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# FROM “FYP” TO BALLOT BOX TIKTOK AND INDONESIA’S 2024 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Policy Report  
June 2024

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SINGAPORE

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**June 2024**

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## Executive Summary

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TikTok played an integral role in Indonesia's 2024 general elections as a channel for politicians and political parties to distribute information. The platform also provided an opportunity for image rebranding and served as an arena for an information battle. TikTok's unique algorithm allows non-official accounts, and even those with small numbers of followers, to create viral content and deliver it to a wider audience beyond a particular account's own followers. This was also the case with viral content on TikTok during Indonesia's 2024 general elections, with official accounts not always being the sole initiator of the spread of such content. Owing to this feature, TikTok is able to help political figures reach audiences beyond their original constituents. TikTok has a first-mover advantage by creating a strong social media content loop, which can also easily lead to acceptance of post-truth information. The combination of this advantage and TikTok's video-based nature has established the social media platform as an effective tool to exploit its users' emotions.

# From “FYP” to Ballot Box: TikTok and Indonesia’s 2024 General Elections

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Social media often acts as a primary source, in some cases the top source, of information regarding political candidates. It has even replaced the role of mainstream mass media for some prospective voters.<sup>1</sup> Social media’s affordable and interactive nature provides an ideal space for candidates to conduct their campaigns and interact with potential voters.<sup>2</sup>

In 2022, a new trend emerged. TikTok, a short video–based social media app from China, played a special role in the electoral process in several countries. For example, Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s victory in the Philippines is considered, to some degree, to have been determined by his campaign’s revision of history regarding Ferdinand Marcos Sr. carried out through short video content created on TikTok.<sup>3</sup>

TikTok’s audience growth since its appearance has been rapid. Various reports in early 2023 showed that TikTok is among the top five most used social media platforms, with over one billion users over the age of 18.<sup>4</sup> In this context, Indonesia is the country with the second largest number of TikTok users in the world, with 109.9 million users as of February 2023.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, Indonesia’s young voters, who dominate the digital space, emerged as an important segment of voters in the country’s 2024 electoral political landscape, notably because they constitute the largest pool

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<sup>1</sup> Marcel Broersma and Todd Graham, “Social Media as Beat: Tweets as a News Source during the 2010 British and Dutch Elections,” *Journalism Practice* 6, no. 3 (June 2012): 403–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2012.663626>.

<sup>2</sup> Jakob Linnaa Jensen and Sander Andreas Schwartz, “Introduction: A Decade of Social Media Elections,” *Social Media + Society* 8, no. 1 (January 19, 2022), 205630512110634, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051211063461>.

<sup>3</sup> Chad De Guzman, “A Dictator’s Son Rewrites History on TikTok in His Bid to Become the Philippines’ Next President”, *Time*, 5 May 2022, <https://time.com/6173757/bongbong-marcos-tiktok-philippines-election/>.

<sup>4</sup> We are Social, “The Changing World of Digital in 2023: Global Overview Report”, 26 January 2023, <https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2023/01/the-changing-world-of-digital-in-2023/>.

<sup>5</sup> Sarnita Sadya, “Pengguna TikTok Indonesia Terbesar Kedua di Dunia pada Awal 2023 [Indonesian TikTok Users, 2nd Largest in the World in Early 2023]”, *DataIndonesia.id*, 20 February 2023, <https://dataindonesia.id/Digital/detail/pengguna-tiktok-indonesia-terbesar-kedua-di-dunia-pada-awal-2023>.

of voters.<sup>6</sup> The young demographic profile of Indonesia's TikTok users<sup>7</sup> and the status of Indonesia's young people as first-time voters attracted politicians and political parties to utilise the platform as a political instrument. Apart from the demographic factor, technical aspects such as the unique features of the platform have been another driver behind politicians' use of TikTok.<sup>8</sup> Particularly, TikTok's algorithm tracks every user's movements to personalise the content that will be presented to them via the "For You Page" (FYP), aiming to encourage users to stay on the platform for as long as possible. Such a personalised algorithm allows a politician a first-mover advantage by controlling the flow of information to create a filter bubble for the user.<sup>9</sup>

This feature also allows the spread of disinformation, as was the case during the 2022 Philippine elections, when "distorted historical facts" were purveyed.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, TikTok's playful and light-hearted nature as well as its short-duration video feature – TikTok allows users to share videos not exceeding 10 minutes – makes it easily accessible to consumers with short attention spans and therefore has the potential to influence political discourse and participation on the platform – and even outside the platform.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the design of TikTok is such that it allows "circumscribed creativity", that is, the types of memes that users can create and disseminate are limited.<sup>12</sup> This effectively means that politicians are able to control how their messages are recycled.

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<sup>6</sup> Arya Fernandes et al., "Pemilih Muda dan Pemilu 2024: Dinamika dan Preferensi Sosial Politik Pascapandemi [Young Voters and 2024 General Elections: Dynamics and Post-Pandemic Social Political Preferences]", CSIS Indonesia, September 2022; Tika Ayu, "KPU Sebut 60 persen Pemilih Indonesia di Pemilu 2024 Didominasi Kelompok Muda [KPU: 60% of Indonesian Voters in the 2024 General Elections are Youths]", *Tempo*, 17 February 2023, <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1692894/kpu-sebut-60-persen-pemilih-indonesia-di-pemilu-2024-didominasi-kelompok-muda>.

<sup>7</sup> In 2022, 63.1% of Indonesia's TikTok users were between 18 and 34 years of age. See Erlina F. Santika, "Kelompok Anak Muda Jadi Pengguna Terbesar TikTok, Usia Berapa Mereka? [Youths are Biggest TikTok Users: How Old Are They?]", *Katadata*, 27 September 2023, <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2023/09/27/kelompok-anak-muda-jadi-pengguna-terbesar-tiktok-usia-berapa-mereka>.

<sup>8</sup> Daniele Albertazzi and Donatella Bonansinga, "Beyond Anger: The Populist Radical Right on TikTok". *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* (January 2023): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2022.2163380>.

<sup>9</sup> Ooi Kok Hin, "How Political Parties Used TikTok in the 2022 Malaysian General Election," *RSIS Commentary*, 22 December 2022, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/how-political-parties-used-tiktok-in-the-2022-malaysian-general-election/>.

<sup>10</sup> Maria Elize H. Mendoza, "Philippine Elections 2022: TikTok in Bongbong Marcos' Presidential Campaign", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 44, no. 3, (December 2022): 389–395.

<sup>11</sup> Darsana Vijay and Alex Gekker, "Playing Politics: How Sabarimala Played Out on TikTok", *American Behavioral Scientist* 65, no. 5 (May 2021): 712–34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764221989769>.

<sup>12</sup> D. Bondy Valdovinos Kaye, Xu Chen, and Jing Zeng, "The Co-Evolution of Two Chinese Mobile Short Video Apps: Parallel Platformization of Douyin and TikTok", *Mobile Media & Communication* 9, no. 2 (May 2021): 229–53, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157920952120>.

The playful and light-hearted nature of TikTok, its focus on providing entertainment, and the demography of its core audience mean that in order to achieve maximum results the communication styles adopted must be of an entertaining, inspirational and connecting nature. Radical right-wing political groups in Italy and France, for instance, have had to adjust their communication styles to adapt to TikTok, switching from fear-based rhetoric to inspirational messages.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, TikTok's algorithm allows a user's content to be easily discoverable by other users – unlike other platforms, which depend mainly on user searches or the accounts they follow to understand their preferences, TikTok's algorithm observes various parameters of user behaviour on the platform, e.g., their pauses, swipes, repeat viewings or shares, to understand their preferences.<sup>14</sup> More significantly, TikTok has a proximity feature that allows a user's video clips to show up in the feeds of those who are in geographic proximity to the user.<sup>15</sup> This means that campaign managers can adjust their locations to reach audiences in a particular locality.

In what ways did TikTok act as an instrument of electoral politics in Indonesia's 2024 general elections? What are the prospects for the use of TikTok in Indonesian politics in the near future? This policy report builds on previous research by Ali Nur Alizen, Ratu Dyah Gendiswardani, Salma Salima Haliza Nihru, and Rafi Alif Muhammad Akbar on the prospects of the use of TikTok as a political instrument in Indonesia's 2024 general elections.<sup>16</sup> It presents an updated analysis drawing on additional information since the elections to provide a more thorough understanding of the role of TikTok in the elections. This report argues that TikTok's unique algorithm, which allows politicians to reach a vast number of users, came in handy as a tool for image rebranding and information battles. The vast pool of young and first-time voters in the 2024 general elections made TikTok even more important owing to the platform's ability to create filter bubbles, which in effect gives a politician who adroitly uses the platform a first-mover advantage. We start the discussion by looking at TikTok's rapid rise at the global level. We then

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<sup>13</sup> Albertazzi and Bonansinga, "Beyond Anger: The Populist Radical Right on TikTok".

<sup>14</sup> Michelle Greenwald, "Audience, Algorithm and Virality: Why TikTok Will Continue to Shape Culture in 2021," *Forbes*, 1 April 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michellegreenwald/2021/04/01/audience-algorithm-and-virality-why-tiktok-will-continue-to-shape-culture-in-2021/?sh=1bb51dc92af7>.

<sup>15</sup> TikTok, "Location Information on TikTok", n.d, <https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/account-privacy-settings/location-services-on-tiktok>.

<sup>16</sup> Ali Nur Alizen, Ratu Dyah Ayu Gendiswardani, Salma Salima Haliza Nihru, and Rafi Alif Muhamad Akbar, "Prospek Penggunaan TikTok Sebagai Instrumen Politik Pada Pemilihan Umum 2024 [Prospects of the Use of TikTok as a Political Instrument in 2024 General Elections]." *Laboratorium Indonesia 2045 (LAB 45)*, 2023. 9229prospek-penggunaan-tiktok-sebagai-instrumen-politik-pada-pemilihan-umum-2024sh.pdf (lab45.id)

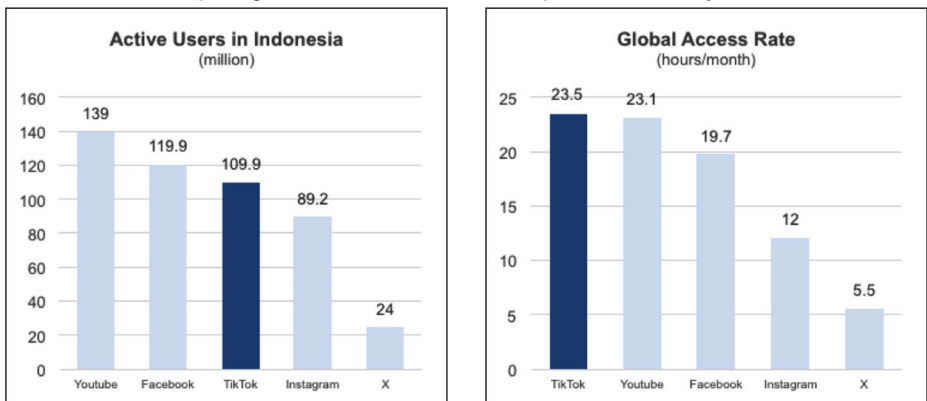
discuss the use of TikTok as an instrument of electoral politics in Indonesia and end with the outlook for the use of TikTok as a political medium.

### TikTok Enters the Arena

We focus on observing five social media (excluding WhatsApp) that have the most number of active users in Indonesia sequentially: YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). YouTube had the most number of active users in Indonesia, reaching 139 million by 9 February 2023. TikTok was in third place, with 109.9 million users. With respect to frequency of usage, TikTok appears to have overtaken the other four social media, which were established much earlier. Usage rates for Indonesia are not available but globally TikTok users spent about 23.5 hours a month on the platform, scrolling and consuming content (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Social Media Statistics<sup>17</sup>**

Source: Simon Kemp, "Digital 2023: Indonesia," *DataReportal*, 9 February 2023,



<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-indonesia>.

Each social media platform has its featured content, although all allow users to upload content of various sorts (see Tables 1 and 2). TikTok excels in short audio-visual content, ranging from 15 seconds to 10 minutes. YouTube is well known for its long content despite its new feature, YouTube Shorts, which is much like TikTok. YouTube-verified users can upload videos each running up to 12 hours; non-verified account holders can only upload videos that each do not exceed 15 minutes.

<sup>17</sup> Alizen, et. al. "Prospek Penggunaan TikTok Sebagai Instrumen Politik Pada Pemilihan Umum 2024,"



Instagram has two types of featured content: visual and audio-visual. Each post is limited to a maximum of 10 photos/videos. A post containing more than 1 photo is called a carousel. Users can also upload videos with a maximum duration of 60 minutes. Instagram users can add text (captions) to provide more information about their visual or audio-visual content. Facebook’s special feature is long-form text, setting it apart from X, which allows only short-form text. However, X has changed its policy lately and permits US-based premium users to upload text up to 4,000 characters.

**Table 1. Featured Content and Level of Interactivity<sup>18</sup>**

<i>Platform</i>	<i>Featured Content</i>	<i>Limits</i>	<i>Level of Interactivity</i>
<i>TikTok</i>	Audio-visual	15 seconds–10 minutes	High
<i>YouTube</i>	Audio-visual	Non-verified accounts: up to 15 minutes; Verified accounts: up to 12 hours/256 GB	Medium
<i>Facebook</i>	Text, long-form	Up to 63,206 characters	High
<i>Instagram</i>	Visual, Audio-visual	Visual: Up to 10 photos per carousel Audio-visual: up to 60 minutes	High
<i>X</i>	Text	Non-subscribers: up to 280 characters; Subscribers (US-based): up to 4,000 characters	High

Sources: Author’s observations as well as TikTok, <https://www.tiktok.com/creators/creator-portal/en-us/tiktok-content-strategy/creating-videos-longer-than-one-minute/>; Google, <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/71673?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&oco=0>; X, <https://twitter.com/premium/status/1623411400545632256?lang=en>.

TikTok, Facebook, Instagram and X have high levels of interactivity in accordance with their features. Their users can quickly post or reply to comments and share content. Interactivity on YouTube is allowed only in its comment section; YouTube does not allow users to repost content directly. We highlight the interactivity feature because politicians still need to be maximally

<sup>18</sup> Alizen, et al. “Prospek Penggunaan TikTok Sebagai Instrumen Politik Pada Pemilihan Umum 2024.”

utilising this feature to build reciprocal engagement with citizens and bridge the gap between them. Table 2 shows a comparison of other features.

**Table 2. Comparison of Social Media Features<sup>19</sup>**

Features	Social Media Platforms				
	TikTok	YouTube	Facebook	Instagram	X
Group/Circle			✓	✓	✓ X has Circle, but the feature “deprecated” on 31 October 2023
Stitch/Repost/Quote/Share	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reply/Comment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Like	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stories	✓	✓	✓	✓	Terminated on 23 Oct 2018
Live/Space	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shop/Marketplace	Banned in Indonesia on 4 Oct 2023, but the feature is back since 12 Dec 2023		✓	✓	
FYP/Trending Topic/Trending	✓	✓	Terminated on 1 Jun 2018		✓
Hashtag	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pinned/Highlight/Featured	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Verified badge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Home/Timeline	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

<sup>19</sup> Alizen, et al. “Prospek Penggunaan TikTok.”

Features	Social Media Platforms				
	TikTok	YouTube	Facebook	Instagram	X
Explore/For You/ FYP	✓	✓		✓	✓
Feed/Profile	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reels/YouTube Shorts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Subscribe/Follow/ Add Friends	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Direct Message/ Messenger	✓		✓	✓	✓
Insight/Viewers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## New Tool, Old Scenario: TikTok and the 2024 Indonesian General Elections

For the past decade, the use of social media for campaigning has grown among Indonesian politicians. It is well known that cyber troops, influencers and bots were involved in mobilising and manipulating public opinion on Facebook, Instagram and X.<sup>20</sup> In the past two years, a new social media platform, TikTok, has emerged, adding options (and challenges) for politicians to increase their chances of winning (or losing).<sup>21</sup> TikTok’s algorithm, which allows videos to be easily discoverable beyond the confines of users’ follower numbers, indicates the usefulness of the social media platform for political campaigning. Politicians can also use the proximity trend algorithm to engage specific regions, allowing them to reach their target audiences more precisely and effectively.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of TikTok users in Indonesia has increased phenomenally, growing by more than 200% between 2020 and 2022. In 2020, only 17% of the population used TikTok; the figure jumped to 30% one year later and to 40% by 2022.<sup>22</sup> In addition, Indonesia

<sup>20</sup> Yatun Sastramidjaa and Wijayanto, “Cyber Troops, Online Manipulation of Public Opinion and Co-optation of Indonesia’s Cybersphere”, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, No. 7, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Mendoza, “Philippine Elections 2022”; Ooi Kok Hin, “How Political Parties Used TikTok in the 2022 Malaysian General Election”. RSIS Commentary, December 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Cindy Mutia Annur, “Survei KIC-Kominfo: Pengguna TikTok di Indonesia Meroket Tajam Semenjak Pandemi Covid-19 [KIC-Kominfo Survey: TikTok Users in Indonesia Significantly Increased since COVID-19 Pandemic]”, Databoks, 1 February 2023, <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2023/02/01/survei-kic-kominfo-pengguna-tiktok-di-indonesia-meroket-tajam-semenjak-pandemi-covid-19>

has the highest number of TikTok users in the world after the United States.<sup>23</sup> Given TikTok's growing popularity, political candidates in Indonesia, including presidential candidates who ran in the 2024 elections, have been using the platform for their political campaigns.

The huge proportion of young voters (17–40 years old) in the 2024 electoral rolls, accounting for about 56.45% of total voters, made them a crucial voter group in the elections.<sup>24</sup> The fact that turnout among young voters in the 2019 general elections reached 91.3%<sup>25</sup> allowed politicians to extrapolate that young voters would similarly turn out in large numbers in the 2024 general elections and would therefore have a significant influence in determining the outcome.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, those who are known as part of Generation Z – i.e., people born between 1997 and 2012<sup>27</sup> – have unique behavioural characteristics. Based on quantitative research conducted by Alvara Strategic, Generation Z grew up alongside the development of the Internet, making them very familiar with Internet technology and smartphones. This generation prefers consuming information in visual rather than text form. Hasanuddin Ali, chief executive officer of Alvara Strategic, confirmed that this habit could explain why video-based social media platforms, including TikTok, are increasing in significance.<sup>28</sup> IDN Research Institute's findings verify this view.<sup>29</sup>

Given this trend, politicians and presidential candidates find it imperative to maximise the use of social media platforms (especially TikTok) in order to reach and communicate with young voters during election campaigns. The next question is: How did Indonesian politicians utilise TikTok in the 2024 general elections? We note at least three aspects of TikTok usage: (i) as a medium to channel information from the official accounts of

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<sup>23</sup> We are Social, "The Changing World of Digital in 2023".

<sup>24</sup> Nabilah Muhamad, "KPU: Pemilih Pemilu 2024 Didominasi oleh Kelompok Gen Z dan Milenial [KPU: Gen Z and Millennials Dominate 2024 General Elections Voters List]," Databoks, 5 July 2023, <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2023/07/05/kpu-pemilih-pemilu-2024-didominasi-oleh-kelompok-gen-z-dan-milenial>.

<sup>25</sup> Arya Fernandes, "A New Era of Young Voters", *Kompas*, 11 October 2022, <https://www.kompas.id/baca/english/2022/10/11/a-new-era-of-young-voters>.

<sup>26</sup> Arya Fernandes, "A New Era of Young Voters".

<sup>27</sup> Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins", PEW Research Center, 17 January 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.

<sup>28</sup> Hasanuddin Ali, Chief Executive Officer Alvara Strategic, "Focus Group Discussion", Laboratorium Indonesia 2045, 15 February 2023.

<sup>29</sup> IDN Research Institute, "Indonesia Gen Z Report 2022", 2022, <https://cdn.idntimes.com/content-documents/indonesia-gen-z-report-2022.pdf>.

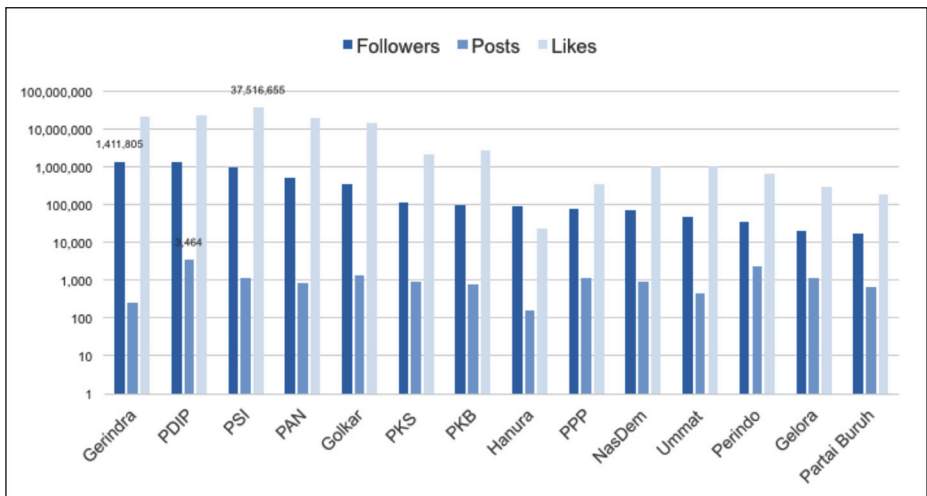
politicians or political parties; (ii) as a means of image rebranding; and (iii) as a means of engaging in an information battle.

### TikTok as an Information Channel

The rise of TikTok in electoral politics in Indonesia can be seen from how political actors such as politicians and political parties are starting to utilise this platform as another official channel for distributing information. Fourteen political parties that successfully passed verification by the General Elections Committee (KPU) for the recent elections have TikTok accounts, with growing numbers of followers. As of 19 March 2023, the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra) was the party with the most significant number of followers on TikTok, followed by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) and the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI).

In order to maximise their presence on TikTok, political parties and political figures need to regularly produce and curate content that can draw public attention. PDIP, the Indonesian Unity Party (Perindo) and the Functional Groups Party (Golkar) have been actively producing TikTok content regularly. Public attention to the content can be measured to some extent through the “like” feature on TikTok. As of 19 March 2024, PSI ranked highest in the number of “likes” it drew, followed by PDIP and Gerindra (see Figure 2).

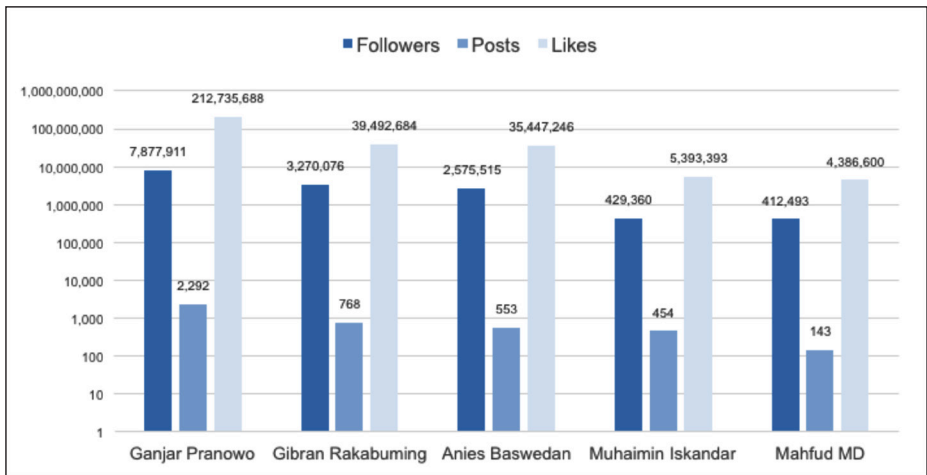
**Figure 2. Political Party Accounts by Number of Followers, Posts and Likes as of 19 March 2024<sup>30</sup>**



<sup>30</sup> Alizen, et al. “Prospek Penggunaan TikTok.”

The use of TikTok intensified during the 2024 Indonesian general elections campaign period as more politicians entered the platform. Using the observation method, we recorded TikTok usage by five politicians who ran in the 2024 presidential election (see Figure 3). As of 19 March 2024, Ganjar Pranowo was the most active figure in terms of the number of followers, intensity of uploads and the number of likes received. Politicians with the highest number of followers after Ganjar were, consecutively, Gibran Rakabuming, Anies Baswedan, Muhaimin Iskandar and Mahfud MD. All their accounts have been verified and are managed as personal accounts.

**Figure 3. Number of Followers, Posts and Likes on Accounts of Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates as of 19 March 2024<sup>31</sup>**



### A Tool for Image Rebranding

The second aspect of TikTok usage was as a tool for image rebranding. This was apparent in the case of Prabowo Subianto’s rebranding. Prabowo has long been known as an “emotional” military man. However, social media, primarily TikTok, helped to bring about a 180-degree change in his image. He has since been portrayed as a cute and chubby grandpa or *gemoy*. The official X account of Prabowo’s party, Gerindra, initiated this transformation. This account often joked with netizens who commented on its posts. It also held prize giveaways several times to attract young people. Apart from carrying photos of Prabowo’s activities as defence minister, his official Instagram account also uploaded photos of the retired general wearing a

<sup>31</sup> Alizen, et al. “Prospek Penggunaan TikTok.”

white hoodie and portrayed him as a lover of cats. On TikTok, the Prabowo camp adopted as its official campaign song a viral TikTok tune titled “OK Gas”, whose lyrics were later changed by the composer to fit the Prabowo campaign. The use of “OK Gas”, with its simple lyrics and upbeat electronic dance music, and occasionally featuring Prabowo’s dance moves, helped to further spread Prabowo’s popularity to a wide audience. This transformation of Prabowo’s image was calculated to resonate with young voters.

Prabowo’s party, his supporters and volunteers helped to provide a mass of content on TikTok that helped in this rebranding. Even though Prabowo did not directly manage those accounts, the active participation on TikTok by the account owners played a significant role in shaping public opinion and expanding the reach of his political messages during the election campaign. Interestingly, viral Prabowo-related content on TikTok was distributed not only by official accounts with large numbers of followers, but also by unknown accounts with small numbers of followers. This was possibly due to TikTok’s algorithm, which allows content to be disseminated beyond an account’s sphere of followers.

## **An Arena for Information Battles**

The third aspect of TikTok, as with other social media platforms, was that it was turned into an arena for an information battle, or rather a channel for purveying misinformation. The campaign team of each presidential candidate attempted to spread its own version of the truth through TikTok. In this context, the appearance of many viral videos of young people crying on TikTok following the third presidential debate (7 January 2024) represented an interesting phenomenon. These young people were crying as they believed Prabowo had been bullied by candidates Anies and Ganjar during the debate. Prior to the appearance of those melodramatic viral videos, Prabowo’s campaign team portrayed Anies and Ganjar’s criticisms of Prabowo as personal attacks. Up to now, it is still unclear whether the viral videos of young people shedding tears for Prabowo were genuine or orchestrated.

Another example was the dynamics following the second debate for vice-presidential candidates, held on 21 January 2024. Querying his opponents during the debate, Gibran, Prabowo’s running mate, gratuitously used foreign words and technical terms – what in journalistic slang is referred to as “gotcha” questions or questions designed to entrap others into making damaging statements or to expose their ignorance and subject them to ridicule. He was also said to have used inappropriate body language. Gibran’s gimmicks went viral on TikTok in the aftermath of the debate, sparking off an information battle of sorts between Gibran and his opponents as each side sought to promote its own narrative. While Gibran’s campaign

team sought to gloss over his style, projecting him as representative of the youth, his opponents castigated him for being a rude young man who was condescending towards his older opponents.

## Conclusion

The Prabowo–Gibran pair have since been officially confirmed to be the winners in the 2024 presidential election, with nearly 60% of the vote. The Prabowo camp clearly has reaped the benefits of the heavy penetration of TikTok within Indonesia. It utilised the platform not only to establish Prabowo's *gemoy* image, which was very attractive to young voters, but also as a tool to spread his popularity. Prabowo's success story with TikTok indicates the integral role of the social media platform in reaching, and interacting with, voters in the digital era. In addition, Indonesia's 2024 general elections showed how TikTok can be an effective tool to exploit the emotions of its users. Interestingly, Prabowo does not own an official TikTok account as yet. Viral Prabowo-related content was mainly produced by his supporters or accounts that were not even officially affiliated with his campaign.

TikTok's unique features and fast content dissemination have attracted political actors to use the platform as a new campaign tool. Its algorithm is known to be better than that of other social media in determining user preferences and pushing content based on user interactions and behaviour on the app. TikTok's algorithm allows politicians' videos to be easily discoverable by TikTok users without depending on the number of accounts they follow or that follow them. Furthermore, TikTok has a first-mover advantage for a politician by creating a strong filter bubble around target audiences. Social media filter bubbles have been known as an effective tool to create acceptance of post-truth information or normalisation of views that differ from the truth.

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