Perspective on Political Public Relations

Compared to public relations, the study of political public relations is a new field (Gonçalves, 2014). The concept of political public relations also emerges only recently in Indonesia. From the interviews conducted for this research, participants suggest that not many Indonesian people are familiar with the term (Assegaff, Dahlan, Septarina, Wasesa). A senior public relations practitioner, for example, asserted that most Indonesians, including politicians in the parliament, do not really understand political public relations (Interview with Syafiq B. Assegaff, January 21, 2016). Other participants are familiar and explicitly used the terms ‘government public relations’
and ‘propaganda’ (Assegaff, Dahlan, Firmanzah, Kusaeni, Gani, Tulung, Wasesa). Thus, it was not easy to formulate a perspective on political public relations in the Indonesian context. This section explores interview participants’ perceptions about the concept of political public relations based on what they acknowledge or consider on the domain of political public relations.

One of the government officials who sheds light on the link between government public relations, political communication, and public communication was helpful as a starting point. In his capacity as Director General of Public Communication of Depkominfo, Freddy Tulung clarified that government public relations was practiced in two domains, namely in the field of public communication and political communication. The term ‘public communication’ was first used in the government organisation during the second tenure of Yudhoyono. The focus of public communication in the government public relations is to serve and develop communication with the community and as an educational facility in the public sphere. In contrast, political communication as communication containing political messages, such as power talk, authority talk, and influence. While the ultimate goal of political communication is to attain political support from people or stakeholders. The aim of presidential public relations is to empower the legitimacy of the president, whereas public communication is more concerned with facilitating public information that is associated with policies, programs, and government activities, where the goal is not for legitimacy, but for public participation. This is different from government communication in the Soeharto era that was very dominant, where public communication and political communication were only one direction and always
came from above which gave very little chance for public participation, and this was considered as propaganda, a communication pattern of the authoritarian regimes.

Now, in the democratic era, every development program requires public participation. Thus, the participation is needed, and we do so through public communication. So, if political communication has a legitimacy orientation, the communication will aim to increase awareness through the framework of participation. (Interview with Freddy Tulung, January 12, 2016)

The above statement implicitly stated that currently the role of the Depkominfo carries out its duties as a government public relations but only serves to disseminate information for public education. While public relations in the political sector, that is associated with efforts to gain public support and legitimacy, is now centered on the president's office. Thus, Depkominfo, a new government-formed institution in lieu of Deppen, has nothing to do with political communication and no longer plays a role in controlling the media and disseminating political and ideological propaganda as did by the Deppen in the past.

**From old practices to new strategies.** Given that the form of political propaganda during the Sukarno and Soeharto authoritarian regimes is now considered irrelevant and undemocratic so that presidents in the Reformation era tried to change this old propaganda practice into political public relations, a new term in the field of government communication. But in reality, some participants (Assegaff, Dahlan, Kusaeni, Gani, Rachmat) consider that in political communication, political elites and political consultants frequently demonstrate new strategies and forms of
communication that can be regarded as propaganda or largely propagandistic. They perceived that such communication techniques are also practiced by Yudhoyono and his administration. To confirm this, I will analyse the participants’ views and emphasise it with propaganda theory and political public relations in order to find out whether the forms and characteristics of political public relations under Yudhoyono presidency are different from those of Sukarno and Suharto regimes. Or perhaps, in contrast, we can see that Yudhoyono and his officers as well as political consultant also used old propaganda practices but applied them with new techniques and strategies.

*Strategies in popular survey and political consultancy.* Some public relations practitioners (Wasesa, Assegaff, Septarina, Satiotomo, Soetardjo) consider that political consultants engage in political public relations, where their practices are mostly seen during the campaign season or before general elections are held. Silih Agung Wasesa, for example, observes that political consultants and pollsters are a new trend in political public relations in Indonesia that emerged in the early 2000s. These professionals conducted consultations and public opinion surveys and established or joined in political marketing consulting firms, rather than public relations agencies. The difference is that professionals who identified themselves as political marketing consultants assume that public relations and political consultants are part of marketing, while public relations people believe that political marketing is a public relations tool, but their activities are based on research. Wasesa maintains,

Nevertheless, political pollsters and marketing or political consultants are part of, and conduct, political public relations practice. Whatever they do,
marketing or PR, basically their main job is research. The professionals who established pollster firms in Indonesia, such as Denny JA, Saiful Mujani, Eep Saifullah, claimed that they are political consultants, not PR practitioners. (Interview with Silih Agung Wasesa, January 5, 2016)

Wida Septarina echoed the above perspective and noted that political consultants usually exploit political polling, which they can use as a tool to build the desired image of their clients. Septarina used the term ‘public relations’ interchangeability with ‘political consultant’ and spin doctors when she observed that the polling results are used as a basis to say that someone has obtained public support, and that is a strategy to influence public opinion.

The politicians who wish to run for election usually use public opinion surveys as a tool to build their desired image. The polls are used as a basis to say that someone has public support, and that is a strategy to sway the opinion and attitude of the larger public. But in fact, it may not be that way, especially in the ‘made up’ surveys. I think the works of Denny J.A. of LSI and Choel Mallarangeng of Fox Indonesia are essentially PR, but they don’t want to admit they are PR practitioners. Many things can be included as public relations, such as spin-doctors and political consultants. (Interview with Wida Septarina, January 27, 2016)

Correspondingly, Syafiq Assegaff argued that if the client pays some money for a political polling survey and then publicised the result aimed to influence public opinion, then it becomes a political public relations strategy. The common strategy is that the client should be mentioned as a good person by the third party, not by himself.
You cannot say good things by yourself, but you can borrow people’s mouths to speak for you, and borrowing another person’s mouth is PR. This ‘third-party’ technique is the essence of public relations. When the public or the stakeholders say good things about us that means we’ve done effective PR. And that’s the ultimate goal of PR practitioners. (Interview with Syafiq B. Assegaff, January 21, 2016)

All participants who expressed their opinions above worked as professionals in the corporate public relations but recently they also served clients as public relations consultants in the political sector. Muhammad Qodari, who claimed his self as political consultant/adviser and pollster, confirmed that polling was originally used only as a method of scientific research, but is now used as a tool to gain political power. This development was not intended, planned or even anticipated by pollsters, but instead “resulted from the changing electoral landscape” (Qodari, 2010, p. 125). Pollsters and most political actors believe that publicising polling results can attract voters and, therefore, it can be used to win elections. “Some parties and candidates use polling not only to measure public support but also to persuade the public and gain elite backing” (Qodari 2010, p. 128). Polling surveys are therefore easily commercialised and harnessed as persuasive tools because they can be used to influence public support for a particular candidate.

The practice of manipulation through surveys and analysis of inappropriate polls provided by political consultants at the request of their clients is also acknowledged by other interview participants and a senior of political consultant. They said some non-credible survey institutions present data that is less accurate and
misleading or in accordance with the wishes of their clients, and this can damage the reputation of polling makers in general (Alfaraby; Qodari, 2010).

In regard of this issue, M. Alwi Dahlan assesses that professionals who publicise public opinion surveys and other efforts that aimed to influence public opinion and for image building have nothing to do with public relations. In Indonesia, there are many misunderstandings and misuses of the term public relations and this phenomenon emerged after the arrival of the political scholars’ group from the US in 2000s who made public opinion research a trend in Indonesia. The strategy and tactics of presidential political communication are part of public relations, but the success of public relations is correspondent with what image they want to find, without misleading the public. Dahlan maintains,

The communication should be two-way, but it has been manipulated to their interest. The real public relations, if equated with information, means that they should provide complete information so that people can make a smart decision for their respective interests. That is PR. But then many acts of communication have been manipulated. When there is a plane crash, or there is something wrong, the PR function exists then. But if nothing happens and they keep claiming its greatness, that’s not PR. (Interview with M. Alwi Dahlan, January 20, 2016)

Dahlan recalls that during the Soeharto era, the government used surveys as a basis for making policies, by establishing public preferences. But nowadays, it may be difficult to have a neutral survey result, since the political survey is already commercialised. The participant asserted that surveys can be manipulated, depending
on who paid for them and used as a tool for pencitraan, instead of providing factual information. Thus, pollsters used selectively the results likely to influence people. All the leaders have to know the opinion of the people, but it does not have to be polling for the polling is not necessarily true, depending on the methodology they used (Interview with M. Alwi Dahlan, January 20, 2016).

Prita Kemal Gani in her capacity as Chairperson of Perhumas (2011–2014) asserted that political consultants and pollsters who based their consultancy service on public opinion surveys are clearly using new public relations techniques. She perceived that these professionals are neither public relations professionals nor public relations firms because they are mainly creating propaganda. Political consultants and pollsters typically framed a candidate in a particular image and used politik pencitraan as a strategy to rapidly build their client’s good image. Gani also disagreed with the way politicians used politik pencitraan because political consultants were also framing a negative image of other candidates. “Public relations does not acknowledge this ‘immediate work’ because public relations required longstanding effort to build and maintain the client’s reputation.” She maintains,

Public relations practitioners certainly should not do this, because they could be liable for defamation, libel, or may spark a scandal. That’s not PR. But for them, it’s legitimate due to the political game. In my opinion, this is not PR service but political propaganda. They used PR techniques to win the people’s heart, but want immediate results for their effort (Interview with Prita Kemal Gani, December 28, 2015).
Participants’ perspectives, such as Prita Kemal Gani and M. Alwi Dahlan described above can be attributed to their role as former Chairperson of Perhumas and their desire to uphold a particular conceptualisation of public relations with its ethical elements, and that means distancing it from black propaganda and political spin. On the other hand, some participants perceive that popular surveys and other practices of political consultants are (part of) public relations work but it has propaganda characteristics and the communication strategy was largely propagandistic.

Yudhoyono also used polling surveys both during the campaign seasons and in his daily activities as president. Several months before the 2004 presidential election, polling agencies regularly published survey results about the popularity of presidential candidates in the mass media. This strategy, which aims at the bandwagon effect, has proven its effectiveness and can be considered as one of the factors that can increase public support for Yudhoyono. In one section of his memoirs (Yudhoyono, 2014, pp. 405–409), Yudhoyono acknowledged that there might be made-up surveys ordered by some clients (survey pesanan), which was inaccurate, and intended to deceive political opponents and manipulate (voters). He maintains,

If I have to convey my opinion about the political survey that is now mushrooming in our country, including political consultancy services, I choose not to rashly answer it ... Frankly, I myself believe in the survey results. This is the attitude that I have adopted and I have had since 2004, shortly before I took part in the 2004 presidential election ... Since I participate in the 2004 elections, I have always referred to and studied the survey outcomes from three survey institutions that I trust (Yudhoyono, 2014, p. 406).
However, he believes there were also correct surveys that were managed by credible survey institutions. For example, when he just made a decision to increase fuel prices, the effect was immediately reflected in the decline of his popularity. Conversely, if the government policy is felt right then his popularity also increased. Yudhoyono (2014, p. 207) noted, “It can’t be engineered, but that’s the record of our people’s feelings.”

*News management under the Yudhoyono presidency.* In the previous section, I noted that news management is one of the core domains in political public relations. Moreover, it was revealed in the previous chapter that the Indonesian authoritarian regime in the past had massively used propaganda as marked by its main characteristics, including coercion, intimidation, one-way communication. One obvious form of Sukarno and Soeharto’s propaganda is that both regimes suppressed freedom of the press. The practice of media control or media management applied by Deppen, which attempts to censor or suppress information or opinions offensive to the values of the authority is a negative form or propaganda (Welch, 2013, p. 25). Jowett and O’Donnell (2012, p. 3) also contends that ‘spin’ and ‘news management’ are popular terms that imply propaganda and it refers to a coordinated strategy to minimise negative information and present in a favorable light that could be damaging to self-interest.

After the dissolution of Deppen, new government allows input/criticism from the media and public, which indicate that the model of government communication has been changed to become two-way and more egalitarian. The previous section has discussed how Yudhoyono administration implemented political public relations
inside the presidential office with the help of president’s specialist staff particularly in
the news management. Drawing in this frame, this section aims to identify
propaganda traits in the news management as one of well-known of the political
public relations domain.

Agenda-building and informal forum. In the context of news management,
Yudhoyono had many ways to establish rapport with journalists with the aim of
setting the news agenda. In addition to holding regular press conferences, the
president’s staff also held informal meetings with the palace’s journalists and news
media editors, as well as organising presidential visits to mainstream media to meet
with the media owner, editor-in-chief, and politics and economy editors. Media visits
were usually conducted by the president with high ranking officials during
presidential election campaigns. But this practice is often done by other political elites.
Aside to highlight the achievements of their government, the president also has a
desire to neutralise negative issues. Firmanzah considers this activity to be normal for
every administration. “The effort to visit and create a dialogue with the owner and
chief editor in Kompas daily, for example, wouldn’t be a problem, because Kompas also
has the rights and freedom to publish or not to publish, it’s up to them” (Interview
with Firmanzah, January 11, 2016).

On several occasions, the president's staff specifically invited all journalists
who usually covered the president’s activities in the palace to attend an informal
meeting with President Yudhoyono. In a gathering with wartawan istana (journalist’s
corps in the presidential palace), for example, the president’s staff gave an
opportunity for journalists to ask the president about anything. Yudhoyono used the event as an opportunity to clarify and reverse negative news about his family and to justify his policies, which were frequently criticised by the public or the news media. For instance, when a journalist asked about the President’s relative by marriage who was prosecuted and imprisoned in a corruption case, Yudhoyono disclosed that he would never intervene in such a corruption case (Interview with Heider Affan, December 16, 2016).

Another news management strategy undertaken by the president’s staff was to hold regular meetings known as forum pemred (chief editor forums) between President Yudhoyono and chief editors of mainstream media. The chief editors talked informally with the president in this forum as if they were good friends. One of the forum initiators, Akhmad Kusaeni described that the president received tough feedback from chief editors at the forum, and he was not angry, even in response to the most offensive question. “Our communication at the forum will not appear in the media as we respect him, and if it emerged he would no longer invite us”. When asked if the forum was also a means of setting the president’s agenda, Kusaeni acknowledges that it was the government or president’s intention to put an agenda into the media, but sometimes there were chief editors who used the forum discussion to develop it into news by citing other sources.

For example, SBY would announce that Partai Demokrat would like to find a candidate for president through a convention. This information was told while we were singing in the house of Mr Hidayat, the Minister of Industry. After that, he asked for the journalists’ feedback. Ultimately, he wanted to do it by filtering the candidates through a convention. It was still off the record, but not
long after that, the journalists developed it into a news story. (Interview with Akhmad Kusaeni, January 18, 2016)

In addition to receiving input and criticism directly from them, it was clear that the president tried to reduce media criticism by providing some contexts for his policies to the chief editors. Moreover, this forum also aimed to show a democratic strategy for Yudhoyono to receive more feedback from prominent media leaders. The activities in the forum were informal and were not always in the palace, and the President accepted all the journalists’ critical questions. But on the other hand, such a backgrounder can also be used as an effort to neutralise negative news from the mass media and at the same time an opportunity for the president to build his agenda.

It is clear that building relationships with reporters and editors is crucial in public relations programs because the journalists and news media editors can construct (and deconstruct) reality. Based on a premise that journalists and editors play an important part in shaping reality by choosing and displaying news, McCombs and Shaw (1972) argued that “the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues” (p. 177). Indeed, agenda setting is not only conducted by the media. Government, politicians, NGO activists, and academics strive to inculcate their agenda through mass media to influence public opinion. Herman and Chomsky (1988) suggest that in authoritarian countries where the government controls the media and imposes official censorship, the media serve the ends of the dominant elite. In contrast, in a democratic system, where the media are private and formal censorship is absent, it will be much more difficult to see the propaganda system at work. According to Herman and Chomsky
(1988), the media are always actively competing, but they periodically attack and expose corporate and government malfeasance, and also represent themselves as spokespersons for freedom of speech and the interests of the general public.

**Building symbiotic relationships with the media.** Throughout their political careers, Yudhoyono and Kalla were always trying to build and maintain good relationships, not only with journalists and editors but also with the owners of mass media. Before being elected as president and vice president, Yudhoyono and Kalla both had experience as political actors in Indonesia. Yudhoyono and Kalla held key positions during the Wahid presidency (1999-2001) and in the Megawati administration (2001-2004). President Wahid appointed Yudhoyono as Menteri Pertambangan dan Energi (Minister of Mines and Energy), and then after the transfer of power, President Megawati named him as *Menteri Koordinator Politik dan Keamanan* (Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security), or widely known with its abbreviation: *Menko Polkam*. Jusuf Kalla was installed as Menteri Industri dan Perdagangan (Minister of Industry and Trade) by Wahid and was later appointed as *Menteri Koordinator Kesejahteraan Rakyat* or *Menko Kesra* (Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare) by Megawati. In March 2004, both Yudhoyono and Kalla resigned from Megawati's administration when they decided to become a team to run for the 2004 presidential election.

One important element to explain the success of Yudhoyono and Kalla winning the presidential election in 2004 was due in large part to the media support and exposure of the Yudhoyono–Kalla political public relations programs, which
exceeded those of other candidates. Scholars observed that the neutrality of news media has changed to an unbalanced and somehow biased coverage of the candidates’ activities, just before and during the campaign season (Jati, 2013; Masduki, 2004). Masduki (2004), for instance, found that media and journalists have not been able to be a lasting power to control the national political process, and the media were trapped as mouthpieces for the political interests of the power elite, and ignored the media’s other function to educate voters. Masduki contends that political journalism in the 2004 elections was identical to propaganda journalism or bourgeois journalism. He concluded that journalism served the interests of politicians and economic capitalists who exploited the 2004 elections for political bargaining activities in order to maintain continuity of business or political careers (Masduki, 2004).

In his memoir, SBY: Selalu Ada Pilihan (SBY: There Is Always a Choice), Yudhoyono (2014) said that he also felt such media biases but argued that the partisanship of the media is a *hukum alam* (natural law) because the condition naturally happened without intervention. He also called this condition as *hukum pers* (press law), where the press tends not to favour the incumbent in the election. Yudhoyono added that the press alignments became clearer and real when the media owners support a candidate other than the incumbent (p. 441). Yudhoyono referred

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36 The tendency of news media to support Yudhoyono with positive news began in January–February 2004 when Yudhoyono complained to the media that President Megawati no longer trusted him or involved him in strategic decisions. Yudhoyono said he wrote to Megawati for clarification but the president never answered his letter. Because of that letter, Megawati’s husband Taufik Kiemas angrily told journalists that Yudhoyono acted as a childish (army) general because he did not directly ask the president as his direct superior (“Menko Polkam mengundurkan diri,” 2004; “Kiemas: SBY seperti,” 2004). As Yudhoyono often practiced this strategy, the media and the public eventually identified Yudhoyono’s strategy as ‘playing the victim’ to gain public sympathy (see, for example, Tashandra, 2016; Witu, 2016).

37 A few months before the end of his tenure, Yudhoyono launched an 800-page book containing his thoughts during his presidency as a series of responses to criticisms of the public and political opponents to him, including his suggestions for the next Indonesian president.
to his own experience when he nominated himself to seek re-election for the next period in the 2009 election. According to Yudhoyono, he also felt the press were strongly opposing him. He suggested if such conditions happened to a candidate he would advise the creation of advertisements diligently and creatively. He noted that several media outlets retained fair and balanced coverage during the presidential election (p. 441).

However, in Surya Paloh’s biography,38 Hisyam (2014) revealed that there was a bid to build a commitment from Yudhoyono, as presidential candidate, to Surya Paloh just before the campaign season began in 2004. This commitment was initiated and mediated by Usamah Hisyam, a journalist-turned-public relations practitioner and a professional political consultant who had worked as a political editor in one of Paloh’s media outlets.39 According to Hisyam, it began when he suggested and it was agreed by Yudhoyono to collaborate with Paloh in order to boost Yudhoyono’s image through Metro TV and Media Group (Hisyam, 2014, p.106-107). This was one of the political public relations strategies, as Hisyam said that Yudhoyono needs the mainstream media to showcase his activities and political campaigns because it will be difficult to win the election without the support of the media (p. 106). Of course, Paloh’s support for Yudhoyono was not given for free. In return, Yudhoyono offered

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38 Surya Paloh is one of few media tycoons in Indonesia. He owned MetroTV, which is the leading news TV in Indonesia (broadcasting 24 hours, 7 days a week). He also owned three daily newspapers (Media Indonesia, Lampung Post, and BorneoNews), and one online media (Media Indonesia) (Lim, 2011, p. 11).

39 Usamah Hisyam is a former journalist, member of parliament, and then become an entrepreneur and political PR consultant. In 2003, he founded Dharmapena and started a political consulting business, and became a political consultant for Yudhoyono as a candidate for president in 2004. Ahead of presidential election, Yudhoyono as Menko Polkam entrusted Hisyam to produce and deliver TV advertisements on February 2004 with the theme ‘Pemilu Aman dan Damai’ (Safe Elections and Peace) and then on March 2004, he produced Partai Demokrat advertisements with the main theme: ‘Perubahan’ (Change). Hisyam also wrote and published a biography of Yudhoyono on March 2004, entitled: ‘SBY Sang Demokrat’ (see Hisyam’s profile at https://web.archive.org/web/20170519171034/http://demo.usamahisyam.com:80/profil).
Paloh a position as Minister of Communication and Information if he won the election (Andres, 2016; Hisyam, 2014; “Mimpi besar”, 2014).

However, this never happened as Hisyam said that Paloh politely refused to become one of Yudhoyono’s men, as he preferred a position as the Chairman of Dewan Pertimbangan Presiden, Watimpres [Presidential Advisory Council] (Hisyam, 2014, p. 107). Soon after they had reached an agreement, the next secret meeting between Paloh and Yudhoyono was set up at a hotel in Jakarta. After that, they continued to discuss political public relations campaign programs in more detail at Paloh’s private island in the Jakarta waters. Following these meetings, all of Paloh’s media, including Metro TV, Media Indonesia, and Lampung Post, were intensively broadcasting Yudhoyono campaigns and activities. Almost everyday Metro TV broadcast Yudhoyono’s activities and sought to polish his image as a rising star and a reformist general (Hisyam, 2014, p. 111). Paloh and his MetroTV producers together with Yudhoyono’s political public relations team arranged several campaign activities and strategies during the campaign season, including meeting with a number of religious leaders in Aceh, along with around 2,000 Chinese ethnic business people, and mobilising around 12,000 people at Istora Senayan indoor stadium to participate in Yudhoyono’s campaign (Hisyam, 2014, p. 111). All of the events were broadcast live on Metro TV. Paloh also managed to convince and embrace another media conglomerate, Dahlan Iskan, to jump onto the SBY–JK bandwagon (Hisyam, 2014, p. 112).

40 Dahlan Iskan is a media tycoon and the boss of Jawa Pos Group. He owns 12 local TVs (such as JTV, BatamTV, and RiauTV), 151 daily newspapers (including Jawa Pos, Indo Pos, and Rakyat Merdeka), magazines, tabloids, and a radio (Lim, 2011, p. 11).
Yudhoyono recruited another media mogul, Aburizal Bakrie, who became *Menko Perekonomian* (Coordinating Minister for the Economy) in the first tenure of Yudhoyono’s presidency. In early December 2005, Yudhoyono reshuffled his cabinet but retained Bakrie to a new position as *Menko Kesra* until the end of his first term in October 2009. Bakrie is one of a few Indonesian media tycoons who owns several news media stations and outlets, including two national television networks ANTV and TVOne. There is a strong indication that Bakrie was one of the largest contributors to funding SBY–JK campaign in the 2004 presidential election (Dick and Mulholland, 2016; Interview with “Aburizal Bakrie somasi,” 2008; Interview with Mr. X, 2016).

The objectivity of news media in Indonesia looks fragile, especially in the run-up to general elections. It becomes even more obvious when media owners begin to have self-interests or ambitions to gain the position of party chairman or even president. Regarding presidential elections in 2004 and 2009, both Paloh and Bakrie openly expressed their preference in news coverage. Just as Paloh did for Yudhoyono as discussed above, Bakrie also justified the partisan coverage of news media in elections. In an interview with Ross Tapsell, Bakrie said that the subjectivity of the media in favour of certain candidates in general elections is common, as is the case in the US. It also happened in the context of the election of Partai Golkar chairman in 2009. “It’s like how Fox supports the Republicans. CNN supports the Democrats. I’m competing with Surya as Chairman. TVOne is backing me up of course, and Metro is backing him up, just like CNN and Fox” (Bakrie, as cited in Tapsell, 2017, p. 62).

Another media magnate Hary Tanoesoedibjo, who owned various media outlets/networks, including three national television stations and radio networks,
was also trying to approach Yudhoyono. Tanoesoedibjo utilised his Trijaya Radio Network that he had just acquired at that time to ‘support’ the Yudhoyono presidency by broadcasting talk shows with Yudhoyono once a week live at the presidential palace (Manangka, 2013). The radio program that was facilitated by the president’s media relations immediately sparked protests from RRI, the Indonesian government-owned public radio. Other media, also questioned the President’s policy as it was considered unethical to give special treatment to Hary Tanoesoedibjo (Manangka, 2013).

With his popular vote and proximity to the media, Yudhoyono often expressed his optimistic views, filled the public with hopes, and became the ‘media darling’ during the first months of his presidency (“Eros Djarot,” 2013). However, the ‘honeymoon’ period of Yudhoyono and mass media did not last long. In just a few months of his administration, some media outlets started to criticise him and people began to show their impatience, hoping that the president would fulfil his ‘change’ programs that he promised during the presidential campaign.

Towards the first 100-day mark of his presidency, a number of media, politicians, and civil society members assessed the president’s performance. A public opinion poll made by Lingkaran Survey Indonesia, for example, said that Yudhoyono’s popularity declined because in the first 100 days he did not bring significant changes (“LSI: 100 Hari,” 2004). A news magazine critically wrote that Yudhoyono was too busy creating a good image and thus he was afraid to take

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41 Hary Tanoesoedibjo owned three national televisions (RCTI, Global TV, and MNCTV), Indovision, Sky Vision, Sun TV network (13 local stations), four radios (Trijaya FM, Radio Dangdut, ARH, and Global radio), a newspaper (Koran Sindo), magazines, tabloids, and online media (okezone) (Lim, 2011, p. 11).
unpopular measures (Pratisto, Febriana, & Widodo, 2007). While Soesastro and Atje (2005), researchers from CSIS, expressed their disappointment as Yudhoyono did not appoint a more strongly reformist group of ministers in his cabinet, particularly in regard to the economy.

Yudhoyono felt unhappy with these critics and assessments. In an occasion at the presidential palace, Yudhoyono responded to the criticisms and said to the audience in English: “I don’t care about my popularity” (“Presiden SBY,” 2005; Syahrul, 2005). Yudhoyono responded to the critics whose focus was questioning the government’s inability to create jobs. The president argued that any country’s president and government would not be able to create jobs in just 100 days. Yudhoyono said that it was impossible that one could reduce the unemployment rate from 10 million to 5 million people suddenly (Syahrul, 2005).

The above description shows that Yudhoyono managed to develop symbiotic relationships with some media conglomerates before he began his presidential campaign. This section highlights a clear link between the proximity of Yudhoyono to the media owners and his victory in presidential elections as he gained much more positive exposure from mainstream media than his rivals. However, all the above news management practices clearly indicate that Yudhoyono and his government officials actually practised propaganda in a subtle and smoothly executed strategy, in such a way that the public might see it as something that was natural and did not contain an element of coercion. For example, instead of suppressing press freedom and punishing journalists who criticise the government, in order to obtain positive news, as what the Sukarno and Soeharto regimes did, Yudhoyono could gain
favorable news by establishing a symbiotic relationship with mainstream media owners who happened to be political elites or political party leaders. At the level of chief editor and journalist at the palace, Yudhoyono occasionally held informal meetings, which aside from being a backgrounder, the events were also used for agenda setting.

*Image management under the Yudhoyono presidency.* As discussed in the previous section, Yudhoyono used several image management strategies during his presidency. In this sub-section I discuss Yudhoyono’s tactics and strategies as part of image management in order to maintain his popularity and public image. Through his various methods and techniques, propaganda characteristics are clearly identified in his forms of communication, ranging from the simplest methods such as writing books and songs, pursued acknowledgment and international awards, highlighting its popularity through popular surveys, to playing political dramas.

*Political imagery, playing the victim, and spreading charm around.* Most people in Indonesia, including political elites, may not be familiar with political public relations as a concept and strategy in political communication, but they would recognise pencitraan. The term ‘pencitraan’ in Indonesian language is derived from citra (image). *Pencitraan* literally means building an image, a term that refers to impression management where a person behaves and manages their image to attract people’s attention usually to further their own interests. This new term was later associated with political public relations, and was called *politik pencitraan* or political imagery. Because of his frequent use of *politik pencitraan*, it was initially personified to
Yudhoyono. However, it is becoming very popular in Indonesian society and is often used in relation to presidents, government officials, and other elite figures who campaign, and other actions where the purpose is simply to gain sympathy or popularity.

_Politik pencitraan_ has a negative connotation as an act of manipulation, since it is often proven that the actor’s rhetoric and actions are just empty promises (see, for example, “Mega minta SBY,” 2007). Although Indonesian leaders have used _politik pencitraan_ since the Sukarno era, the term began to attract public attention when Yudhoyono ran for president in 2004. Even now, when elites or politicians speak or do something related to the public interest that is suspected of being false or just paying lip service, the media immediately criticise it as _politik pencitraan_ (see, for example, Safitri, 2011). One of the most common _politik pencitraan_ techniques used by Yudhoyono is a strategy known as ‘playing the victim’. Yudhoyono intentionally portrayed himself as a ‘victim’ of his political opponents and the media as an agitation to promptly arouse public emotion in order to gain public sympathy.

On one occasion, for example, Yudhoyono claimed that he was becoming a terrorist target (see, for example, “I am a terrorist target,” 2009; “SBY sasaran tembak,” 2009). Yudhoyono made this statement in a press conference at the presidential palace six hours after several bombs exploded at the J.W. Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta. The terrorist action took place just 10 days after the 2009 presidential election was held, and Yudhoyono linked the terrorist bombing to an unlawful attempt to disrupt the vote counting process at the election committee (KPU). “Perhaps there are those of us who in the past committed crimes, killed, deprived people, or perhaps
eliminated people, and the perpetrators still escaped from punishment, this time the state must not allow them to become vampires and spread the death in our country.” ("Pernyataan Lengkap SBY", 2009). Political elites, including presidential candidate Megawati and her running mate Prabowo Subianto and another candidate Jusuf Kalla denied Yudhoyono’s claim. Megawati, for example, immediately held a press conference and stated that the government should not link the bombing to the election. “This is a crime against humanity. I ask the government not to confuse the atmosphere” (Riyanto et.al., 2009).

In addition to carrying out the strategy of playing the victim, there were also indications (from the above case) that Yudhoyono tried to exaggerate the problem, intimidate his political opponents and to anyone who wants to overthrow him. At the same time, he expressed his complaints/moans to the media and used the terrorist threat as a public sentiment for gaining more political and public support. These strategies were known as propaganda techniques as Jowett and O’Donnell (2012, pp. 303–304) stated that exaggeration, arousal of emotions and presentations are often associated with propaganda. Throughout his career as president, Yudhoyono was considered to exaggerate his problems, including frequently doing curhat (moan or expressing his grievances) to the public. Another example is when he became chairperson of Partai Demokrat. Yudhoyono admitted his decisions were often criticised, assaulted, or even condemned as he was assumed to be neglecting his state duty (Hasanudin, 2013). Yudhoyono even complained in one section of his book (Yudhoyono, 2014, pp. 121–241) that his days never passed without condemnation and scolding by his critics. The public called these kinds of complaints curhat and as
he moaned so frequently in public that one interview participant, Jalaluddin Rachmat, called him as *ahli curhat* or the expert of moan.

**Figure 5. 3 Yudhoyono’s Political Public Relations**

Yudhoyono showed a photograph of himself to reporters, which had been used as a shooting target for a terrorist training (Picture was taken from: joglonet.wordpress.com).

Another term that pointed to Yudhoyono’s *politik pencitraan* strategy is *tebar pesona* or spreading charm around, as he was what could be described as ‘glittering’ in his words and concerns but offered no real policies or solutions to problems. Megawati, for instance, delivered such an impression when criticising Yudhoyono’s slow performance in overcoming the Lapindo mud disaster. “It has been two years since the government won the 2004 election. It’s time to stop the action of *tebar pesona* and start the action of *tebar kerja* (spreading work around).” Megawati said on the anniversary of PDIP in Sanur, Bali (“Mega minta,” 2007). Political analyst Yulianto urged Yudhoyono to stop such *politik pencitraan* because he also believed the public
was too aware of this manipulative communication strategy (“SBY diminta stop,” 2011).

The act of pencitraan evolved around 2003–2004 with the first direct and democratic presidential election. In his capacity as Menko Pol kam Yudhoyono frequently appeared on national television spreading his messages with public service advertisements to ‘calm down’ the public over the ongoing turmoil in society. Usamah Hisyam, a political public relations consultant hired by Yudhoyono, revealed that his client once asked him to produce and deliver TV advertisements during February 2004 with a theme: Pemilu Aman dan Damai (Safe and Peaceful Election). At that time, most people, including President Megawati, were unaware that Yudhoyono had just started his own political campaign. Megawati eventually became conscious of the strategy and no longer trusted him. In this case, Yudhoyono used language with positive terms and played a verbal symbolisation, a propaganda technique that can also create a sense of power (Jowett and O’Donnell, 2012, p. 303).

Yudhoyono then played out a political drama when he wrote a letter to Megawati, asking for clarification as to why he was prevented from engaging in strategic decisions. He also asked whether he still kept his position as Menko Pol kam or had the President taken over? However, the president never responded to Yudhoyono’s letter or called him to clarify the matter. Finally, Yudhoyono held a press conference in his office and confirmed his stance to reporters that he had sent a letter of resignation to President Megawati from the government (“Menko pol kam mengundurkan,” 2004). It is hard to believe a coordinator minister would send a letter

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to the president just to clarify his position and to request a meeting. And because of that letter, Megawati’s husband Taufik Kiemas angrily told journalists that Yudhoyono has acted like a childish army general because he did not directly ask about his problem to the president as his direct superior (“Menko polkam mengundurkan,” 2004; “Kiemas: SBY seperti,” 2004). State Secretary Bambang Kesowo also told reporters that it was unnecessary to send a letter if Yudhoyono wanted to meet Megawati (Andi, 2007). Taufik’s statement in favour of Megawati turned out to benefit Yudhoyono’s image because people assumed that Yudhoyono was a victim and Megawati was obstructing his political career.

*Political engineering and spin doctors.* For some participants (Bakti, Dahlan, Kusaeni, Gani), the strategy of *politik pencitraan* and political drama as described above were two examples of political manipulation and unethical propaganda. Prita Kemal Gani in her capacity as Chairperson of Perhumas (2011–2014) asserted that the politics of image building or *politik pencitraan*, which is often displayed by Yudhoyono, is basically a propaganda technique. However, Gani suggested that one cannot assume all propaganda techniques are unethical. She said propaganda is fine as long as the practitioners use the correct facts and accurate data. Gani maintained: “But once they start using spin techniques, that’s not PR, because spin doctors turn the facts upside down. We should not do spin techniques by stating that something was incorrect, and so on”. Gani was aware that today there are many public relations developments in Indonesia, including public relations practitioners who use a marketing strategy to build the desired branding of a candidate, but the way they use it creates something that does not correspond to their original condition, or it is just faked. She argued, “Of
course, to get the public sympathy, they have to sell the candidate, so it looks juicier and sexier. As long as the things that they are doing are right, it doesn’t matter”.

Wasesa also supported the above opinion. He said public relations practitioners consider that building political image activities are usually performed by political marketing practitioners for short-term purposes, as they only sell a candidate’s brand during the presidential campaign. “Once the election is finished, and SBY won and has become president, then the political marketing service is no longer needed. However, I think, political marketing can be used in any situation and at anytime” (S. A. Wasesa, personal communication, May 23, 2017).

Political communication observer of LIPI, Ikrar Nusa Bakti recalled that Yudhoyono and his team undertook ‘political engineering’ and mounted his presidential election campaign as a normal phenomenon in relation to how politicians in many democratic countries conducted their campaigns. Referring to Yudhoyono’s complaint to the media that he was not invited by Megawati to discuss and make strategic decisions, Yudhoyono was actually on duty abroad at that time so he was not asked to join in the policymaking process.43 Yet, he created a narrative where he was a victim and mistreated by Megawati. Yudhoyono did another act of political manoeuvring when Megawati asked him many times whether or not he will run for president, and Yudhoyono always confirmed that he will not run, but he eventually nominated himself as a presidential candidate. However, Bakti admitted that in the context of political contestation, politicians can do whatever they want with whatever

43 Yudhoyono missed the cabinet meetings on February 25 and 27, 2004, for a visit to China. President Megawati still listed Yudhoyono’s name at a limited cabinet meeting held on March 11, 2004, but he was absent. Instead, he held a press conference at the office of Menko Polkam and declared his resignation from the cabinet (Andi, 2007).
means, as long as it does not violate the rules specified in the general election. Bakti maintains,

The essence of power struggle is how you can influence others to act on your wishes. Yudhoyono did his way, which can be described as unbelievable, extraordinary, and unusual in terms of political communication . . . According to political communication theory, you can perform as a great man, you can promise to make the public more prosperous, and so on . . . because politics in Indonesia does not operate in a vacuum. (Interview with Ikrar Nusa Bakti, December 28, 2015)

Another participant, Akhmad Kusaeni, Editor in Chief and News Director of Antara News Agency (2012–2015), has a similar opinion about the use of propaganda and spin doctors because he believes image building is very important for all governments. Kusaeni asserted that the government needs spin doctors to intensify its political communication, and that public relations people could plan this area of communication, including what should appear in the media this afternoon, what the message is, and so on. “There should be a person to do this job. Not for negative interest, but for the sake of more effective government to make the government’s political communication much better”. He maintains,

They can be used for good or evil. So, the spin doctors, as well as propaganda and PR, should be value-free. But, to be used for what? If the uses are to the greatest interest of the public, that’s good. But if it used to oppress, deceive, slander, and manipulate the public, that’s bad. (Interview with Akhmad Kusaeni, January 18, 2016)
This section, however, has identified that political drama and *politik pencitraan* are propaganda techniques that were deliberately displayed to the public and it has proven effective in arousing emotions and using this public sentiment to boost public support. It can be seen that Yudhoyono’s popularity ahead of the 2004 presidential election immediately skyrocketed. Yudhoyono sustained his *politik pencitraan* by entrusting Usamah Hisyam to produce Partai Demokrat advertisements with the main theme: ‘perubahan’ (change) and to write a biography of Yudhoyono, entitled: *SBY Sang Demokrat* (SBY the Democrat) in March 2004. Yudhoyono’s *politik pencitraan* was tremendously successful. One of the keys to his success was thanks to the ability of Yudhoyono’s political consultants to forge in secret cooperation with several mainstream media owners to get favourable news.

*‘Black’ campaign and negative campaigns.* In the context of political public relations and the power struggle in Indonesia’s new democracy, presidents and political actors used strategies associated with propaganda techniques. ‘Black’ campaign is often mentioned in political communication in Indonesia to describe dirty politics played by politicians. Interestingly, the term ‘black’ in this case is always associated with something bad, but actually it has nothing to do with racism. Rohman Budijanto noted in *Tempo* magazine that ‘black’ campaign in Indonesia may be influenced by the emergence of the terms *pengusaha hitam* (black businessman) or *konglomerat hitam* (black conglomerate), the terms used to name a corrupt business person. Budijanto said, the term ‘black’ campaign was reproduced by commentators and politicians, including President Yudhoyono. He asserted that, in fact, the exact term for this context is not ‘black’ campaign, but ‘black’ propaganda (Budijanto, 2014).
It was unclear when the term ‘black’ campaign first appeared, but the term emerged after the 2004 campaign season and referred to the unethical practice of political propaganda used by the election candidates. To conduct free and fair elections, the government passed Law No. 10/2008, which restricts various unfair and unethical practices of political campaigning. In Article 84, organisers, participants, and campaign officers are prohibited from insulting a person, religion, tribe, race, class, candidate and/or other participants; and inciting and bringing into conflict individuals or society (Law No. 10/2008). In many practices of propaganda in Indonesia, it was clear that these issues refer to ‘black’ campaigns. The negative campaign term refers to the way a party attack its opponents by exposing things that harm the image of the opponent, but contain some truth (Setiawan, 2015).

Yudhoyono and the Democrats often used the term ‘black campaign’ for referring to political opponents who practice unethical campaigns (see, for example, Maulia, 2009; Yudhoyono, 2014). One example of a negative campaign is found in activist and political observer Bony Hargens’s (2009) book entitled Trilogy Dosa SBY-JK (SBY-JK The Sin Trilogy Series). Hargen criticised Yudhoyono throughout his book, which exposed Yudhoyono–Kalla’s failures during their tenure and that the SBY-JK government did not fulfil its promise to reduce poverty and unemployment. In fact, according to the book, poverty and unemployment increased dramatically after the government issued a policy to reduce fuel subsidies. Yudhoyono’s Partai Demokrat considered the book as a form of negative campaigning from SBY-JK’s political competitors (“Anas,” 2008).
Indeed, the new phenomenon of unethical propaganda practices, such as ‘black’ campaigning emerged as a result of changes in the country’s political system, also associated with the right of freedom of expression and public desire for the implementation of liberal democracy. In the name of freedom and democracy, the governments in the Reformation era, including the Yudhoyono administration, were unable of removing such practices, whether carried out by politicians or perhaps by their own government. Tulung admitted that in this era, it was impossible to control or avoid criticism as well as black campaigning in the media, particularly in social media. Therefore, in terms of freedom of expression, “I think we needed to educate people or re-educate them because the reality in every human life is that freedom would be constrained by responsibility. Everyone has his own interpretation. It’s not wrong because there is no regulation about it” (Interview with Freddy Tulung, January 12, 2016).

Some examples and practices of political public relations applied by Yudhoyono and his officials, as discussed above, are new strategies and techniques used in the Soeharto post era. It also shows how Yudhoyono adept in implementing political public relations or propaganda strategies to gain public support and legitimacy. At the beginning of the Reformation era, these strategies and techniques were almost never carried out by Yudhoyono’s immediate predecessors, while Yudhoyono as the sixth Indonesian president consistently did so despite often being criticised by his political opponents.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined and discussed a number of issues related to the development and practice of political public relations in Indonesia. In the first section, this study revealed that popular polling or political surveys have existed since the New Order era, but politicians and the media rarely publish them because they are considered sensitive information. During the Yudhoyono administration, there are many efforts to popularise himself, which were carried out in sophisticated, systematic and subtle ways, including popular surveys and other image buildings that often made many people not aware that they were being persuaded to give support to Yudhoyono. The presence of political consultants, who often called spin doctors in the media, and their survey polls in 2003-2004 marked the rise of the practice of political public relations in Indonesia.

Although political consultants had assisted Yudhoyono significantly in winning presidential elections, their involvement in managing communications within the presidential communication office is generally unclear. However, there is an indication, as suggested by one participant, that Yudhoyono finally required help from communication specialists a few years before the end of his second term. The public relations professionals undermined assertions of transparency and accountability, as they worked in silence particularly when the president had been overwhelmed by his political opponent’s attacks. What is clear here, in the context of institutionalising political public relations in government organisations, is that Yudhoyono preferred to be supported by a number of specialist staff members and military officers.
When all related theories, concepts, and perceptions in this section were combined, I will arrive at a premise that in a democratic atmosphere, the practice of public relations in the political sector—currently known as political public relations—could be categorised as propaganda as it is difficult to deny a number of evidences that propaganda characteristics are inherent in the practices of political public relations. However, the propaganda strategies and practices under the Yudhoyono presidency were carried out with sophisticated research methods and in gentle ways. This kind of propaganda was rarely involved elements of force and coercion as it was practised under the authoritarian regimes. Yet, the popular surveys that being publicised in the mass media, for example, can be done using certain methods whose results can mislead the public for the benefit of a certain candidate. Polling makers and politicians recognise this tactic. They are aware that polling outcomes can be used in elections to influence public opinion and mobilise the voters as it has bandwagon effects, a propaganda strategy where people do something mainly because other people are doing it, regardless of their own beliefs. Many other communication techniques and strategies used by Yudhoyono and his officials were identified as misleading and manipulating. If the above premise is true, then I would argue that in the Indonesia context, the concept of political public relations can be considered as ‘soft propaganda’, a type of propaganda that is carried out without the elements of force and coercion. To strengthen this premise, in the next chapter, I will examine other political public relations strategies practised under the Yudhoyono presidency.
Chapter 6
Political Public Relations and the Oil Pricing Policy: A Case Study

Introduction

The Reformation era marked the end of the authoritarian regime in Indonesia. This change led to more transparent, participatory and egalitarian government communication to meet public demand for reformation and democratic values, particularly in policymaking. This chapter examines the government’s policy of raising oil prices to equalise, or at least to get closer, to international standard prices by reducing energy subsidies. For a long time, the International Monetary Fund has argued that the Indonesian government should remove oil subsidies, even though such a move has always been opposed by the Indonesian public. The retail prices of oil in Indonesia used to be very cheap compared to the international market, as the Indonesian government had subsidised oil prices since the Sukarno and Soeharto eras in order to help poor households. Moreover, the provision on the use of natural resources including oil and natural gas for the welfare of the people, as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution, also justified the public demanding the government continue providing oil subsidies.

The oil pricing policy was selected for an in-depth case study primarily due to the community’s refusal of this policy. The objective of this case study is to elaborate how political public relations were practised by Yudhoyono and his government
officials, especially in the implementation of government policies and presidential elections. In order to effectively implement oil price policy and mitigate public unrest, the government required a variety of advanced communication strategies to persuade and convince the public. In contrast to the difficulties experienced by his predecessors, President Yudhoyono and his government officials were relatively successful in implementing this policy as they harnessed sophisticated political public relations strategies to influence public opinion. Yudhoyono also used the issue of fuel prices as a political commodity to win the 2009 elections, and thus retained presidency for a second term.

This chapter argues that the political public relations strategy plays an important role for the president to implement government policies and help maximise political support and legitimate, so that the president can maintain their hegemonic control. In order to explore Yudhoyono’s strategies in increasing oil prices, as well as to compare with his predecessors, this chapter is structured in four sections. The first section investigates the background of government policy on fuel prices and oil subsidies. This section offers a brief history of oil subsidy policy in Indonesia, from Presidents Sukarno to Megawati. The second section discusses substantial issues that emerged from the government policy in reforming oil subsidies which created controversies and public rejection. The third section explores and analyses political public relations strategies and propaganda techniques used by the Yudhoyono administration when they were implementing the oil pricing policy during his two terms in office. The fourth and final section examines how the Yudhoyono administration utilised political public relations to maintain political power and
legitimacy, particularly the strategy to use oil pricing policy as a political commodity in the 2009 presidential election.

The Background and Development of Oil Pricing Policy

Indonesia has a long history of fuel subsidies, which began in the Sukarno era in the 1950s (Beaton & Lontoh, 2010). After independence, Indonesia’s first president Sukarno had no option but to subsidise basic commodities, such as rice and fuel, as the majority of Indonesia’s population lived in poverty. Sukarno nationalised Dutch assets in the oil and gas sectors in 1957. Thus, subsidy policies have been a common feature in Indonesia’s economy since the establishment of the nation. Sukarno implemented the subsidies policy, with a five-year plan 1956–1960, as part of the first attempt to stimulate economic development systematically and as a way to protect people from the effects of inflation (Beaton & Lontoh, 2010). However, Indonesian people experienced sustained difficulties under Sukarno since the president rejected foreign investments, particularly from the US and its allies.

Soeharto’s New Order regime emerged in 1967 and demonstrated impressive economic growth. Soeharto made some economic improvements, but the percentage of the Indonesian population who lived in poverty was still high, hovering around 40% up until 1976. However, the percentage dropped to around 11% over the next 20 years (Azra, 2000). In contrast with Sukarno, Soeharto invited foreign investment, including from Western oil companies, to explore and exploit fossil oil in Indonesia. He maintained Sukarno’s policy in fuel subsidies and applied the low price of fuel to support macro-economic policies and to develop social, economic, and political stability. Although there were many cases of corruption and mismanagement of the
state oil company (Ricklefs, 2001), Soeharto’s success in restoring economic stability was supported by the rising nation’s incomes, mainly from exports of oil and other products from the mining sector. The Soeharto administration achieved high economic growth in the years 1973–1974 from the oil embargo and the ‘oil boom’ of the early 1980s. Soeharto was also able to maintain the stability of fuel prices during the 1990s. Although Soeharto had increased the fuel price several times, it never sparked social unrest during his presidency, as the percentage of increase was not significant.

The Soeharto administration could maintain the low retail price of gasoline without subsidies, as the global oil price was low and the Indonesian currency was stable. However, the regime maintained the subsidies to other kinds of oil, such as diesel and kerosene, to keep them at low prices. Suleiman (2013), an expert on nuclear energy, believes the Soeharto regime made fuel subsidies the main weapon to win the hearts of the people for decades. Similarly, Kumoro and Astriana (2015) contend that Soeharto used the fuel subsidy policy as a tool to maintain stability and public order, even though economists warned that the subsidies only created false stability. Victor (2009) maintains that some governments provide the lowest fuel prices even though they are not facing direct elections. Rather, they applied fuel subsidies with the aim of satisfying and influencing their constituents, as they fear instability. Thus, one of their strategies to reduce these risks is to provide fuel subsidies.

The high economic growth and political stability maintained for decades by the Soeharto administration were eventually shattered when the Asian financial crisis hit the country. Within six months of the crisis in July 1997, the rupiah collapsed from
2,500 to the US dollar to nearly 10,000, which increased prices and forced the
Indonesian government to stop imports (United Nations Environment Programme
[UNEP], 2016). The economic crisis forced Soeharto to sign an agreement with the
International Monetary Fund (IMF) in order to qualify for emergency loans. The
agreement demanded the dismantling of state and private monopolies and cutting
subsidies for basic commodities, including petroleum products (Beaton & Lontoh,
2010). As part of Indonesia's commitment to accelerate economic reform, on May 5,
1998, Soeharto increased fuel prices by, on average, 50%. The retail price of premium
(gasoline) per litre rose from Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) 700 to IDR 1200 (71%), the price
of solar (diesel) from IDR 380 to IDR 600 (58%), and kerosene from IDR 280 to IDR 350
(25%).

In an interview with CNN Indonesia (May 21, 2015), Kuntoro Mangkusubroto,
former Minister of Mines and Energy of Soeharto's seventh development cabinet,
disclosed that the drastic increase in fuel price was the unilateral decision of Soeharto
who succumbed to IMF’s pressure to cut energy subsidies. According to
Mangkusubroto, the policy to increase fuel prices was decided quickly without going
through a cabinet meeting, without the usual formula and calculations, and without
agreement from Soeharto ministers: “Honestly I and some friends of the Ministry in
the economy sector did not know the reason. But definitely raising the price of fuel at
that time was not using a formula commonly used by my Ministry” (Duta, 2015, para.
9). As a result, the dramatic increase of fuel prices ignited public anger and ended with
violence and political turmoil. The student protests and deadly riots in Jakarta quickly
spread to other major cities in Indonesia. This widespread public backlash eventually forced Soeharto to resign in May 1998.

Following the collapse of the Soeharto regime, the efforts of subsequent governments in reforming fuel subsidy, led by Presidents Wahid, Megawati, and Yudhoyono, became more difficult and problematic. The joy of freedom of expression overwhelmed the country, and this contributed to a culture in which street demonstration was the preferred method of exercising democratic rights, rather than other mechanisms for citizens to express their concerns (Beaton, Christensen, & Lontoh, 2015). The news media also enjoyed a high degree of press freedom after being suppressed for decades by Soeharto (Kitley, 2001). The challenge for Soeharto’s successors was even harder as the governments faced difficulties to influence people when they had to reform oil subsidies as it always caused public unrest (Beaton & Lontoh, 2010; Indriyanto et al., 2013; Roberts, 2005; UNEP, 2016). As discussed in Chapter 3, the challenge was escalating when President Wahid dissolved Departemen Penerangan (Deppen, Department of Information) in 1999 as the ministry was considered no longer relevant to the process of democratisation. In a dialog with former Minister of Information Yunus Yosfiah at the palace (October, 28 1999), President Wahid argued that the decision was in accordance with his longstanding principle that the government should not intrude in the domain of public affairs. He added that people have too long suffered at the hands of the government, and therefore he decided to eliminate the department (“Bicara keras,” 1999).

Presidents Wahid and Megawati sustained the fuel subsidy policy by raising fuel prices several times, but it did not run smoothly. Every time fuel prices increased,
there were protests and violence in several major cities in Indonesia. Under IMF pressure and six months of postponement, President Wahid increased fuel prices for the first time on 1 October 2000 by an average of 12%. President Wahid raised the fuel prices for the second time on June 16, 2001. As predicted, the efforts to reform fuel subsidy rapidly ignited demonstrations and riots in several major cities. Due to poor communication (Beaton & Lontoh, 2010; Clements et al., 2013) this move was also driving people to demonstrate in ways that were stronger than before.

On July 23, 2001, President Wahid was impeached by the Parliament, and his Vice President Megawati Soekarnoputri became president. Wahid’s impeachment came after he ignored the second censure sent by the Parliament, which was not predominantly related to the policy reform on fuel subsidies, but rather to allegations of two corruption cases (“Megawati appeals,” 2001). Meanwhile, President Megawati increased the fuel price twice on January 17, 2002 and on January 2, 2003. She tried to increase it for the third time but since the policy sparked large-scale demonstrations and she was forced to roll back the price in 2003 (Roberts, 2005). This shows that a non-democratically elected government that receives legitimation from the public finds it difficult to push through unpopular policies, including reforming fuel subsidies. The following Diagram 6.1 and Table 6.1 below show fuel prices from the era of Soeharto (1980) to the tenure of Yudhoyono (2013).
Table 6.1 Fuel Prices in Indonesia from Soeharto (1980) to Yudhoyono (2013) in IDR.


Table 6.1 above illustrates the government’s policy of increasing oil prices that have been applied by Presidents since the Soeharto era with a relatively small percentage increase compared to that of the Yudhoyono administration. In this table, we can see the Yudhoyono government has raised fuel prices four times and also
reduced prices three times. Moreover, Figure 6.1 below shown the oil prices in a line chart to see how significant the increment and the progress of oil price.

Figure 6.1 The Line Chart of Oil Price Progress from Soeharto (1980) to Yudhoyono (2013) in IDR.

Controversies in Oil Pricing Policy

As discussed above, government efforts to remove oil subsidies never ran smoothly although many Indonesian people might have been aware that the retail price of oil is low compared to the international market price. Given that the government’s efforts to raise oil prices are directly implicated in the lives of people, the main obstacles to eliminate fuel subsidies are generally politics. Even governments that have an interest in reforming fuel subsidies face problems related to public
approval, vested interests, and institutional capacity. Much literature debates this issue, creating polarisation amongst academics, activists, and politicians. A discussion of this controversial policy, therefore, requires some clarification of the various arguments in favour and against the oil subsidy. Three main issues that sparked controversy are discussed in the following section.

**Oil subsidy definition.** There are many definitions and understandings of the term ‘subsidy’, which can be confusing and lead to public criticism. International Energy Agency (IEA), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the World Bank have agreed to define energy subsidy as “any government action that lowers the cost of energy production, raises the revenues of energy producers or lowers the price paid by energy consumers” (International Institute for Sustainable Development [IISD], 2012, p. 6). Meanwhile, the World Trade Organisation’s (WTO) Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM), supported by 153 countries, including Indonesia, also defines ‘subsidy’. A subsidy, according to ASCM, exists where the government (1) Provides direct or indirect transfer of funds or liabilities, (2) Revenue is foregone or not collected, (3) Provides goods or services below market rates or purchases goods paying higher than the market rate and (4) Provides income or price support (Braithwaite, D. et al., 2010, p. 11).

By the above definitions, the aim of fuel subsidy to empower poor households can be achieved in two ways. Firstly, subsidies can reduce fuel prices, so the direct effect of the fuel subsidy is that it generates more disposable income for households. Secondly, an indirect effect of fuel subsidies is when households purchase
cheaper goods and services as a result of the reduced energy input cost to manufacturers, distributors and service providers (IISD, 2012). For Indonesia, the Ministry of Finance defined subsidy as “a budgetary allocation given to a company or institution that produces or sells fuel with the purpose of providing access to energy at an affordable price, or keeping fuel prices lower than market prices by applying an administered price policy” (IISD, 2010, p. 34).

Does oil subsidy really exist? The government’s definition on the fuel subsidy as mentioned above is criticised by Indonesian civil society, among others, questions whether the government actually paid money to subsidise the fuel. Kwik Kian Gie, a prominent economist from The Indonesia Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), the opposition political party of Megawati, rejects this notion and suggests a critical question: Do fuel subsidies equal the money spent? (as cited in Nugroho, 2005, p. 1). In a private interview with the BBC (March 28, 2012), Kwik argued that fuel prices imposed on Indonesian people are not always equivalent to the price of crude oil. He questioned when fuel prices are lower than the equivalent price of crude oil in the international market, the government always complains that the national budget will be ruined because they have to subsidise these price differences. In this situation, Kwik added, the government considered the subsidy is equal to the cash that should be spent by the government, and to avoid this imbalance budget, the fuel price should be increased.

Kwik, who is a former Coordinating Minister of Economics, Finance, and Industry in the Wahid administration, and also State Minister for Bappenas (Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional, National Development Planning Agency) in the
Megawati presidency, argued further that without reducing or eliminating the fuel subsidy the government already had strong revenue. This is possible because the Indonesian government does not need to buy 100% of its oil to meet the national demand. Even though the oil price in the international market has highly increased, Kwik asserted that Indonesia still has more than 50% of the oil that Indonesians can use from national resources. Therefore, the notion that the government needs to raise fuel price is not true. Kwik maintains, “It’s very misleading. No money is needed to subsidise that oil, except for when we do the refining and transporting of the fuel. That’s just $10 a barrel so the government really doesn’t need to do this” (Vaswani, 2012, para. 24-26).

According to Hanan Nugroho (2005), an economist from Bappenas (Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning), the oil subsidy is a cash payment made by the government of Indonesia to Pertamina in a situation where the revenue of Pertamina, obtained from the task of providing fuel in the country, is lower than the cost of issuance to provide such fuel (p. 2).

Nugroho said the fuel subsidies definition used by the government takes into account the difference between the prices of imported crude oil purchased at market price, along with all the cost elements, and then is reduced by the retail price of fuel in Indonesia (p. 2). Hence, the more imports of fuel and crude oil to fulfil the people and industry’s need, higher fuel

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44 Pertamina is a state-owned oil and gas company who monopolised fuel distribution in Indonesia. After the government passed Law No. 22/2001, Pertamina has the key role of distributing subsidised fuel and LPG in Indonesia under the Public Service Obligation (PSO) mandate. The arrangement of the PSO business will be subject to competition mechanisms that are reasonable, fair, and transparent with appropriate pricing in accordance with the market. On 17 September 2003 Pertamina became PT Pertamina (Persero) based on PP No. 31/2003. This law mandated, among other provisions, a separation between the upstream and downstream oil and gas businesses (see the company’s profile in Pertamina.com).
subsidiesshouldbeallocated, and that should be combined with the cost of imports, refining, and distribution. The subsidy becomes even bigger when the price of oil in the international market increases. This definition of oil subsidies developed by the government has been used in the calculation of accounting figures which later became the basis for the government’s program to eliminate fuel subsidies, including the design of the programs of reducing the impact of fuel price increases (p. 2).

Nugroho (2005) explained further that in the state budget, ‘fuel subsidy’ and ‘oil revenues’ are two different things. He said the government did not include oil revenues in the fuel subsidy calculation mechanism. Therefore, he maintains, if the oil revenues are put into the ‘subsidies’ calculations, then, as indicated by Kwik Kian Gie, the Indonesian petroleum industry will always produce a ‘surplus’ (Nugroho, 2005, p. 5). The critical question is, if the oil is the wealth of the country and should be used for the welfare of the people, why do people have to pay more to buy oil? This criticism, according to Nugroho (2005), is a straight question that needs to be explained properly by the government before they aggressively run programs to reform oil subsidies and raise fuel prices. He argued that the community should question the government to evaluate whether the definition of ‘subsidy’ that had previously been accepted by the scientific and general community has indeed been examined carefully (Nugroho, 2005, p. 5).

Today, this polemic is still relevant as a result of government shortcomings to provide some easy-to-comprehend and proportional information on fuel subsidies. This oil subsidy is not just disputed amongst Indonesian civil society. A joint forum of the IEA, OECD, OPEC and World Bank has also acknowledged that “the practical
applicability of the WTO definition in generating data of energy subsidies has proven to be limited” as a result of a “lack of commitment and transparency of countries in reporting energy subsidies” and the difficulties associated with quantifying subsidies other than direct financial support (IEA, OPEC, OECD, & World Bank, 2010, p. 11).

**Wrong target vs. liberalisation of fuel prices.** The Indonesian government has allocated a substantial amount of money on fuel subsidies. In the 2012 fiscal year, for instance, the government spent IDR 202 trillion (USD22 billion) just on energy subsidies (Ministry of Finance, 2012). This amount was higher than government expenditures for defence, education, health, and social security combined (IISD, 2012). However, in economic literature, most discussions of the necessity to remove fuel subsidies in Indonesia is that it is inefficient with high-income groups gaining most of the benefits from fuel subsidies (IISD, 2012; Kahfi, 2014; UNEP, 2008). UNEP (2008), for example, argued these subsidies often benefited the wrong target, such as the energy companies, equipment suppliers, and the medium and upper households, especially in the towns and cities. In some cases, the poor may not even receive the subsidies at all.

Some scholars rejected the above reasoning. Reuvrisond Baswir (2005) of Gajah Mada University, for example, said that the argument that high-income groups gain most of the benefit from fuel subsidies is a manipulative argument and did not have a strong academic foundation. In a personal interview with Era Muslim, Baswir asserted that the rise in fuel prices is to accommodate the interests of the IMF. He said this is not just about increasing fuel price, but a matter of a gradual process of eliminating fuel subsidies and thus releasing the fuel price according to the market
(Ridyasmara, 2008). Likewise, former Finance Minister Fuad Bawazier told Viva News’ reporters (2014) that if the government raised fuel prices, it will enable foreigners to dominate the oil sector business freely, from upstream to downstream. Fuad, who has joined with Prabowo’s Gerindra party, argued that the foreign companies who have grasped the fuel in the upstream sector will be expanded to the downstream sector, and will certainly dominate retail outlets across Indonesia. Increasing fuel prices, Fuad said will only make people suffer because the effects of the increase will also increase inflation (“Isu kenaikan harga,” 2014).

Indonesian civil society has long watched the interests of the IMF and World Bank in liberalising the oil and gas sector in Indonesia. Since Soeharto signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the IMF in January 1998, the Indonesian government has always adhered to the arrangement. One of the 50 points in the letter (point number 9) stated that the government had agreed to eliminate fuel subsidies gradually during the period of that provision, and the initial adjustment started on April 1, 1998 (IMF, 1998). During President Habibie’s tenure (1998–1999), the House followed up the IMF settlement and managed to draft a new bill, passed in 2001, namely UU Migas No. 22/2001 (Oil and Gas Law No. 22/2001). However, this new law received strong objection by some elements of civil society (lawyers, analysts, and oil and gas experts).

In 2003, the employees of Pertamina filed an appeal to the Constitutional Court (Mahkamah Konstitusi, MK). According to their complaint, the new law was not only contrary to Article 33 of the 1945 Constitution but could be detrimental to the Indonesian economy (Mahkamah Konstitusi Republik Indonesia, 2004). They said to
liberalise the downstream sector of the oil and gas industries clearly aided the interests of private and foreign entrepreneurs and did not carry out the mandate of Article 33 of the 1945 Constitution. In the plea, they argued some articles in the new law were just accommodating the IMF agenda that gave authority to foreign oil companies doing exploration and exploitation activities throughout the country [Article 12 verse 3], and give ‘at most’ 25% of their production to fulfil Indonesian domestic needs [Article 22 verse 1] (Mahkamah Konstitusi Republik Indonesia, 2004). The most important objection associated with fuel prices lies in Article 28 verse 2 and 3, which requires the government to sell fuel prices according to the market price, which is contrary to the Constitution. After a long assessment process, the Court finally accepted the appeal and the above-mentioned clauses that stated the price of fuel would be set through downstream market competition alone were subsequently overruled by a Constitutional Court verdict in 2003 (Mahkamah Konstitusi Republik Indonesia, 2004).

Yudhoyono and Political Public Relations Strategies

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla (widely known by their shared acronym SBY–JK) cruised to a convincing victory over the incumbent President Megawati with 60% of the vote in the 2004 presidential election. This popular vote was definitely a legitimation and a good chance for the new government to apply tough policies, including oil subsidies reform. This section discusses and analyses

45 Downstream operations are oil and gas operations that take place after the production phase, through to the point of sale. Downstream operations can include refining crude oil and distributing the by-products, such as gasoline, natural gas liquids, diesel and a variety of other energy sources, down to the retail level.
three essential political public relations strategies and propaganda techniques that contributed significantly to the success of implementing oil subsidies reform.

**Public information and political lobbying.** During his two-term presidency, Yudhoyono raised fuel prices four times and lowered the prices three times in a row (see Table 6.1). On the first attempt, Yudhoyono and Kalla appeared quite confident in reducing the oil subsidies on 1 March 2005, which is four months after they were sworn in as president and vice president. Despite the fact Yudhoyono gained 60% of popular support through the election and still had close relationships with a number of major media, the increase was only 29% on average. The stated government reason for raising the fuel prices at that time was due to the average price of Indonesian crude oil reaching USD 53.44 per barrel in 2005, up 186.5 percent higher than the price of oil in 2003 amounted to USD 28.65 per barrel (Harefa, 2014). Yudhoyono also needed to increase fuel prices immediately since Indonesia became a net oil importer country in 2004 (IISD, 2012).

Since November 2004, the government has made the rise in fuel prices a public matter (Ar-Rabbani, 2005). Several economic ministers informed the public in the mass media about the government plan to reform oil subsidy policy. President Yudhoyono accepted his popularity would decrease with a fuel price increase, but he needed to prioritise the country's economic health and justice for poor people (Ar-Rabbani, 2005). On February 28, 2005, Finance Minister Jusuf Anwar also held a meeting with the Budget Committee of the House of Representatives to explain the policy, but they failed to reach an agreement. After the consultation meeting, Anwar told journalists that the authority to raise fuel prices was the right of the government
and it was stipulated by law. Therefore, the government would raise the price of fuel even without an agreement from Parliament. “It was just a consultation,” he said after the meeting ("Pemerintah tetap menaikkan," 2005). Earlier that day, President Yudhoyono also met with the Regional Representatives Council (DPRD). He said the decision to raise fuel prices had been measured and discussed in detail for three and a half months.

All the ministers who had consulted with Members of Parliament then went to the palace for a cabinet meeting with the president. After the meeting, the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Purnomo Yusgiantoro confirmed that fuel prices would be increased starting at midnight on Tuesday March 1, 2005. In the press conference, Yusgiantoro said fuel prices would increase by 29% except for kerosene, and it was stipulated in the Presidential Regulation No. 22/2005 ("Menteri ESDM pastikan," 2005). In responding to the minister’s statement, Chairman of the House Budget Committee Emir Moeis threatened to not support the government politically if there are public protests against the fuel price increase ("Pemerintah tetap menaikkan," 2005). The government’s decision to keep increasing fuel prices, even without the consent of Parliament, indicates that they already expected that the cost was not sustainable. In addition to relieving the burden on the state budget, the government set eight programs to compensate for rising fuel prices, such as scholarships, health insurance, and provisions of rice for the poor (Koten, 2005). These were implemented as risk mitigation strategies.

As predicted, the government’s announcement to increase fuel prices on 1 March 2005 was quickly rejected by the public. A number of student demonstrations
took place on the street, particularly in front of the House and presidential palace, and at some of major cities (Koten, 2005). One reason for their objection, among others, was because increasing fuel prices was perceived as not relevant to the economic conditions. The government's decision to reduce subsidies and raise fuel prices is tantamount to an act of ‘economic suicide’ (Koten, 2005). The increase of fuel prices would trigger increases in the prices of goods and services and also raise transportation costs, and therefore, the social costs to be borne by the nation and the people were too high (Koten, 2005). Meanwhile, the Parliament regretted that the government kept raising fuel prices but was not fulfilling the House’s terms that were previously proposed. Speaker of the House, Agung Laksono and Member of Parliament told reporters that the House did not want the policy and it was carried out prior to the audit by an independent institution (“Ketua DPR tidak setuju,” 2005).

Yudhoyono made efforts to approach politicians in the Parliament by political lobbying. This is a significant part of his political public relations strategy, not only because the politicians frequently refuted the president’s initiatives and policies on oil pricing, but the legislative branch was important in creating, revising, and legalising the state budget. Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) assert that the objective of political public relations is “to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals” (p. 8). Journalists, editors, media owners, as well as politico-economy elites are some of the key publics of political public relations and it is suggested that political public relations practitioners should gain a continuum of engagement with these stakeholders (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2014).
Political expert Syamsuddin Haris observed that the consultation meeting between the president and leaders of parliament frequently took place, which indicated that a tug of war of interest between two branches of government occurred. However, it also has been a compromise between them, because the entire consultative meeting concluded with a political compromise. The President and Member of Parliament could reach consent on government policy as political parties in Parliament were not an ideological party, in the sense that political support could be bought. “Thus, political transactions existed, and that allowed political stability. In other words, political stability created during the Yudhoyono presidency was not only because of Yudhoyono’s compromise leadership style but also supported by the political map in the parliament which was not ideological.” Haris maintains,

This is a dilemma in our political life and becomes theoretical discussions. On one hand, we need a strong president and ideological political parties, but this could have an impact on the situation of conflict in the executive-legislative relations, i.e. President and House of Representatives, and it can even lead to a deadlock potency. (Interview with Haris, December 22, 2015)

From the discussion above, we can see the importance of the president and government officials mastering persuasive abilities and political lobbying as part of the political public relations strategy. The agreement reached by both parties can ease tensions and overcome differences between government institutions. In the context of the Indonesian presidential system, political lobbying aimed at reaching consent was positive, because that was the institutional mechanism, which can minimise the
potential of conflict between the president and the parliament (Interview with Haris, 2015).

**Distracting public attention.** There was no significant reaction from the government in responding to the student and public demonstrations due to the fuel prices increase. Nevertheless, in the middle of the disagreement between the government, parliament members, and the public, a serious incident between Indonesia and Malaysia abruptly emerged from Ambalat, a sea block in the Sulawesi sea located off the east coast of Kalimantan. The Ambalat dispute began to steal public attention in early March 2005 when the mass media began to spread the news about Malaysian warships being in what was considered to be Indonesian territorial waters.

Previously on February 16, Malaysia claimed that Ambalat is located within their territorial waters. The claim arose after Petronas (the national oil company of the Malaysian government) gave the oil and gas exploration concession offshore, Ambalat block, to the multinational company Shell. However, the Indonesian government had also given concessions in the same area to ENI (Italy) in 1999 and Unocal (USA) in 2004 as Indonesia claimed those waters were the territorial waters of Indonesia (Bari, 2005). An incident occurred on 21 February 2005 at Takat Unarang when the crew of the Malaysian warship KD Sri Melaka arrested 17 Indonesian citizens. They were only released after being held for four hours on the deck of KD Sri Melaka. Upon hearing the news, the Indonesian warships, KRI Rencong and KRI Tongkol, which were on patrol in the South Sulawesi Sea, were ordered to head to the location (Lugito, Febriana, Arifin, & Wibisono, 2005).
The tension between Indonesia and Malaysia escalated as the two countries positioned their warships within the region. TNI-AU (the Indonesian Air Force) sent four F-16 fighter jets, while TNI-AL (the Indonesian Navy) deployed five warships (Lugito et al., 2005). A source in the palace told journalists that President Yudhoyono has established direct contact on 7 March 2005 with Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Later in the day, President Yudhoyono visited the troops and had the opportunity to sail in the KRI K.S. Tubun warship from Nunukan to Sebatik (Lugito et al., 2005; “Soal Ambalat,” 2005). Yudhoyono was accompanied by the commander of the Indonesian military, ministers, and of course, a number of print and TV journalists who were invited to follow and report on the president’s trip.

Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak stressed that the Malaysian government would not withdraw its troops from the Ambalat (“Soal Ambalat,” 2005). This situation made headlines in some major daily newspapers for a number of days. Suara Merdeka in 9 March 2005 edition, for example, wrote a headline: “Kostrad Bersiap ke Ambalat. KSAD: Kedaulatan Negara Harga Mati” (Kostrad Prepares to Ambalat. Chief of Staff: The State Sovereignty is No Bargain). Kompas on the 8 March 2005 wrote: “Ambalat, Milik Siapa?” (Ambalat, Who Owns It?). Some leading political and general news magazines, such as Tempo and Gatra, also covered the topic with special reports. The journalists were allowed to visit the Navy warship to feel the tension at the location.

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46 Kostrad is an acronym of Komando Cadangan Strategis Angkatan Darat (The Command of the Army Strategic Reserve).
The news reports by Indonesian media on the Ambalat dispute quickly aroused the emotions of the Indonesian people. Anti-Malaysia demonstrations sprung up in several cities in Indonesia. Other groups built stations in major cities, including Semarang, Yogyakarta and Makassar to register volunteers who were ready to be sent to the front if the war against Malaysia occurred (“Warga Semarang mendirikan,” 2005). Various community groups and students marched on the streets to protest against Malaysia. The masses began to burn the Malaysian flag and yelled slogans such as *Ganyang Malaysia* (Crush Malaysia), which were previously propagated by Sukarno in the 1960s (Lugito et al., 2005; Bari, 2005). The Indonesian media continued to make the Ambalat dispute their headline until May 2005. By contrast, the Malaysian mass media covered the dispute only to a small degree. A group of demonstrators accused the Indonesian government of deliberately deflecting the issue of fuel prices. Students of University of Jember, East Java, for example, accused the government of President Yudhoyono of deliberately covering up the issue of rising fuel prices by exaggerating the tension in Ambalat (Lugito et al., 2005).

Similarly, Rudi Sukandar (2010) argued that President Yudhoyono tried to change public opinion when the government was facing huge debt problems and thus cut oil subsidies. Sukandar asserted that the media had helped the Yudhoyono administration, directly or indirectly, to distract the public focus from fuel prices to the Ambalat dispute. As a result, people ignored rising fuel prices and Yudhoyono could safely maintain his political authority with minimal backlash. According to Sukandar, President Sukarno also used this propaganda technique in the 1960s when the government had no money to pay their own employees, creating a war against
Malaysia, which was known as Konfrontasi or confrontation.⁴⁷ Sukandar concludes: “What Indonesian media exposed in 1960s or 2000s about konfrontasi, we assume, was one way to shift public attention from the economic crises in the country by utilizing conflict issues with Malaysia as it was in Indonesia in 1960s” (2010, p. 407).

From the above discussion, it can be interpreted as the alertness of the president’s specialist staff in capturing important events and its political momentum that can occur at any time. As I discussed in the previous chapter, presidential specialist staff have the function of sorting out problems and then prioritising or blow up certain events that are public sentiments and are related to the efforts to increase the president’s popularity. The ability of presidential specialist staff who carefully and cleverly exploit a problem and turn it into an advantage for government and presidential organisations can lead to creating opportunity to divert public attention to government policies in raising oil prices.

The presidential organisation is a political institution that has all the necessary elements and sources that can be used anytime to manage critical issues. But the government officials should have specific skills in carrying out strategies of propaganda and political public relations such as the ability to exaggerate (or otherwise minimise) issues/events, diverting important issues, spinning the realities and facts, or even creating pseudo-events. Since the Nazi era in the 1930s, Hitler was able to ensure the success of his domestic propaganda campaign with total control of Germany, and no one with competing techniques could distract the German public

⁴⁷ Konfrontasi or the confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia during 1963-1966 was a sporadic dispute which involved several countries and armed conflict. For more information, see the history and analysis about Konfrontasi Indonesia–Malaysia in Sukandar (2010).
with propaganda messages (Jowett and O’Donnell, 2012, p. 249). Today, this old propaganda technique is still relevant in political organisations. Dewi Fortuna Anwar asserted that distracting the public focus from one case to another is one of the pivotal skills that need to be mastered by the officials of government public relations. She emphasised that the presidential spokespersons have significant roles in political public relations because political communication is not just applied through speech. “We have to know what is needed to to be said, why it should be communicated, who is the target that should receive the information, what is our goal, whether or not we should divert the issue, and so forth” (Interview with Dewi Fortuna Anwar, January 18, 2016).

**Empathy and presidential rhetoric.** The Yudhoyono administration increased fuel prices for the second time on October 1, 2005 with a remarkable average increase of 120%. Before taking the decision, President Yudhoyono spoke at a plenary session in the House of Representatives on August 16, 2005 where he emphasised that the government had decided to reform fuel subsidies due to higher international crude oil prices. Yudhoyono gave the State of the Nation Speech and explained the annual budget plan to parliament members. He said that the world’s oil prices had reached over US$66 per barrel, much higher than the price adjustment last March, which used a benchmark of US$35 per barrel, adding that if the oil price stays high then the fuel subsidy for 2005 is estimated to reach IDR140 trillion. Consequently, the debt burden of the government would also increase along with an increase of the domestic and global interest rates. To justify the government policy on fuel subsidy reform, Yudhoyono stated:
Such a huge fuel subsidy is deemed as missing the target and unjust since it is enjoyed more by those with a more substantial income. The price of fuel, which is cheaper than the market price, has also resulted in the squandering of fuel, and encourages fuel smuggling. The various negative excesses of the global environment that is so fluid have made the Government continuously design anticipatory and prudent policies. With a heavy heart, the Government has taken an unpopular policy of raising the price of fuel as of the past 1 March. The fuel price hike was clearly not an easy choice to make and unpleasing to the people, and it was forced to carry it out as a last resort (“The state address,” 2005, para. 53).48

In addition to explaining the reasons for reducing fuel subsidies by raising the retail prices of oil, President Yudhoyono also pointed out his empathy to public difficulties as a result of that government policy. The last sentence of the above paragraph: “clearly not an easy choice to make” and “it was forced to carry it out as a last resort” become the ultimate weapon that Yudhoyono always used to raise fuel prices in 2005, and in May 2008 (see, for example, “SBY: Kenaikan BBM,” 2008; ) and in June 2013 (see, for example, Asril, 2014; Dorimulu, 2013; “Presiden SBY,” 2012) not only to rationalise their policy, but also to persuade and demonstrate his empathy to the public.

Rhetoric, which was synonymous with persuasion (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2012) is a system that is capable to make something worse appear the better reason. In his state address on August 16, 2005, Yudhoyono said that the policy of raising fuel on
March 1, 2005 (or five months since he became president) was a policy that had to be taken. Through this statement, it seemed that the policy was made in a rush as if there were no other alternatives so it was difficult to believe the truth of the policy. Of course, the masses who do not understand the oil problem might see that the government was indeed in trouble and unable to withstand the deficit of the state budget as a result of the increase in world oil prices. But, is it true there is no better alternative, so the government must liberalise the energy sector in order to meet foreign interests? Is it true that the rise in world oil prices has made the country’s financial budget a deficit? Is it not the opposite that the state budget actually benefits from the high of world oil prices? Why, for example, does the government not try to increase domestic oil production to become 1 million barrels or more per month by making new oil refineries or by other means?

Because the target of propaganda is generally addressed to the masses and not to intellectuals who are very small in number, the government rhetoric can of course easily mislead the audience regarding their intention. The president’s efforts to appear in front of the public and speak with presenting data that seems to be the best, but it turns out that it can only be a rhetoric that manipulates and misleading people. Jowett & O’Donnell (2012) said: “Sometimes an audience will believe a persuader’s spoken intent, and consequently, it will be manipulated and used without knowing what is happening. This we regard as propaganda.” (p. 39). While the methods and strategies used by Yudhoyono are exactly the same as stated by Donald C. Bryant’s (1953) who characterised “propaganda by technique—excluding competing ideas, short-
circuiting informed judgment, ignoring alternative ideas or courses of action, and in general subverting rational processes” (Cited in Jowett & O’Donnell, p. 44).

Yudhoyono’s rhetoric and populist strategy of showing his attentiveness to the interests of ordinary people can also be seen in other parts of Yudhoyono’s State Address (see the complete speech in “The state address,” 2005). To persuade the public, the government then gave a ‘gimmick’ in the form of direct cash as compensation funds which thus showed the government's empathy for the people. In his speech before the Member of Parliament, Yudhoyono persuade the public that he understood the suffering of the people when raising fuel prices. Therefore, the government sought to create a compensation program and aimed primarily for the poor. The program, later named as Bantuan Langsung Tunai (Unconditional Cash Transfer, BLT), is directed at reducing poverty and creating work opportunities. However, in much literature it was noted that programs such as BLT were designed not to reduce poverty but were designed as emergency income support (see, for example, World Bank, 2012, p. 12). The speech shows that Yudhoyono was trying to attract public sympathy by empathising with public difficulties. This was done by Yudhoyono by issuing Instruksi Presiden (Presidential Instruction) No. 10/2005 on energy saving, released on 10 July 2005.

The president’s instruction to conduct energy saving was directed to all departments and heads of government in the region, among others, in terms of reducing the use of lights and air conditioning (in office buildings) run by the government, local government, and state-owned enterprises. Energy saving was also applied to official vehicles run by the government and local governments (Instruksi
The government also urged their bureaucrats to wear regular work uniforms instead of formal suits (jackets). This was related to the use of air conditioning (“Presiden keluarkan inpres,” 2005). Moreover, the Minister of Information called on television stations to reduce their airtime and to no longer broadcast programs for 24 hours (Abdullah, 2012). However, the government later abandoned this appeal (“Stasiun TV boleh,” 2005).

The government claimed this effort significantly saved energy and it was reapplied in 2008 and 2012 (see “SBY lagi-lagi akan,” 2009; Liu, 2012). This government/presidential rhetoric aimed to show empathy with public suffering. In January 1998, during the economic crisis of the Soeharto era, Soeharto’s eldest daughter Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana made similar public empathy efforts by calling on businessmen, particularly the Chinese, to contribute their gold and other valuable items to show their empathy and appealed to public nationalism in the movement of *Cinta Rupiah* (Love the Rupiah campaign), but these rhetorical efforts were considered insignificant and ineffective (Pepinsky, 2009, p. 173). This political public relations campaign, however, can also be regarded as another methods of propaganda.

**Right decision at the right time.** As discussed earlier, Indonesian presidents often face serious problems when they have to raise fuel prices. During his presidency, Yudhoyono also had to deal with urgent circumstances when the international price

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49 Siti Hadiyanti Rukmana initiated the Love the Rupiah movement to invite people to release foreign currency. The worst decline of the Rupiah in Indonesian history occurred on June 17, 1998 when its position was at the level of Rp 16,650 per US dollar and led the Soeharto regime to collapse due to the monetary crisis (see Supriadi, 2015).
of petroleum products soared and the value of the rupiah declined. The decision to raise the fuel price was postponed for several months before it was announced on October 1, 2005. Yudhoyono’s tendency to be slow in making important decisions, such as raising fuel prices, had received widespread criticism from politicians, the news media, political experts, and even complaints from his own ministers (Liddle, 2005; Interview with Ikrar Nusa Bakti, December 28, 2015; Interview with Syamsuddin Haris, December 22, 2015).

William Liddle (2005) was one political expert who criticised Yudhoyono’s slow behaviour in making decisions. President Yudhoyono’s reluctance to adopt policy recommendations from his ministers was a conscious choice, rather than the pressures from his economic team, led by Coordinating Minister Aburizal Bakrie and political support from Vice President Jusuf Kalla. Given that Yudhoyono’s predecessors were partially undermined by mass demonstrations fueled by economic complaints, Liddle (2005) argued that “Yudhoyono’s calculation of the political price of the high economic reform in terms of potentially widespread and fierce opposition in parliament and in the street” but Liddle also noted that the president might have made a miscalculation because “the political costs of poor economic policy could turn higher in 2009, when Yudhoyono was running for re-election” (p. 338).

From a different perspective, president’s specialist staff Firmanzah stated that the process of decision making could be very long because the technical ministers were not yet ready to complete their proposal and provide some options to the president. “I think the speed of the President in making a decision depends on the readiness of the technical ministers. If they give something immature to the president,
then it will be returned again” (Interview with Firmanzah, January 11, 2016). In regards to this case, Yudhoyono admitted that he postponed implementing the policy of oil price increments even after the decision was made three weeks earlier, because the compensation fund for poor families (BLT) was not yet available (Yudhoyono, 2014, p. 218). Thus, when Yudhoyono thought that ‘the cake is not cooked yet’ he would not dare to release any decision.

Dewi Fortuna Anwar also emphasised that the democratic institutions meant it was no longer possible to allow the president to make arbitrary decisions because every decision must go through a democratic process anyway. For example, when the government wanted to build infrastructure the government must change the law about the use of land for public facilities. It means every decision must go through a democratic process. This is problematic because changing the law will take a long time. Thus, Anwar noted that a lot of criticism happened because they did not understand the current situation and easily criticised Yudhoyono as an incompetent president who could not make quick decisions: “We cannot do anything by using a presidential decree. We can see a lot of criticism in the country that is unfair because they don’t understand the constraints faced by a democratic president” (Interview with Dewi Fortuna Anwar, January 18, 2016). Therefore, the slowness of Yudhoyono’s decision making according to government officials was only due to technical and bureaucratic problems.

However, Liddle’s opinion and other reasons put forward by the president/vice-president officials could be different when viewed through the lens of political public relations. In public relations, ‘timing’ is everything. Thus, in regards
to the strategy and political calculation, there was a possibility that President Yudhoyono and his Vice President Jusuf Kalla sought the most suitable time to announce the policy to the public. In political public relations, determining when information should be publicised, what messages should be emphasised, who and how to deliver the message are important elements to be effective in action and communication process. When the government had to raise oil prices for the second time in 2005, October 1, 2005 may have been chosen as it was close to the beginning of the Muslims’ fasting month or month of *Ramadhan* in Islamic calendar. As such, a few days after the decision was announced, most Indonesians were fasting and trying to refrain from anger and temptation. Thus, mass demonstrations cease when the fasting month begins. After fasting for the whole month, Muslims then celebrate Idul Fitri holidays for several days and forgive each other. The problem is then over.

The timing strategy of the policy announcement, therefore, can contribute to the success of policy implementation. Thus, Yudhoyono was considered very slow in making important decisions possibly because he wants to ensure that all strategies, including exit strategies, are well prepared. More importantly, Yudhoyono was very concerned about his popularity, then strategy and preparation for him became the key features to avoid blunders and reduce public rejection of government policies. In other words, in the context of Yudhoyono as decision maker, the strategy of political public relations is also one of the critical factors that contribute to slowing down its behaviour in making important decision.

**Media campaign.** As stated earlier, Yudhoyono was relatively successful in increasing fuel prices three times during his first tenure (2004-2009). And when the
world crude oil prices fell, which coincided with the campaign season for legislative and presidential elections in 2009, the Yudhoyono government issued a ‘gimmick’ for the public by slightly lowering the oil prices and used this government policy as a political campaign strategy.

After being re-elected president for the second term, Yudhoyono faced more difficult challenges than the previous period. In addition to a major corruption scandal that suddenly emerged in the early years of Yudhoyono’s second period (see Andres, 2016; “Rivals rocking SBY,” 2009), the government needed to raise oil prices again as international crude prices surged. Although Indonesia was no longer required to increase oil prices as the agreement with the IMF had been halted, the government declared that oil prices should rise again to relieve the government’s national budget (Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Negara, APBN) (“The ongoing quest,” 2013). The issue then became complicated as media support for the Yudhoyono government began to decline.

As I discussed earlier, Yudhoyono was able to establish symbiotic relationships with a number of media conglomerates at the beginning of his reign in the first term. Yudhoyono began to lose his grip on the media when the owners of the media became interested in the power struggle (Mujayatno and Saputra, 2014). Hisyam (2014), for instance, said that the owner of Media group Surya Paloh received another offer from Yudhoyono for collaboration when the 2009 presidential election drew closer, but Paloh rejected the offer because he considered his political vision to be no longer in

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50 The Yudhoyono government paid the loan to the IMF in 2006, which is sooner than the agreed schedule, so the Fund could no longer dictate the Indonesian government’s economic policies (see Bisara, 2015).
line with Yudhoyono (p. 159). Additionally, Paloh was also disappointed with Yudhoyono’s unkept promises, such as the position as head of Watimpres (Presidential Advisory Council), or a medal of appreciation for assistance in helping the victims in Aceh’s tsunami in December 2004 (pp. 159–160).

The government’s policy to raise the price of oil received harsh opposition from the public and the press, even though the government had used an intensive media campaign to facilitate good reception of the policy. However, the government finally postponed implementing the policy scheduled for 2012 to 2013. According to Indriyanto et al. (2013), the government had made a strong media campaign with good intergovernmental coordination, as demonstrated by the establishment of a dedicated team for communications-related planning. The government also conducted ‘interactive dialogues’ approximately 24 times between March and July 2012. Indriyanto et al. (2013) said that the media campaign gained good results, and the large number of interactive dialogues “reveals a desire to build public understanding and support. Government officials responsible for communications should also be praised for adapting quickly” (p. 8). This media campaign was led and organised by the Ministry of Communication and Information. However, Indriyanto et al. said, in the first half of 2012, policy announcements changed frequently, and communications activities adapted to support new plans. “In these circumstances, there are clear limits to how much research and planning can go into a communications campaign … there is a lack of strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation” (p. 8).
Yudhoyono’s spokesperson for economic affairs Firmanzah stated that the postponement was actually a mistake by the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources at that time when he included a clause in the 2012 State Budget. Firmanzah noted that in one article it stated that the price of subsidised oil should not be increased during 2012 and this article became a law. Firmanzah said that the government could not increase the oil price in 2012 because it would break the law. Therefore, he added, if the government wanted to raise the price of oil, the law needed to be amended first (Interview with Firmanzah, January 11, 2015).

**Oil Pricing Policy as Political Commodity**

**Government compensation.** Long before fuel prices increased in 2005, the Indonesian government, including the Yudhoyono administration, had several safety net programs to help poor people when the government cut oil subsidies. Social programs included ‘Raskin’, *Beras Miskin* (program for sale of subsidised rice to the poor), ‘BOS’, *Bantuan Operational Sekolah* (School Operational Grants), *Jamkesmas*, *Jaminan Kesehatan Masyarakat* (Health insurance scheme for the poor), and the most famous program: ‘BLT’ *Bantuan Langsung Tunai* (Unconditional Cash Transfer). BLT as a government compensation program received both praise and criticism. Originally, BLT was designed as additional income to help poor people to meet their basic needs following oil price increases (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2015; World Bank, 2012). Starting in 2005, the Yudhoyono administration provided BLT compensation every time the government increased fuel prices.

In 2005, Yudhoyono specified in his State of the Nation Address speech in parliament that the compensation program aimed not only to ease the burden of poor
people and suppress the negative impact of fuel price increases, but also to reduce poverty, creating work opportunities that hinges on the programme to increase the quality of life of the people. Nevertheless, the objectives, to reduce poverty and create work opportunities, were considered exaggerated and misleading. The World Bank (2012), for instance, said “BLT served a clear objective well, but it is not a social assistance or poverty reduction system” (p. 6). The BLT program became a public debate in Indonesia mainly about the feasibility of giving cash to poor households. The World Bank (2012) emphasised that “Cash with no strings attached could not be beneficial for poor households, it was thought, because they would not receive the skills or awareness encouraging them to pull themselves out of poverty” (p. 10). The Bank maintained, “BLT would be equivalent to handing out fish, not teaching households how to fish for themselves [emphasis in original] … As a cash handout without enduring governance protocols and automatic procedures, BLT was also open to charges that it could be politically motivated and manipulated” (World Bank, 2012, p. 10).

In the first implementation of the BLT program, the government allocated a total budget of IDR 23 trillion as compensation for two fuel price increases in 2005, i.e. on March 1, 2005 and October 1, 2005. Every poor household received IDR 100,000 (equal to AUD 10) per month and it was directed to 19.2 million poor households. The first phase of the distribution of funds was conducted in October-December 2005, and the funds allocated for the three months amounted to IDR 4,489 trillion. The second phase was given in 2006, with a budget of IDR 18.61 trillion for 9 months (World Bank, 2012, p.13).
**BLT program as money politics.** In 2004, Indonesian people voted for their president and the heads of regional government through direct elections. This new electoral system greatly influenced the emergence of money politics in Indonesia (Hadiz, 2012). In 2009, BLT emerged as one of the most popular issues of the presidential campaign (Beaton and Lontoh, 2010). The BLT program became controversial as many people assumed the social program was a form of money politics. Ironically, the source of BLT, according to the Head of State Audit Agency (BPK) Anwar Nasution, was derived from foreign loans, not from the compensation of fuel prices increase (Handr & Burhani, 2009, “Temuan BPK,” 2009). Thus, civil society accused the government of two sins, borrowing the money from foreign sources and then disbursing IDR 41 trillion cash money to poor households as a bribe to buy the public vote to win the election.

In the Reformation era, vote buying became common practice in the Indonesian elections. It was known as *serangan fajar* (attack at dawn) where a candidate mobilises their functionaries to distribute *amplop* (envelope with money) to villagers’ homes on election day. Croissant and Beate (2006) observed food staples were frequently provided to buy votes in the *serangan fajar*, and the election committee could not monitor this unethical practice due to both the lack of funding and an insufficient number of watchdog staff members.

Following the successful implementation of BLT in 2005, the Yudhoyono administration extended the program as they disbursed money in 2008–2009 in the approach to the presidential election. Political elites and civil society criticised the BLT program and identified it as a money politics tactic used by Yudhoyono to boost his
popularity in the 2009 elections. Mulyadi Sumarto, director of Pusat Studi Kependudukan dan Kebijakan, University of Gadjah Mada (PSKK UGM) said the BLT program, implemented during the 2009 election campaign, was the result of political manipulation. Sumarto argued the deception was more visible compared to what happened in Mexico and Peru, where the same program had been applied. The manipulation could be seen from the urgency of the 2008 BLT program, which was actually no longer necessary. Sumarto in PSKK UGM (2013) argued further:

Such manipulations include the distribution period of BLT, the number of BLT recipients, data used for the distribution of BLT, BLT distribution method, and legal basis of BLT program. The series of manipulation, distribution of BLT to households before the election, and then claim it as an expression of good intention of the incumbent president to mobilise voters, is an indication of vote-buying (para. 5-6).

Megawati Soekanoputri, Amien Rais, Kwik Kian Gie, and Rizal Ramli, among others, were the leading political elites who strongly rejected the BLT program. Megawati criticised the program in which she personified Yudhoyono as if he was Santa Claus who distributes money (as a gift) to common people (“Megawati: Bayaran,” 2008). On many occasions, Megawati, who is the chairperson of PDI-P, the only opposition party in the parliament, also said BLT was downgrading society’s dignity and creating a beggar mentality (“Megawati: BLT bikin,” 2012). She argued that the program only increased suffering and it was inappropriate for the Indonesian nation, as it is not a nation of beggars (Simarmata, 2008).
Even though their political rivals kept criticising the BLT program, Yudhoyono and Kalla persistently highlighted BLT as a helpful government program, which not only helped poor people but also eradicated poverty (Burhani, 2010; Junaedy, 2009). Vice President Kalla responded to Megawati’s critiques by saying that he was offended that the Indonesian nation was equated with beggars. Kalla argued that the government treated BLT as zakat (charity) and the government is obliged to help poor people (Simarmata, 2008).

Meanwhile, in his own book, Yudhoyono wrote that he was aware of these criticisms and thus carefully prepared his counter attack. In a huge gathering at Simpang Lima, Semarang, Central Jawa, in 2009, before thousands of people who attended his political campaign, Yudhoyono spoke to the masses and tried to arouse public emotion. The following is the dialogue between Yudhoyono and the masses.

“Brothers, there are people questioning the BLT from government to the people. My question is, is it wrong if the state or government provides assistance to people who are experiencing difficulties?” I asked.
“No, nothing is wrong!” The crowded replied with thunder.
“Some think a hundred thousand is worthless. Perhaps it is true for those who have and the rich. What is the money worth for the people, is it no value?” I asked again.
“There is, it is worth it!” They answered again.
“Okay. Lastly, lastly, do you think our brother who received the government’s assistance could be assumed as beggar?”
“No, we are not beggars,” they answer with even more thunder (Yudhoyono, 2014, p. 439) 51

Megawati was aware that Yudhoyono’s political campaign was to counter her criticism of the BLT program. Realising that the majority of her constituents were from the lowest class, Megawati then turned to support BLT. Perhaps the most embarrassing thing for Megawati was when her political consultant advised her to change the theme of the campaign. Although Megawati initially attacked the BLT program and the fuel price increases, she then became supportive to the unconditional cash transfer policy. This became a political farce that arguably added to her political downfall. Adjie Alfaraby (2012), concluded that the implementation of BLT had an enormous electoral effect in increasing and lowering public support. The receivers of BLT are the masses at the grassroots level that became a major force of PDIP. Adjie said:

It was clear that other political parties also provide active political responses to the BLT and fuel issues. They do not want to be harmed and also do not wish that only certain parties obtain political advantages from the policy. That is why the power game behind the fuel and BLT issue, especially before elections, becomes a hot issue (2012, p. 6).

Megawati blundered when she criticised the BLT program because her speech was immediately criticised by her political opponents in the mass media and her grassroots’ voters were easily swayed to support Yudhoyono’s Partai Demokrat (Adjie, 2012).

Lowering fuel prices. Yudhoyono administration increased fuel prices three times during his first tenure in 2005 and 2008, and provided the BLT program to support the policy. However, Yudhoyono also reduced oil prices three times in a row as the campaign season approached. The lowering of the fuel prices coincided with the fall of the world’s fuel prices in 2009 and amounted to only IDR 500 (AUD 5 cents) each time, or totally IDR 1,500 (AUD 15 cents) within one and a half months. In the Palace, the government attempted to showcase this as a government achievement when the President’s spokesperson Andi Mallarangeng said that the previous administration had never been able to reduce the fuel prices three times in a row.

The government’s policy of reducing fuel prices three times in a short period was definitely a strategy to attract people in order to win general elections. For the legislative election, Partai Demokrat used Yudhoyono’s image as a successful president who could reduce fuel prices. He hired political consultant Choel Mallarangeng of Fox Indonesia to develop media campaigns (Ufen, 2010), including about the government policy to reduce fuel prices. In a 30-second political advertisement, three types of people from different occupations (a city transportation driver, a fisherman, and a farmer) expressed their gratitude and bowed to President Yudhoyono for lowering the oil price and thus making their lives easier.\textsuperscript{52} The televised advertisement on the fuel price issue clearly sought to sway public opinion. By using words such as ‘the first time in the history’, this advertisement refers to Yudhoyono’s feat in lowering oil prices three times in a row, which had not been achieved by the previous presidents. The advertisement concluded with a word:

\textsuperscript{52} See the advertisement at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1sDkVdvYx0
Lanjutkan (Continue), signifying that people should continue to support Yudhoyono for the second term.

In this section, we can see how Yudhoyono was able to make the issue of fuel prices as a political commodity ahead of the 2009 presidential and legislative elections. After successfully raising oil prices twice (March 1, 2005 and October 1, 2005), the Yudhoyono administration again raised oil prices for the third time on May 24, 2008. Price increases with the provision of BLT facilities, or cash directly to the poor, Yudhoyono used this as a campaign material to win the 2009 legislative and presidential elections. In addition, Yudhoyono also used oil prices as a political commodity by lowering oil prices three times regularly and he cleverly claimed that the price decline was an achievement that had never been done by previous governments. These manipulative efforts show the way political public relations with modern propaganda techniques have gradually become institutionalised in the presidential organisation.

Implications of Political Public Relations

Historically, a government was often tested through various problems, including in applying unpopular policies. The process of formulating unpopular policy has always been problematic for Indonesian presidents. When the government arrives at a decision to raise fuel prices, for example, the policy will not be smoothly implemented if the president or government is unable to cope with public resistance, or if it lacks strong communication strategies to encourage public acceptance. Indeed, President Yudhoyono was aware of how government policy on fuel price increments led to Soeharto’s downfall and also forced Megawati to drop the policy after mass
riots erupted everywhere. Thus, deciding unpopular policies obviously requires certain strategies and tactics and also needs to consider their impact on the public.

The impact on political decision making. Compared to his predecessors, Yudhoyono was relatively more successful in implementing policies to reform fuel subsidies. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, political experts, observers, politicians, and even Yudhoyono’s own ministers criticised Yudhoyono’s slow and indecisive attitude in a situation requiring the government to immediately make the decision. Such criticism is based on the president’s slowness when he has to make decisions on public policies. A news magazine wrote that Yudhoyono was so busy creating his public image that he was too afraid to take unpopular measures (Pratisto et al., 2007). Yudhoyono was also labelled peragu or indecisive due to his slowness in making decisions (see, for example, Kartasasmita, 2010).

William Liddle criticised Yudhoyono’s sluggish attitude reflecting his political cautiousness and Yudhoyono’s reluctance to adopt policy recommendations of his economic team. Liddle and other political observer’s perspectives then became a mainstream view on assessing Yudhoyono’s performance because it was frequently highlighted in various news media. They shared the same opinion about Yudhoyono’s slow attitude and indecisiveness in making decisions as Yudhoyono’s main weakness (see, for example, Aspinall, Mietzner, and Tomsa, 2015; Fealy, 2015; Interview with Ikrar Nusa Bakti, 2015; Interview with Syamsuddin Haris, 2015; Kartasasmita, 2014; Liddle, 2005; McBeth, 2016).

This old criticism has become a negative image for Yudhoyono. And this image was getting stronger since he began competing in the 2004 presidential election, as it
was often used as ammunition by his political opponents, including mainstream media owners who have political interests, to attack Yudhoyono’s character. To counter this criticism, Yudhoyono’s spokesperson, Dino Patti Djalal, in his memoir wrote that Yudhoyono denied the accusation that he is a doubtful president [presiden peragu] (p. 56) and preferring to discourse [suka berwacana] (p. 144) rather than make decisions quickly. According to Djalal (2008), Yudhoyono usually called and discussed with various stakeholders (pihak terkait) prior to taking a key decision in order to understand the essence of the problem. Next, the president sets options and assesses the consequences of the options. Subsequently, he estimates the factors that will arise in the future before he finally makes decisions. In addition, Djalal (2008) also disclosed that Yudhoyono is the president who most relies on SMS (short message service) in Indonesian history (p.164), and always reads public opinion surveys to read the mood and feelings of the people (p.165).

This suggests that Yudhoyono’s slow attitude in making decisions can be attributed to his cautious attitude and over consideration. On the other hand, it implies that Yudhoyono has his own political calculations and wanted to establish appropriate communication strategies and ensure that a policy is well prepared before being announced to the public. Thus, Djalal’s notes are in line with the discussion as stated earlier in this chapter that Yudhoyono was a strategic man who studied military strategies, including the tactics and battle strategies of Sun Tzu, Clausewitz, and Liddell Hart (Yudhoyono, 2014, p. 350).

I scrutinised this issue by interviewing some participants and explored their retrospective accounts to ascertain how important it is to maintain and enhance a good
image for Yudhoyono and how it related to the policy-making process. Several participants (Bakti, Djalal, Firmanzah, Haris, Mr. X, Septarina) confirmed that Yudhoyono was always concerned with building his good image to maintain his popularity during his presidency. Firmanzah, one of Yudhoyono’s spokespersons for economic affairs, revealed that one of the duties of the president’s specialist staff was to choose issues addressed to the president. Therefore, they must be able to classify information and determine what is included in the president's domain, coordinating minister’s domain, and minister’s domain. He acknowledged that the task was not easy but they had to decide and prioritise certain information anyway because the president was really busy and did not need to know all the problems.

It was evidently quite difficult because there was no standard of measurement. However, the presidential organisation is a political institution, so some issues that become the main concern of the public, or matters that have a big impact on the president’s popularity can affect the president’s electability. That was one important criterion. Other issues such as technical and bureaucratic problems should be reported to the ministers; no need to tell the president because it’s not effective. (Interview with Firmanzah, Jakarta, January 11, 2016)

Presidential spokesperson for foreign affairs, Dino Patti Djalal, also confirmed that the president would not handle all issues that happened throughout the country. Confirming Firmanzah’s statement, Djalal argued that presenting a good image of Indonesia is very much part of the whole strategy, internally as well as externally. Image building is crucial for the president and government as it can provide many advantages. And presenting a good image of Indonesia is key in a government or in
the country’s international affairs as it can increase the bargaining position as well as gain benefits for home affairs (Interview with Dino Patti Djalal, January 21, 2016).

With the above responses, we can now understand why the president (sometimes) was too slow in responding or making decision on some issues, such as the policy to increase fuel price or the Lapindo mudflow case, even though it was urgent and obviously involved the lives of many people. In the context of political hegemony, it was clear that there are certain issues that need to be prioritised, not for the urgency of the cases but because for the sake of increasing or maintaining the president’s popularity. This indicates that implementing government policy often needs to be sustained by political public relations strategies, but at the same time, it can be a factor that can slow down the decision-making process. In other words, it reflects that in politics, building and maintaining a good image must be a top priority rather than deciding important policies for the benefit of the citizens.

Furthermore, when viewed through the lens of political public relations, Yudhoyono’s slow attitude in making decisions can be associated to communication strategies. As discussed earlier, ‘timing’ is everything in public relations. Thus, in the case of the fuel price policy, for example, determining when the information on policy should be published is important so that it can be effective in its implementation. For example, delaying and executing this policy towards the fasting month of Ramadan, where Muslims must control their anger or emotions, is a time strategy. Therefore, aside from Yudhoyono’s character factor which is considered indecisive and too slow in making decision, communication strategies and political calculations are also important factors that contribute to the delay in the implementation of important
policies that must or have been decided. In summary, this study demonstrates that the activities and strategies of political public relations can slow down, postpone, or ignore potential decisions on certain issues that can be made by the president, through an intervention in the policy-making process at the basic level, i.e. at the stage of selecting issues, and it was related to the president’s interest in increasing their popularity and perpetuating their dominant position.

**The impact on social and political environment.** As the number one and the main political actor in a country, the president has always been the center of public attention. Their policies can affect the fate of the nation. It can improve the quality of life of their citizens but also can be the opposite. Therefore, the process of making and implementing government policies should be the main priority and focus on efforts to improve public welfare and maintain political stability. While efforts to maintain popularity and legitimacy could be the next priority, not the other way around. And the success of the government in implementing its policies is one of the most important stages that requires an appropriate communication approach and strategy so that the policy gets wide acceptance from the public.

When implementing policies and using the political public relations strategy, Yudhoyono always tries to avoid *kegaduhan politik* (‘political tumult’). Claiming that he needed to prepare several options before implementing his policies, political expert views that Yudhoyono tended to decide a policy that can satisfy all parties, even if it ignored the public interest. “That’s impossible. Because in every policy, it can fill one side, but can hurt the other. No policy can satisfy all people” (Interview with Syamsuddin Haris, December 22, 2015).
In his capacity as a president as well as a politician,\textsuperscript{53} Yudhoyono also wants to play safely to build a good image and to maintain his legitimacy. By harnessing political public relations strategies and with such leadership approach, Yudhoyono seems to be better at improving and maintaining political and security stability in Indonesia than his immediate predecessors. Haris noted that it shows the mechanisms and functions of public relations must exist in government institutions. But more importantly is “to make the function of PR not being trapped to preserve stability and harmony only. If it’s the objective, there will be a false harmony or artificial stability”.

Likewise, Aspinall, Mietzner and Tomsa (2015) observed that Yudhoyono can be regarded as a ‘moderating president’, politically moderate or centrist, who always puts himself as a moderator rather than a decision maker when faced with an issue or a situation. Yudhoyono tended to position himself as a leader who mediates differences in a government and society characterised by deep divisions, “and he believed that his most important role was to moderate these divisions by mediating between the conflicting forces and interests to which they gave rise” (Aspinall et al, 2015, p. 3). However, the scholars observed that Yudhoyono was too slow and indecisive as he had too many considerations. The consequence of the slowness in decision-making was detrimental to the public because many opportunities and progress of the nation might be missed, and thus thwart the improvement of people’s

\textsuperscript{53} On May 22, 2005, Yudhoyono was elected as Ketua Dewan Pembina (Chairman of the Executive Council) of Democratic Party (“SBY Jadi Ketua”, 2005). On March 30, 2013 at the extraordinary congress of Democratic Party he was elected by acclamation as party’s chairman (2013–2015) replacing Anas Urbaningrum who was involved in corruption cases, and then he was re-elected as chairman for the 2015–2020 period.
welfare. Therefore, they argue that Yudhoyono’s 10-year rule is considered stable but stagnant (Aspinall, Mietzner, and Tomsa, 2015).

**Conclusion**

In exploring and analysing the implementation of government policies on oil prices increments, this chapter has shown several practices and strategies of Yudhoyono’s political public relations, most of which have propaganda characteristics or their nature is propagandistic. Through this case study, it was revealed that Yudhoyono relied on military officers and trusted them more than professional public relations consultants in helping to manage his communication tactics and plans. The chapter demonstrates that Yudhoyono and his officials were able to manage the crisis, reduce mass riots and used communication strategies and tactics far more advanced and sophisticated than the previous presidents. Therefore, Yudhoyono was relatively more successful in implementing the unpopular policy than his immediate predecessors.

In addition to having high popularity when this unpopular policy was implemented, Yudhoyono’s success in utilising the political public relations strategies was also supported by the rhetorical skills of the president, subordinates and spokespersons in explaining policies and winning the discourse in public debate. Yudhoyono’s administration used some short-term strategies and tactics, such as political lobbying, empathy and timing, and campaigning on simultaneous policies such as unconditional cash transfers and other social safety net programs. By using these sophisticated political public relations strategies Yudhoyono could maximise
political and popular support as he successfully made his political rivals’ criticisms turn to support during the campaign for the 2009 presidential election.

More importantly, from this case study I can identify a number of political public relations practices and strategies which are basically propaganda methods that were carried out with new techniques and strategies. In an effort to persuade the wider society to accept the unpopular policy, for example, the Yudhoyono administration cleverly provided direct cash funds to poor families and also campaigned for energy-saving movements to the public. In addition, he also consistently persuades the public with the same information and presents half-truth information that seems to be the only choice. There are even some propaganda strategies that have been used since Hitler’s propaganda era, such as distracting public opinions, excluding competing ideas, short-circuiting informed judgment, and ignoring alternative ideas or courses of action. Therefore, this chapter reinforces a central argument of this thesis, which has been stated in the previous chapters, that political public relations can be considered as ‘soft propaganda’.

Another important finding in this thesis is that political scholars and observers often criticise Yudhoyono for his indecisive character or his slowness in making important decisions. This thesis does not repudiate this mainstream view, as perceived by Liddle and other scholars and politicians, because it can be complemented with other perspectives. However, this thesis offers a different perspective and argues that Yudhoyono’s indecisive and slow decisionmaking, particularly on important policies was because he made certain political calculations that were concerned with maintaining his popularity. Moreover, if politics is
ultimately about “who gets what, when, how,” as suggested by Lasswell (1958), and it was believed that ‘time is everything’ in public relations strategy, then this thesis puts more emphasis on this ‘time issue’. It links it with political public relations strategies so that the implementation public policy can be widely accepted, while at the same time allowing President Yudhoyono to maintain or even increase political and public support. Nevertheless, this ‘slowness’ can be detrimental to the common interest of the public because it can prevent national opportunities and progress, thwart the improvement of people’s welfare, and slow, or even stagnate the democratisation process. Apart from that, Yudhoyono’s attitude could ease tensions and increase political stability. As discussed earlier, he was able to generate political consent in relation to politicians in parliament which was achieved through political lobbying. In the context of political public relations, it might be considered good practice because political stability (which can encourage economic improvement and stability) could generally benefit the country.
Chapter 7
Conclusion

Introduction

When Yudhoyono was elected as Indonesia’s sixth president in 2004, Indonesian people had high expectations that the new leader could fix many problems in the country, including corruption, terrorism, and massive poverty (see, for example, Harvey, 2004; “Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono,” n.d.). Although there are still several public expectations and political promises that have not been fulfilled until the end of his tenure, this study suggests that Yudhoyono used political public relations and drew on propaganda techniques, which could make his popularity often hovering above 50 per cent during his administration. By using political impression management and political dramas, such as curhat (moans) tebar pesona (spreading around charm), ‘playing the victim’ and other persuasive techniques, Yudhoyono was able to attract public sympathy and impress the Indonesian people.

The ability to build a strong image as a smart and firm leader, followed by Yudhoyono’s victory in the 2004 presidential election was an interesting phenomenon after Soeharto stepped down in 1998. Together with running mate Jusuf Kalla and his Partai Demokrat, a newly established political party which only gained seven percent votes of the 2004 legislative election, Yudhoyono convincingly defeated Megawati, the eldest daughter of the late Sukarno. In the first round of the 2004 presidential election, Yudhoyono also crushed two strong presidential candidates: Amien Rais, one of the Reformation movement leaders who had urged Soeharto to resign, and another
military figure, General Wiranto, proposed by Partai Golkar and political elites of the New Order regime.

How do we explain these phenomena? How did Sukarno and Soeharto retain power for decades? Why were Presidents Habibie, Wahid, and Megawati only able to hold their posts for a total of six years? And how can Yudhoyono win and maintain his power for two full terms? For me, as a researcher, all of these historical events, from the emergence of founding fathers, the transfer of power among nation leaders, as well as the power struggle in the Reformation era, make Indonesia one of the best case studies on political leadership, political communication, and, most importantly, the power and exercise of political public relations.

This thesis examined the development of political public relations during the Yudhoyono presidency (2004–2014). One of the key arguments of the thesis is that political public relations contributed significantly to the well-running of the Yudhoyono presidency, empowering and professionalising his political communication, and was one of the significant factors that enabled him to maintain his power legitimately. In the context of the democratisation process in the post-Soeharto era, the emergence and utilisation of political public relations by President Yudhoyono enabled the political stability necessary to sustain a healthy democracy. Nevertheless, this thesis also reveals that Yudhoyono uses political public relations excessively to maintain power and hegemonic control rather than prioritising the public interest, and that can be seen explicitly in the process of political decisionmaking and presidential and legislative elections.
Summary of Key Findings

This section addresses four research questions identified in Chapter 1.

RQ 1: How is political public relations perceived from Indonesian perspective?

It is difficult to acquire a common understanding of the concept of political public relations in the Indonesian context, given that the term only emerged in the early decades of the 2000s. One main reason is that Indonesian people typically were aware of the practices of governmental communication as political propaganda and indoctrination, such as the controlling, manipulative or coercive strategies performed by the Sukarno and Soeharto regimes. In addition, the rapid development of political public relations strategies in Indonesia and the differences between public relations in the political sector and in corporate settings have not been fully recognised by practitioners nor agreed by scholars.

However, after analysing participants’ perspective, examining Yudhoyono’s practices and activities that are the domain of political public relations, and then linking them to relevant theories and concepts, this thesis arrived at a premise that the concept and practice of political public relations could be considered as ‘soft propaganda’. This kind of propaganda rarely involved elements of force and coercion as it was practised under the authoritarian regimes, even though most of the practice were arousing emotions and using public sentiment. Thus, unlike the Sukarno and Soeharto regimes, for instance, which clearly suppressed press freedom and freedom of expression, in Yudhoyono’s media management they tried to control the news by establishing a symbiotic relationship with media owners, who happened to be
political party chairpersons, and held formal and informal meetings with chief editors and journalists, aiming at agenda setting and backgrounder.

There are many evidences and examples of the propaganda strategies and methods used by Yudhoyono and other political actors discussed in this thesis, ranging from creating songs and writing books; word games in the form of *glittering generalities* and *exaggerating*; news management; ‘black’ and negative campaign; engineering popular surveys; providing half-truth information; to distracting public attention. For example, Yudhoyono and other political actors build their public image and influence public opinion through the publication of popular survey results in the mass media. One well-known propaganda strategy was identified in this political activity, namely the *bandwagon* effect. Another example of communication activities and image-building strategies undertaken by the government or president, which is also considered propaganda methods, involves spreading around charm (*tebar pesona*) and political imagery (*politik pencitraan*) largely by over-emphasising their good image.

From many propaganda examples stated above, it is difficult to deny that most of the propaganda methods and techniques used by Yudhoyono were essentially propaganda, or propagandistic. Therefore, in an Indonesian perspective, especially in the context of the Yudhoyono presidency, the concept of political public relations can be considered as ‘soft propaganda’. In other words, propaganda characteristics are inherent in the practices of political public relations, but the propaganda strategies and practices used by the Yudhoyono presidency were carried out with sophisticated methods and in gentle ways.
RQ 2: How did political public relations develop and institutionalise under the Yudhoyono presidency?

Political public relations developed in Indonesia within a few years after Soeharto stepped down in May 1998. Previously, political propaganda was used for decades by authoritarian regimes led by Presidents Sukarno and Soeharto. After the fall of Soeharto, a new democratic government led by President B. J. Habibie, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Megawati Soekarnoputri abandoned such communication forms and practices. However, these presidents were unable to uphold political stability and security. Their weakness in using communication strategies is a key factor in their inability to anticipate a democratisation process characterised by press freedom and freedom of expression. The implementation of unpopular policy by raising fuel prices, for example, was strongly opposed by the public and it contributed to the process of declining legitimacy and popularity of the presidents and their governments.

In contrast, Yudhoyono was able to effectively use political public relations strategies both in the presidential elections and his daily activities. Therefore, 2004 is a pivotal year in the modern development of political public relations practice in Indonesia. The rapid growth of political public relations was influenced by new government regulations, which stipulated the holding of direct elections for the president and legislative members from 2004, as well as direct elections for heads of government in the regions, such as governors, mayors, district heads from the following year. The development of political public relations in Indonesia was also marked by the growth in political consultants who conducted research and popular
surveys ahead of the 2004 presidential election. This thesis noted that in the early 2000s, some Ohio PhD scholars introduced advanced research methods to measure candidates’ popularity and electability. They disseminated their survey results in the news media to influence public opinion and designed other communication strategies in response to the results. Surprisingly, these new professionals had little background in public relations and journalism but were generally scholars in political science. Their services were increasingly sought after as they were able to accurately predict the results of the 2004 legislative and presidential elections.

Although reforms in government institutions have begun since the Habibie, Wahid and Megawati administrations, the institutionalisation of political public relations was also carried out significantly by Yudhoyono. Since the beginning of his presidency, Yudhoyono has placed a number of his trustees from civilian and military high rank officers as minister and the president’s specialist staff. Their duties and responsibilities were varied and they seemed able to work professionally even though their backgrounds were not from public relations practitioners. Although the government had developed Depkominfo as government public relations, Yudhoyono had focused on managing communication and developing the political public relations strategies within the presidential organisation. It can be concluded that in the context of institutionalising political public relations in government organisations, Yudhoyono prefers to be supported by a number of specialist staff members and military officers and trusts them more than public relations practitioners.
RQ 3: How did Yudhoyono harness political public relations to maximise political and public support?

This thesis shows that Yudhoyono is a president as well as politician who is much more aware and understanding of political public relations strategies than his immediate predecessors. He exercised his power with the assistance of his confidants from military fellows and specialist staff members to make his political communication and performance look ‘presidential’ and competent so that it can be used to mitigate public unrest and improve political stability, especially when implementing unpopular policies.

After failing to become Megawati’s vice president, Yudhoyono began establishing his own political party and hired political consultants to build his good image in the mass media. Using President Megawati’s lack of political communication skills, Yudhoyono often displays his attractive gestures, political messages and discourses in the media. With his ‘polite’ style and his skilful in political rhetoric, he, for example, tries to calm down the chaotic situation in Indonesia in the event of terrorist bombings and other mass riots. Ahead of the 2004 presidential election, Yudhoyono played a political drama and with a strategy of ‘playing the victim’, he succeeded in arousing the voters’ emotions and obtaining public sympathy to support him as new president.

In addition to his political lobbying in parliament, Yudhoyono also showed his skills in using the political public relations strategy, especially in getting political support for the implementation of unpopular policies. Although his political opponents often criticised him too slow and indecisive in making decisions,
Yudhoyono tended to be more successful than his predecessors in raising fuel prices up to four times during his administration. There are several strategies and tactics implemented by Yudhoyono related to efforts to apply unpopular policies. One strategy used was to provide direct cash assistance (BLT) to poor households and campaign on various occasions that the oil subsidy was salah sasaran (misdirected) because it was widely enjoyed by the upper-middle class community, and besides that the government made this policy as a last resort. With the BLT program, Yudhoyono also countered the criticism of the opposition that they (who rejected the BLT program) did not side with the rakyat kecil (small/poor people). As a result, his political opponents feared losing their constituents and turned back to support the policy. In addition, Yudhoyono also lowered oil prices three times at almost the same time. He campaigned for the policy during the legislative elections and claimed it was the achievement of his government, even though world fuel prices were indeed falling. This thesis shows that in his political public relations strategy, Yudhoyono was relatively successful in achieving his political goals by using new and old methods of propaganda and with consistency and sophisticated ways.

RQ 4: In the context of Yudhoyono’s presidency, what are notable impacts of political public relations on the broad political environment in Indonesia?

In many observations of political experts and media reviews, Yudhoyono was often said to be so slow in making important decisions because of his indecisive character and cautiousness. This thesis does not repudiate this mainstream view. Yet, by using a critical approach, this thesis offers an alternative perspective in that
Yudhoyono’s indecisive and slow decisionmaking, stemmed from his political calculations that were concerned with his efforts to enhance his popularity and ultimately to maintain his dominant position and hegemonic power. In other words, when viewed through the lens of political public relations, timing factors are also crucial, because in public relations, ‘timing’ is everything. Thus, when a policy is considered too long to be decided by the government, there is a possibility that the Yudhoyono government is looking for the best time to announce its policies to the public. The timing strategy of the policy announcement, therefore, can contribute to the success of policy implementation. Thus, Yudhoyono was considered very slow in making important decisions possibly because he wants to ensure that all strategies, including exit strategies, are well prepared.

This thesis, therefore, argues that political public relations may hamper, prolong, or intervene in certain issues to be discussed in the decisionmaking process. This is also closely linked to the excessive use of political public relations by Yudhoyono because of his desire to maintain his popularity as he tended to focus on issues that could boost his popularity. It can also be considered that this is a dialogical process in which the government pays more attention to the issues that people care about, but the process takes a long time because as they are too concerned about the negative impacts their policies could have on their image.

Moreover, political scholars, politicians, observers, and interview participants criticise Yudhoyono for his indecisive character or his slowness in making important decisions due to his desire to please all parties, trying to befriend all people and streams in society and to avoid kegaduhan politik (‘tumult’). Yudhoyono’s attitude and
his skills on political public relations strategies could ease tensions and increase political stability. Therefore, on the one hand, political public relations is considered to be able to slow down the policy-making process, and the consequence can be detrimental to society because many opportunities were missed. On the other hand, political public relations also has positive impacts, its role can ease tensions and expand acceptance of unpopular policies so that political stability can be maintained or enhanced.

**Conclusion**

This thesis offers a new perspective on characteristics and linkage between public relations and propaganda. It is assumed that in the context of Indonesia’s new democracy, political public relations can be regarded as soft propaganda. It implicitly states that political public relations is propaganda carried out in the subtle ways, rather than the hard ways. However, with such a strategy it becomes powerful, influencing, and perhaps more deceptive than indoctrination or other persuasive strategies used by the authoritarian regimes. The process of soft propaganda can occur sometimes without being realised by the public, mass society, or the intended target audience.

This thesis suggested that political public relations is a powerful and strategic instrument that can be exploited by political organisations, including the government and presidential institution, to strengthen their communication and to achieve their objectives and interests. The power of political public relations can lead to positive and negative impacts. Political public relations can be done ethically or unethically; it can be good or bad; it can be trustworthy or manipulative; but whatever it is, this
thesis showed that it can have positive and beneficial impacts on society. The positive impacts of political public relations, for example, are seen when Yudhoyono was relatively successful in mitigating public resistance when he implemented unpopular policies. Yudhoyono could also maximise his popularity and electability for he could retain his presidency for two full terms. And more broadly, political public relations can enhance and maintain political stability necessary to nourish and consolidate democracy. Conversely, the weakness or lack of political public relations can lead to disaster not only for the president and their government but also it can trigger political and security instability in the country. It may degrade the president’s legitimacy and public trust. Presidents Habibie, Wahid, and Megawati were good examples in this regard because they neglected, or could not take advantage of, political public relations during their tenure.

On the other hand, this thesis also demonstrated that political public relations can have negative impacts, especially when they were used excessively and exploited only for the vested interests of the president and political elites. In other words, the services of political public relations were focused on efforts to perpetuate dominant positions and maintain hegemony. Therefore, when the vested interests are more prominent than the public interest, the thesis argues that political public relations can inhibit or prolong the decisionmaking process that ultimately can harm the common good. In the context of smoothing the running of government, the discussion and comparison between Indonesian presidents can strengthen our understanding of the crucial role of political public relations in government
organisations. And at the same time, it affirms why political leaders should prioritise and master the use of political public relations when they first take office.
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Appendices
Appendix A: List of Participants

Appendix A1. List of the participants of group 1. ‘The Insider’: Government public relations officers and professional public relations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ahmed Kurnia</td>
<td>January 5, 2016</td>
<td>Ahmed Kurnia served as a government PR practitioner, former journalist (Tempo magazine), and a senior lecturer majoring in public relations. He served for ten years (2006–2016) as a special staff for Director General of Information and Public Communication and (Dirjen IKP) of the Ministry of Communication &amp; Informatics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Silih Agung Wasesa</td>
<td>January 5, 2016</td>
<td>Silih Agung Wasesa serves as deputy chairperson of APPRI (Association of Public Relations Firm in Indonesia) and founder of a PR firm in Jakarta. He has extensive experienced in brand public relations and marketing communications. He was helped some political actors’ communication strategies, including Indonesian presidents. Wasesa is also a senior lecturer majoring in public relations. He graduated from Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, with further professional education and training in PR both in Indonesia and abroad.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>January 27, 2016</td>
<td>(1); January 27, 2016 (2); and personal comm. in May 23, 2017*</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Adjie Alfarabi</td>
<td>January 6, 2016</td>
<td>Adjie Alfaraby serves as one of the directors and political consultant of LSI (Lingkaran Survey Indonesia, Indonesia Survey Circle) network. Established in 2005, LSI is one of the most prominent survey institutes in the country that provides political survey and political consultation to its clients. LSI managed to accompany a number of politicians to win elections. Yudhoyono and Partai Golkar were some of LSI’s clients.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Firmanzah</td>
<td>January 11, 2016</td>
<td>Firmanzah (one name) is a former special staff on economic affairs for President Yudhoyono (2012–2014). Previously, he held position as Head of Public Relations, Deputy Director of Postgraduate Program of Faculty of Economics, and then became Dean of the Faculty of Economics, Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta (2009 – 2013). Firmanzah obtained his Ph.D majoring in Strategic and Management International (UPPA) from University of Pau and Pays de l'Adour, Pau, France, (2005). Currently, Firmanzah holds a new position as Rector of Universitas Paramadina,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Freddy Tulung</td>
<td>January 12, 2016</td>
<td>Freddy Tulung is former Director General of Public Comm. at the Ministry of Communication &amp; Informatics (2010–2014). He was former Chairman of Bakohumas (the Coordination of Government Public Relations Council). He served as individual staff for the Minister of Comm. &amp; Info. (2007), Inspector General (2008-2009), and Director General for SKDI (Communication Media and Information Dissemination) (2009). Freddy graduated as Master of Urban Affairs in 1989 from Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dewi Fortuna Anwar</td>
<td>January 18, 2016</td>
<td>Dewi Fortuna Anwar serves as Research Professor and Deputy Chairman for Social Sciences and Humanities at LIPI (Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia, The Indonesian Institute of Sciences) (2004–2010. She obtained her Ph.D from Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. She briefly held the position of Assistant to the Vice President for Global Affairs (May 1998–July 1998 and that of Assistant Minister/State Secretary for Foreign Affairs August 1998– November 1999. During the Habibie administration, she served as Spokesperson of Foreign Affairs for the President. Professor Anwar served as Deputy secretary of the Vice President for Political affairs (2010–2014) during the Yudhoyono administration. From May 2015 until now, she has served as Deputy Secretary of Vice President Jusuf Kalla for Policy Supporting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dino Patti Djalal</td>
<td>January 21, 2016</td>
<td>Dino Patti Djalal is a former spokesperson for President Yudhoyono (2004-2010). He then served as the Indonesian Ambassador to the United States (2010-2013). He resigned from his ambassador post in September 2013 to pursue a presidential primary bid. He joined the Department of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia in 1987. Djalal received his doctorate from the London School of Economics and Political Science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Syafiq Basri Assegaff</td>
<td>January 21, 2016</td>
<td>Syafiq Basri Assegaff is a medical doctor, a former journalist from Tempo magazine (1983–1990), a professional PR consultant, and a senior lecturer majoring in public relations. He graduated from the faculty of medicine at Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung (1988). He also holds a Master degree in journalism from University of Technology Sydney (2001). He served as Director of Marketing and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Relations of Universitas Paramadina from July 2007–November 2010. In the 2004 presidential elections, Assegaff assisted the SBY-JK campaign as PR consultant in *tim sukses* (successful team) of Jusuf Kalla (JK).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>9. Wida Septarina</th>
<th>January 27, 2016 and personal comm. in May 29, 2017*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wida Septarina is a professional PR practitioner. In the presidential election 2009, she assisted Jusuf Kalla as political PR consultant. She is the founder and owner of a PR firm in Jakarta. She graduated with a bachelor degree in Russian Literature and a master of communication at the University of Indonesia. Wida has more than 15 years’ experience in Public Relations. Wida is also a senior lecturer at Universitas Indonesia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) notes: personal communication with interviewees Wisesa (May 23, 2017) and Septarina (May 29, 2017) were conducted by using short message service (an internet base application) either to confirm some issues and to develop the new questions.
Appendix A2. List of the participants of group 2. ‘The Outsiders’: Scholars, politician, and commentators from the industry and association of public relations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ikrar Nusa Bakti</td>
<td>December 28, 2015</td>
<td>Ikrar Nusa Bakti serves as Research Professor at LIPI (<em>Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia</em>, The Indonesian Institute of Sciences). He is former Chairperson of Politics/Political Science at the same organisation. Professor Bakti focuses his research on domestic politics, military, strategy, and international relations. He graduated from Universitas Indonesia (1983) and obtained his Ph.D majoring in political history from School of Modern Asian Studies, Griffith University Brisbane, Australia (1992). Since March 2017, Bakti installed as Indonesian Ambassador to Tunisia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Prita Kemal Gani</td>
<td>December 28, 2015</td>
<td>Prita Kemal Gani is former chairperson of PERHUMAS (<em>Perhimpunan Hubungan Masyarakat Indonesia</em>, Indonesian Public Relations Association). She held the position from 2011 to 2014. Currently, Prita is the President of the ASEAN PR Network, which was established in June 2014 in Jakarta. She is also Founder &amp; Director of the London School of Public Relations (LSPR) in Jakarta and Bali. Prita received her degree in PR from The London City College of Management, and holds a Master in Business Administration from The International Academy of Management &amp; Economics, Manila, Philippines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Muhammad Alwi Dahlan</td>
<td>January 20, 2016</td>
<td>Muhammad Alwi Dahlan is a Professor Emeritus of Communication at University of Indonesia, Jakarta. In 1961, he obtained his BA (Hons) from American University, Washington, DC. He took his MA in 1962 at Stanford University. In 1967, he obtained his Ph.D in communication sciences from the University of Illinois at Urbana City, United States, and became the first Indonesian who has a doctorate in the field. Professor Dahlan was appointed as Minister of Information for the Seventh Development Cabinet during the last term of Soeharto (16 March 1998 – 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
May 1998). Professor Dahlan was a Co-Founder and Chairperson of PERHUMAS, which was established on 15 December 1973, and he became the chairperson from 1978 to 1981.

5. Jalaluddin Rakhmat

Jalaluddin Rakhmat is a Member of Parliament from Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), period of 2014–2019. Prior to be a lawmaker, Rakhmat was known as an Islamic cleric and a senior lecturer, majoring in rhetoric and psychology communication. He obtained his doctoral degree from Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin, Makassar, Indonesia, while his MA was obtained from Iowa State University in the USA.

6. Tipuk Satiotomo

Tipuk Satiotomo is a PR practitioner who serves as Chairperson of APPRI (Association of Public Relations Firm in Indonesia). She also serves as director of a PR firm in Jakarta. Tipuk started her career as an assistant to a public relations executive in public communication. Her experience in PR and communication led her to join Editor weekly magazine where she had worked as a reporter for four years. However, her experience in the news media and communications business eventually brought her back to work in Public Relations.

7. Sinta Soetardjo

Sinta Soetardjo is a PR practitioner who serves as the Treasurer of APPRI. She also serves as PR Director of a PR firm in Jakarta.
Appendix A3. List of the participants of group 3: Senior Journalists and editors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Heyder Affan</td>
<td>December 16, 2015</td>
<td>Heyder Affan is a senior journalist and editor from local and foreign media. In 1996, Affan started his career as a reporter for <em>Nusa</em> daily newspapers. In 1999, Affan joined with BBC as a contributor and in the last three years, he has become a permanent journalist in BBC radio for Indonesian service. As a journalist, Affan also covers important president’s activities in the Palace and elsewhere in the country, including the 2004 and 2009 presidential elections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mr. X (anonymous participant)</td>
<td>December 29, 2015</td>
<td>Mr. X is a senior journalist and editor from a mainstream daily newspaper in Jakarta, Indonesia. During the 10 years of Yudhoyono administration, he was one of the journalists who were appointed by the media to cover activities in the presidential Palace. Mr. X is currently the editor for politics and security issues in the national newspaper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ahmad Kusaeni</td>
<td>January 18, 2016</td>
<td>Ahmad Kusaeni was a senior journalist and chief editor. He has 23 years of journalistic experience in <em>Antara</em> news agency, including Bureau Chief of <em>Antara</em> in New York, USA (~2005); seven years as Deputy Chief Editor of <em>Antara</em> (2005–2012), and then he became Chief Editor and News Director of <em>Antara</em> (2012 – 2015). Kusaeni holds a Master degree in journalism from Ateneo de Manila University, the Philippines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Retno Indarti</td>
<td>January 28, 2016</td>
<td>Retno Indarti is a senior journalist for local and foreign media. She has been a journalist since the early 1990s. Initially, Retno worked as a journalist on daily newspapers <em>Media Indonesia</em>. As a senior journalist who has been serving in the presidential Palace since the Soeharto era, Retno frequently follows the president’s activities, including when the president was visiting abroad. Since early 2000 Retno has been a permanent correspondent in the Palace for Japanese television, Nippon Hoso Kyokai, NHK.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B Interview Guides

Appendix B1. The first themed questions is about the concept and perspective of government communication and political public relations.

1. What is your perception of political public relations?
2. Could you describe what is political public relations? What ranges and types of activities are regarded as political public relations in Indonesia?
3. Can you describe the difference between Government Public Relations and Presidential Public Relations? Are they different? If they are, how?
4. What is other roles of political public relations are there in presidential organisation? Do they contribute to policy-making?
5. What do you think about Yudhoyono’s communication, particularly in relation to political public relations?
6. What do you think about Yudhoyono’s use of political rhetoric? How does this compare with his predecessors?
7. Were the manipulation and propaganda techniques used in the era of Yudhoyono?
8. Were these techniques used by his predecessors?
9. Are there links between political public relations, propaganda and government public relations?
10. There are views, especially by foreign observers, that Yudhoyono was a democratic and successful president as her rarely punished his opponents and journalists, and the economy had grown impressively under his reign. Do you agree with this view? Why?
11. Do you think the development of political public relations in Indonesia differs with other democratic countries? In what ways?

Appendix B2. The second themed questions is about the development and institutionalisation of political public relations.

1. Could you describe public relations history in Indonesia?
2. How do you see the development of political public relations in Indonesia?
3. How do you compare government propaganda during the Sukarno and Soeharto era versus the presidential and government public relations in the post-Soeharto era?
4. Compared with previous presidents, are there any changes in the era of SBY in term of communication management?
5. Why do you think the government/president always seek to change communication system in the Palace?
6. Yudhoyono became president in a different political context. Do you think public relations professionals assisted him in his political communication?
7. What do you think about the use of political surveys and political consultants? Can we assume their services and practices are part of political public relations?
8. Compared with previous presidents, are there any changes in the era of
Yudhoyono in term of communication management?
9. Do you know it there were foreign public relations firms helping President Yudhoyono?
10. Can you speak about the history of political consultants, survey and polling institutions in Indonesia?
11. There are rumours that data manipulations and engineered surveys were provided by private polling institutions. Do you know if this is accurate? Is so, what is your comment on this issue?
12. What do you think about the standard of government communication during the 10 years of SBY presidency? Did it improve in the course of his presidency?
13. Compared with the New Order, what do you think of today's communication system? Has the government built a communication system that is appropriate in a climate of democratisation?

Appendix B3. The third themed questions is about the practices of political public relations.

Questions for the President’s specialist staff/government public relations
1. Could you describe your tasks and roles in presidential communication (or during presidential elections)?
2. How often did you interact with the President, ministers, and other officials (daily, weekly or less)? What topics were usually discussed? Did you gather current issues from news media, from intelligence sources, or any sources related to the President?
3. How did you communicate the president’s policies, initiatives, and instructions in the press conference? Did you discuss with the President’s political PR and/or the President’s political communication experts how should you explain issues to the journalists?
4. How did you relate to journalists? Did you limit the time, the questions, and also the journalists who were licensed to ask the questions, particularly for live press conferences?
5. Did you give any background information to the journalists before the press conference? Did you brief the journalist ‘off the record’? Did you lead the journalists to cover issues in a certain way, or flag what topics should be avoided in the conference?
6. How did you coordinate issues with other presidential assistants related to the dissemination of information to the public? What was your role when the President wanted to speak at the press conference?
7. Did you check and re-check information? How often? How did you advise the president to deal with an important issue that you thought the public should not know about?
8. Did you prepare and write speeches for the President and/or Vice President?
9. Related to the rise of oil prices, why did the president needed so much time to make a decision?
10. Was there any particular consideration in raising the fuel price, such as creating a good image?
11. Do you think Yudhoyono administration was too slow because of the change in the political system?
12. Do you think the different persons and spokesperson’s abilities in the two terms generated significant impacts?
13. Do you think creating a good image is part of spokesperson’s job?
14. Did the president hire professional public relations consultants to advise him on how to deal with the crises?
15. How did Yudhoyono find time to write books and compose songs during his presidency? And for what purpose?

Questions for senior journalists and editors
1. What do you think about Yudhoyono political communication?
2. How is your relationship with the president’s media relations staff/specialist staffs, and spokesperson?
3. Did they give you background information or speak to you ‘off the record’ as a context for news report?
4. Did the backgrounder and/or off the record information (if any) influence your report on government policies or presidential initiatives?
5. What do you think about the professionalism and ethics of your job and the work of media relations and spokesperson?
6. Did you frequently (or rarely) check and re-check the information before publish it? Or were these checks done rarely?
7. What do you think about Yudhoyono’s performance, behaviour, communication, and attention to journalists’ needs? Was this the same with previous presidents?
8. Did you ever censor your report? Did the presidential communication office direct you to adopt a particular angle or ideology? If possible, can you give an example?
9. What do you think about direct cash transfer (Bantuan Langsung Tunai, BLT) policy, in the first and the second terms of the Yudhoyono administration?
10. What did you know about the government’s policy on oil price hike during SBY-JK administration? Do you have an opinion on this matter?
11. Did you ever experience any pressure from the president’s media relations/high ranking officers in the palace to report a certain way?

Appendix B4. The fourth themed questions is about the effects of political public relations.
1. Can you describe your role in the decision-making process and communication system in the Palace? Did you have particular tasks to improve or maintain the president’s good image?
2. Do you think Yudhoyono was too slow in making decisions? Does it have anything to do with his efforts to maintain a good image?
3. Did you write any speeches for the president (or presidential candidate)? How long did you do that? Who worked with you on these? Did you coordinate with the president’s political communication assistants?

4. How did the president and his staff manage crises? Was there any particular consideration in raising the fuel price, such as maintaining political support and a good image?

5. Did Yudhoyono use PR strategies for image-building? Is it possible that his desire for good image and popularity hampered him from being a decisive leader?

6. Do you think the way Yudhoyono led the country during his term has led to political stability?

7. Some observers criticise Yudhoyono for being too slow and indecisive in decision-making, for example, in the oil price case. How do you view this issue?