

Street Politics, Digital Activism, and Democratic Futures: Media Discourses on Indonesia's Road to 2045

Zakaria Efendi, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia*

Meysella Al Firdha Hanim, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia

Irwan Abdullah, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia

Zaenuddin Hudi Prasajo, Post Graduate Program, Pontianak State Islamic Institute, Indonesia

Maghfira Nur Aziza, Departement of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Mercu Buana University Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Abstract

This study analyzes the role of youth street politics in the dynamics of Indonesian democracy by emphasizing the integration of physical and digital spaces. Unlike previous studies that tend to separate street politics from digital activism, this study combines the two through a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework of national and international media coverage and reputable journal articles. The findings of this study show that youth street politics is no longer limited to physical action, but has transformed into a hybrid practice of participation that gains widespread resonance through digital amplification. Street politics functions as an arena for democratic correction while also being positioned as a threat to political stability, reflecting the ambiguity that continues to be produced in public discourse. Theoretically, this study contributes to strengthening the concept of hybrid democracy by showing that street politics is a medium of negotiation between state legitimacy, media representation, and digital community participation. Empirically, the study clarifies how digital connectivity changes the structure of mobilization and produces new meanings of civil resistance. Practically, these findings confirm that student street politics, if managed within a deliberative and participatory framework, has significant potential to strengthen the consolidation of Indonesian democracy towards 2045.

Keywords:

Street politics; Digital activism; Hybrid democracy; Critical discourse analysis; Indonesia 2045.

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, Indonesian democracy has shown challenging dynamics. Street politics remains an important instrument in expressing public dissatisfaction with government policies (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019). The wave of student demonstrations in 2019

related to the Criminal Code Bill and the weakening of the Corruption Eradication Commission, the rejection of the Job Creation Law in 2020, and protests on environmental issues and government policies, both judicial and legislative, that were not pro-people in the following years, indicate that the informal public

sphere remains vital in the democratic process. In this context, Barrie (2021), states that informal protests can change public support through persuasion and framing mechanisms, emphasizing that political legitimacy can be influenced outside of formal channels. This phenomenon shows that even though electoral democracy is well established, formal channels are often considered insufficiently representative, so street protests become a medium for correcting power (Diprose et al., 2019). This fact confirms that street politics is still a determinant of state legitimacy and a measure of the quality of democracy.

Previous studies have highlighted the role of the media in framing demonstrations and their impact on public opinion (Susánszky et al., 2022). Then Baulch et al. (2024), explained how memes and content distributed via WhatsApp and other platforms function as instruments of political persuasion, particularly in the context of meme politics and the mobilization of the younger generation. Furthermore, Jalli (2025), also conducted a comparative study covering Indonesia, discussing how TikTok features (short video format, recommendation algorithm) are utilized by young activists for digital campaigns and issue organizing. However, these studies tend to examine street politics and digital participation separately, while studies that integrate the two with the discourse on the future of Indonesian democracy, particularly in the context of Indonesia Emas 2045, have not been comprehensively studied. Considering that the number of internet users in Indonesia will reach 229.4 million people by 2025 with a penetration rate of more

than 80%, and the majority of them are Gen Z and millennials, this places the younger generation as the main actors in the digital public sphere (apjii.or.id, 2025). Surveys also show changes in the consumption patterns of young people, who now access news and political information more through video and visual-based platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube than through mainstream media (Muhamad, 2023). Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by connecting street politics, the digital political participation of the younger generation, and the discourse on the future of democracy as a single analytical framework to understand the direction of Indonesian democracy.

This study analyzes three main contexts: the dynamics of street politics in online media, youth political participation in digital spaces, and the discourse on democracy towards Indonesia Emas 2045, to show that this activism is not merely protest, but a socio-political process that shapes democratic orientation. Street and digital politics influence leadership transitions through public demands for leadership figures and styles, influence policy directions through discursive pressure, and shape public opinion as an arena for contesting meanings of democracy, justice, and citizenship rights. This activism also reflects the younger generation's concern for sustainability and long-term welfare and forms the basis for demands for institutional reform related to corruption, inequality, and restrictions on civil space. Using Fairclough's, (2013) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to trace textual, discursive, and social practices,

this study confirms how street and digital politics shape the discourse structure, collective imagination, and democratic horizon that are crucial for the formulation of Indonesia Emas 2045.

The basic assumption of this study is that street politics and digital participation cannot be separated from the dynamics of contemporary democracy in Indonesia. These two practices reinforce each other and serve as alternatives to formal mass media, which is known to still have ties to political parties and tends to be unable to provide a neutral and balanced democratic space for conveying information about the current political situation in Indonesia. At the same time, the discourse on democracy in online media shapes the collective horizon of how the public envisions Indonesia's political future in 2045. Thus, this study departs from the assumption that the future of Indonesian democracy will be greatly influenced by the dynamic interaction between street politics, digital activism, and the construction of public narratives formed through the media, in which all three reinforce each other in shaping opinion, legitimacy, and the direction of national political reform (Nugroho, 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Street Politics

Street politics has long been a hallmark of democracy in Indonesia, especially since the 1998 reforms that opened up freedom of expression and assembly (Rifka Alkhilyatul Ma'rifat, I Made Suraharta, 2024). Student mass actions, labor unions, and civil society groups consistently utilize public spaces to pressure the state to be more

accountable (Setiawan & Tomsa, 2023). Study by Dittgen et al. (2024), shows that street politics is not merely a spontaneous expression of dissatisfaction, but an important mechanism in power negotiations. In various cases, demonstrations have even played a role in influencing the policy agenda, for example on issues of corruption and the environment (Bailey, 2024).

Although street politics is often positioned as an essential channel of correction for democracy, the literature also highlights its ambivalent nature. Djuve & Knutsen (2025), assert that street politics does not always strengthen democracy in the hands of elite interests; rather, this practice can become an instrument of mobilization that triggers political instability. Wajner (2022), emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between protests oriented toward democratic accountability and populist mobilization that tends to undermine state legitimacy. In this context, this study takes a critical stance by offering an update to the existing discourse, namely by examining how online media frames street politics and how this construction shapes public perceptions of the legitimacy of democracy itself. Meanwhile, studies that specifically integrate street politics and digital activism as a hybrid political practice are still very limited, because most previous studies have strictly separated the physical and digital realms. In fact, in the context of contemporary Indonesia, these two realms are increasingly intertwined in shaping patterns of mobilization and the production of political meaning, thus requiring analysis that is able to capture

these hybrid dynamics more comprehensively.

B. Digital Political Participation

The emergence of social media has expanded the forms of political participation among the younger generation, which was previously more limited to formal channels such as elections and political parties (Yang et al., 2025). Wahyuningroem et al. (2023), emphasize that digital activism in Indonesia has redefined political dynamics by creating new spaces for expression that are more interactive, rapid, and transcend geographical boundaries. Political communication strategies such as hashtag activism, political memes, and viral videos have now become effective instruments for mobilizing the masses, building social solidarity, and putting pressure on the government through digital public opinion (Mizoroki et al., 2024). However, the literature also points to the limitations of digital activism.

Digital participation is often temporary and does not always lead to real engagement in the public sphere (Lorenz-Spreen et al., 2023). Furthermore, the dynamics of social media often exacerbate political polarization through disinformation and the formation of echo chambers that limit diversity of perspective (Azzimonti & Fernandes, 2023). Nevertheless, this study attempts to go beyond this pessimistic view by offering a new analysis: the digital participation of Indonesia's younger generation does not stop at symbolic expression in the virtual world, but is closely linked to collective action on the streets. Thus, digital politics and street

politics form a hybrid channel of contemporary political participation, which shows an important transformation in the way the younger generation mobilizes their aspirations and pressures the government through a combination of online and offline spaces (Waeterloos, Conradie, et al., 2021). The novelty of this study lies in shifting the analysis from separating digital activism and street mobilization to understanding them as hybrid practices that are interrelated and mutually reinforcing through media discourse construction. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this research also offers an original contribution by showing how national and international media shape, legitimize, or delegitimize this model of youth political participation, an aspect that has not been widely addressed by previous research.

C. Democratic Futures

These studies examine the future of democracy from various theoretical and practical perspectives. Alexander & Mohanty (2013), present a feminist analysis that challenges the Euro-American framework of democracy by examining sexual and gender politics, economic marginality, and anti-colonial practices in the context of the West and the Third World. This literature offers a historically grounded feminist conception that challenges the liberal pluralist approach to democracy. It systematically revisits the promotion of democracy by analyzing controversial concepts of democracy, examining various models from liberal to participatory and cosmopolitan democracy (Steele et al., 2021). Tarkpor &

Clarke (2024), show how international financial institutions promote certain forms of “institutional reform” through conditionality that has political-economic consequences (and criticism of its social impact). Contemporary democratic innovations, including cosmopolitan, deliberative, ecological, and associative models, with a primary focus on wealthy Northern countries (Lage et al., 2023).

Despite facing various challenges, the literature still leaves room for optimism. A number of experts assess that Indonesian democracy has high resilience thanks to the strength of civil society and high political participation, both through formal and informal channels (Setiawan & Tomsa, 2023). Recent studies also emphasize the important role of the media in shaping the collective imagination about the future of democracy, including in strengthening and potentially weakening the legitimacy of the state (Hendriks et al., 2025). Based on these assumptions, this study highlights how media discourse on street politics and digital participation shapes the public horizon towards Indonesian democracy in 2045, while also enriching studies on democratization in the digital age (Saud et al., 2023). The novelty of this study lies in its focus on how media construct a hybrid model of youth political participation that links street politics and digital activism as an integrated democratic force, whereas existing scholarship often treats these spheres separately. The study further contributes by systematically mapping how national and international media produce, circulate, and contest imaginaries of Indonesia’s democratic future, an analytical dimension still

underexplored in current democratization literature.

RESEARCH METHOD

The units of analysis in this study consist of street political representation, political participation of the younger generation in the digital space, and media discourse on the future of Indonesian democracy. These three units of analysis were chosen because they are interrelated in shaping the dynamics of contemporary democracy and the collective imagination towards Indonesia 2045. Online media and social platforms serve as arenas for the production of public meaning, where representations, narratives, and legitimations are produced, contested, and disseminated, a process involving textual interactions (content), discursive practices (circulation, remixing, and endorsements), and social practices (institutional and structural) that shape collective perceptions of political issues (Krykoniuk et al., 2025).

This study uses a qualitative method with Fairclough's, (2013) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) strategy, which was chosen because it is able to reveal how media texts, digital narratives, and public opinion not only represent social reality but also actively shape power relations, political legitimacy, and the future direction of democracy. The CDA approach provides a comprehensive analytical framework for exploring the latent meanings, ideologies, and social practices contained in discourse constructions across various platforms, enabling researchers to simultaneously trace the interactions

between text production, discursive practices, and socio-political contexts.

The types of data used in this study consist of primary and secondary data obtained from credible online sources. Primary data includes twelve news articles from national and international portals, including AP News, East Asia Forum, Human Rights Watch, Reuters, Kompas, The Guardian, IDN Times, Aljazeera, World Bank, Tempo, and The Jakarta Post, as well as three research articles published in indexed journals. These sources were selected because they provide up-to-date and credible information on street politics, digital activism, and public narratives in Indonesia, as well as allowing researchers to access contextual and diverse local and global perspectives. All primary data collected was published between 2023 and 2025, ensuring the information is current and relevant to current political developments and youth participation. Meanwhile, secondary data consists of previous research and academic literature relevant to the themes of street politics, digital democracy, and political participation among the younger generation. This secondary data is used to construct a theoretical framework, compare empirical findings, and strengthen discourse analysis interpretations, so that the entire study has a strong conceptual basis and is relevant to the context of contemporary Indonesian democracy.

Data collection was conducted through documentation and online searches using keywords such as Indonesian street politics, digital activism, democracy 2045, and youth

political participation. Data selection was conducted using purposive sampling, which involved selecting one main article written in English that was the most widely read, received the most public attention, or ranked highest on each national and international news portal, so that each source represented the most relevant and influential issues. In addition, the selection took into account media credibility, content relevance to the research focus, and diversity of perspectives from various platforms to ensure comprehensive and representative coverage of information.

Data analysis was conducted by thematically identifying narrative patterns, media framing, and digital representations that emerged in the three research contexts. This analysis process refers to Haimed's (2024) explanation, following the three stages of CDA, namely (1) text description, (2) interpretation of the socio-political context, and (3) explanation of the relationship between discourse and power structures. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation by comparing media reports, digital responses, and expert analysis. Thus, this study was able to present a comprehensive picture of the relationship between street politics, digital media, and the future of democracy in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Dynamics of Street Politics in Online Media Coverage

Street politics remains an important arena in negotiating the legitimacy of Indonesian democracy. Data compiled from national and international online

media reports show that large demonstrations on issues ranging from corruption and economic policy to controversial bills are always framed as indicators of public dissatisfaction with the political elite. The media not only reports events, but also constructs narratives that influence public perceptions of the quality of democracy. Thus, media framing of street politics plays a significant role in strengthening or weakening public trust in the state. The following are findings on the dynamics of street politics in online media:

Table 1. Media Discourses on Democracy, Political Legitimacy, and Street Politics in Indonesia

Evidence/Source	Discursive Practice Analysis	Analysis of Social Practices
Criticism of the relocation of the capital to Nusantara is considered to weaken democracy: Since it was announced in 2019, the ambitious project to relocate Indonesia's capital from the island of Java to the island of Borneo has been mired in skepticism and criticism from inadequate public consultation to land disputes with indigenous communities to concerns about Chinese investment that critics say is making Nusantara a "New Beijing." But a more insidious implication, observers caution, is the undemocratic nature that the new capital, tucked hundreds of miles away from Jakarta and set to operate without elected local leaders, will bring to the fore of what is currently the world's third largest democracy. https://time.com/6329063/indonesia-nusantara-jokowi-democratic-decline/	This news story was produced with an emphasis on criticism and skepticism, framing the relocation of the capital as a threat to democracy. The use of terms such as "New Beijing" underscores concerns about foreign investment, while also directing readers' attention to issues of institutional and political legitimacy.	News narratives reflect how street politics are integrated with digital discourse to shape public opinion and influence policy legitimacy. Online coverage of street politics not only highlights tensions between the central government and civil society, but also reinforces the interaction between physical and digital spaces as arenas for power negotiations. Thus, this narrative shows that online news coverage can expand the reach of street politics, encourage public participation, and shape collective perceptions of democracy, government legitimacy, and the direction of political reform in Indonesia.
Jokowi's legacy is considered an "illiberal legacy: A decade of Jokowi: Indonesia's democracy icon leaves illiberal legacy, critics say. In this year's presidential election, Jokowi turned his back on his own party candidate and helped secure a win for Prabowo, who had chosen Jokowi's son as his vice president. "Widodo has done a lot of damage to democratisation in recent years," said political analyst Kevin O'Rourke. "It's hard to see how the recovery can come about."	This news story was produced with a critical perspective on Jokowi's leadership, using quotes from political analysts as a source of legitimacy. This discursive practice reinforces the narrative that the political actions of the elite can have democratic consequences, while also shaping public	The phenomenon of nepotism and intervention by legal institutions. The news narrative reflects how public opinion about the political actions of the elite, in this case Jokowi and his support for Prabowo, is connected to the dynamics of street politics as mediated by online media. Criticism spread online not only influences public perceptions of the government's legitimacy, but also strengthens the potential for political mobilization on the streets by shaping a collective

Evidence/Source	Discursive Practice Analysis	Analysis of Social Practices
https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/decade-jokowi-indonesias-democracy-icon-leaves-illiberal-legacy-critics-say-2024-10-14/	opinion that is skeptical of the political orientation of the elite. Delivery via online portals allows this narrative to spread widely and be reinforced through comments and discussions on social media.	narrative about democracy and leadership. In other words, this news story shows the simultaneous interaction between digital and physical spaces: online news coverage becomes an arena for shaping public opinion and solidarity, which can encourage direct political participation, protests, or critical discussions that affirm demands for democracy at the socio-political level.
A governing coalition without an effective opposition: We the people, as civil society, have a duty to revitalize political education to provide the checks and balances necessary to uphold Indonesia's constitutional democracy and for us to avoid an illusion of democracy. https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2024/10/12/the-new-government-and-the-illusion-of-indonesian-democracy.html	This narrative was produced as a form of advocacy through online media, emphasizing the importance of political education to monitor and balance power. Discursive practices demonstrate the use of inclusive language (we the people) to build collective legitimacy and mobilize public participation. Delivery via online platforms allows this message to reach a wide audience, facilitating public discussion and strengthening civil society engagement in democratic discourse.	The risk of weakening the checks and balances mechanism. This narrative reflects how political education initiated by civil society through online media can strengthen public engagement in street politics. By emphasizing collective responsibility to provide checks and balances, this message not only builds political awareness digitally, but also encourages real social mobilization, such as protests, awareness campaigns, or policy advocacy. In the context of online media, this kind of narrative expands the reach of street politics, connects online public opinion with physical participation, and shapes a space for discourse where civil society can assert democratic demands, monitor the government, and reinforce the legitimacy of democracy at the socio-political level.
Amendments to the TNI Law that Raise Concerns for Democracy (2025): Indonesia's Parliament unanimously voted to pass a controversial revision of its military law on Thursday that will allow military officers to serve in more government posts without resigning from the armed forces, despite growing opposition from pro-	This news item was produced to highlight the conflict between government policy and the aspirations of civil society. Discursive practices reinforce the narrative of opposition by mentioning pro-democracy and human	AP News highlighted concerns among human rights groups that this move reflects past patterns of authoritarianism, expands the role of the TNI in the civilian sphere, and was discussed hastily without broad public participation. This news shows how political decisions by the elite, such as the revision of military law, can

Evidence/Source	Discursive Practice Analysis	Analysis of Social Practices
democracy and rights groups who see it as a threat to the country's young democracy. https://apnews.com/article/indonesia-parliament-new-military-law-99950f862d738e07cdb1586ccb08adbe	rights groups, which serves to build credibility for criticism of military law. Through online media, this narrative can spread quickly, triggering public interaction in the form of comments, discussions, or opinion sharing, thereby strengthening public political awareness and the legitimacy of critical discourse against government policies.	trigger potential street political mobilization mediated by online spaces. Criticism from pro-democracy groups disseminated online can broaden the scope of public participation, build collective opinion, and facilitate the coordination of social action or protests. Thus, this narrative shows the simultaneous interaction between physical and digital spaces: online media serves as an arena for opinion formation, public solidarity, and government oversight, which strengthens the dynamics of street politics and democratic participation in society.
National Protests over DPR Members' Allowances and Economic Inequality: Protests first erupted a week ago, sparked by anger over the pay and privileges given to lawmakers, including a housing allowance of 50m rupiah (\$3,075), which is nearly 10 times higher than the minimum wage in Jakarta. Anger escalated further after a motorcycle taxi driver, 21-year-old Affan Kurniawan, was run over by a police vehicle at a protest site on Thursday. A video apparently showing his death prompted an outcry against the security forces. Witnesses told local television that an armoured car from the National Police's mobile brigade unit suddenly sped through the crowd of demonstrators, hitting Kurniawan and running him over. Kurniawan had reportedly been trying to complete a food delivery order at the time. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/sep/01/indonesia-protests-president-prabowo-subianto-scraps-lawmakers-perks	This news story was produced to emphasize the tension between the public and state authorities. Discursive practices are evident in the use of witness quotes, references to viral videos, and economic comparisons that highlight legislative injustice, which reinforce the legitimacy of public criticism. Through online publication, this narrative spreads easily, triggering public reactions in the form of comments, video sharing, and discussions on social media, thereby forming a collective opinion that is critical of the policies and actions of the authorities.	This news shows how incidents of violence against demonstrators can trigger street political mobilization that is amplified by online media. Videos and narratives of incidents become important tools for building public solidarity, coordinating actions, and pressuring authorities or governments through public opinion. The interaction between digital and physical spaces shows that online media acts as a key mediator between street protests, public opinion, and democratic demands, strengthening public political participation and their capacity to assert civil rights in the context of structural injustice.

The evidence above confirms that street politics still plays a crucial role in the dynamics of Indonesian democracy. Large demonstrations covered by online media, both national and international, are not only represented as expressions of public dissatisfaction, but also positioned as a measure of government legitimacy. In other words, street politics is understood not merely as a form of protest, but as an instrument of democratic correction that has been repeated throughout Indonesia's post-reform political history.

The evidence above shows that the media frames street political protests through narratives that highlight crucial issues, such as corruption, economic policies that do not favor the people, and draft laws that are considered controversial. For example, the 2019 student protests against the Criminal Code Bill and the weakening of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) were often positioned as symbols of resistance against the erosion of democracy, while the 2020 demonstrations against the Job Creation Law were framed as a battle between the

interests of the people and those of the economic elite. Such narratives reinforce the image of street politics as an arena for the struggle for legitimacy between civil society and the state.

B. Representation of Youth Political Participation in the Digital Space

The digital space has become the primary medium for young people to express their political participation. Social media platforms such as Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube serve not only as a means of communication, but also as an arena for mobilization, opinion forming, and solidarity campaigns. The phenomenon of political hashtags, memes, and viral videos shows a significant shift from formal channels of participation to more fluid, fast, and accessible practices of digital activism. This shift marks the emergence of a new pattern of political engagement among the younger generation that is directly or indirectly connected to street politics. The following are examples of the representation of political participation among the younger generation in the digital space:

Table 2. Representation of young people's political participation in the digital space

Digital phenomenon	Source	CDA Analytical Notes
The hashtag movements #ReformasiDikorupsi (Reform Corruption) and #TolakOmnibusLaw (Reject the Omnibus Law).	(Wahyuningroem et al., 2023)	Text: Hashtags as symbols of protest and criticism. Discursive Practice: Twitter-based digital activism mobilizes students and young people, shaping narratives critical of government policies. Social Practice: Expanding the reach of street politics, creating alternative spaces for participation that enable critical public opinion and collective solidarity.
Rushed legislation procedures & minimal public participation (IKN Bill debated & passed in 40 days).	(Schäfer & Syam, 2024)	Text: The rapid framing of legislation and minimal public participation are weaknesses of democracy. Discursive Practice: The media and the public interpret this process as a threat to checks and balances. Social Practice: It triggers criticism and

Digital phenomenon	Source	CDA Analytical Notes
		digital political mobilization, strengthening the role of the younger generation in demanding transparency and accountability.
JakPat Survey: 58.3% of young people engage in online political discussions, with YouTube and Instagram being the dominant platforms.	https://en.tempo.co/read/1772609/social-media-brings-young-indonesians-in-from-political-fringe	Text: Statistics highlight significant digital participation. Discursive Practices: Online platforms serve as informal spaces for young people to express political opinions. Social Practices: Social media has become a new political arena that facilitates political learning, opinion mobilization, and everyday forms of participation.
Young people see politics as part of everyday life and prefer informal digital channels.	https://www.idntime.com/news/indonesia/imgr-gen-z-milenial-lebih-suka-politik-yang-fleksibel-dan-digital-00-jkxzp-lc5qfk	Text: Politics is understood as part of daily routine, flexible and personal. Discursive Practices: Differences in the participation styles of Millennials (experience-based) and Gen-Z (expressive, creative, digital-native) highlight the variety of political discourse in the digital space. Social Practices: The political participation of the younger generation is performative, informal, and integrated with digital culture, expanding political representation in the public sphere.
The hashtag #KaburAjaDulu (Just Run Away) as a criticism of dynastic politics and unhealthy competition.	https://www.kompas.id/artikel/viral-tagar-kabur-aja-dulu-dan-kompetisi-tak-sehat-di-dunia-politik	Text: The hashtag expresses cynicism toward political dynasties and unhealthy competition. Discursive Practice: Digital activism protests a political system that limits youth participation. Social Practice: This online narrative shapes collective opinion, encourages political solidarity, and serves as a medium for public mobilization to express dissatisfaction with an exclusive political structure.

The above findings confirm that political participation among the younger generation is increasingly concentrated in the digital space, where social media has become the main channel for voicing aspirations, building solidarity, and organizing action. This digital activism is not merely a complement to formal politics, but has developed into a distinct form of political participation that confirms the shift in the younger generation's orientation from institutional arenas to more inclusive and interactive non-formal practices.

Content analysts on Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube show that young people are using political hashtags, satirical memes, and short videos to express criticism of government policies and mobilize support for public issues. Digital campaigns such as #ReformasiDikorupsi and #TolakOmnibusLaw, for example, are concrete examples of how digital spaces can create widespread resonance that drives collective action on the streets. Thus, digital spaces serve as incubators of public opinion that have the potential to

shift the center of gravity of political participation from formal institutions to technology-based social networks.

C. Discourse on Democracy and Indonesia's Future in 2045

Cultural transformation in the digital age shows that traditional practices no longer only take place in physical spaces, but are also being rearticulated in digital formats. This phenomenon can be seen in the way communities use online media to document, distribute, and renegotiate

cultural meanings in a global context. Thus, digital spaces not only serve as a means of preservation, but also as an arena for innovation involving cross-generational and cross-cultural interactions. The following evidence illustrates the discourse on democracy and the future of Indonesia in 2045:

Table 3. Discourse on democracy and Indonesia's future in 2045

Discourse on Democracy 2045	Source	CDA Analytical Notes
Mass protests responding to revelations about parliament's housing allowance; spreading across provinces and questioning political legitimacy.	https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/29/why-are-antigovernment-protests-taking-place-in-indonesia	Text: News highlights economic inequality and elitist practices of the House of Representatives as triggers for delegitimization. Discursive: Media frames protests as moral criticism of the political elite. Social: Indicates erosion of public trust that threatens consensus towards democracy in 2045.
Calls to end arbitrary detention; criticism of violence during demonstrations; HRW documents hundreds–thousands of detentions.	https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/09/03/indonesia-end-crackdown-on-protesters-arbitrary-detention	Text: State violence is presented as evidence of the narrowing of civil space. Discursive: The human rights narrative reinforces international criticism of repressive practices. Social: It marks a decline in democracy that could weaken the foundations of civil rights-Indonesia's vision for 2045.
Fiscal projections and financing analysis for Indonesia 2045: macroeconomic risks, financing needs, structural reform.	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia/publication/indonesia-economic-prospect	Text: Technocratic analysis of economic stability and the country's ability to achieve its 2045 targets. Discursive: Global financial authorities frame 2045 as a project that requires strong governance. Social: Shows that the success of the 2045 vision is directly related to the state's legitimacy in managing the economy.
Regional analysis warning of threats to civilian supremacy (military intervention,	https://eastasiaforum.org/2025/04/22/indonesian-democracy-takes-another-hit/	Text: Spotlight on legal revisions that expand the role of the military as a threat to democracy. Discursive: Regional academic analysis constructs a discourse of democracy under institutional threat. Social: Indicates

Discourse on Democracy 2045	Source	CDA Analytical Notes
legal revisions enhancing military role).		the risk of a democratic rollback that could potentially derail consolidation towards 2045.
Academic analysis of post-2024 political dynamics: ISEAS survey on voter shifts, opposition weakness, legitimacy issues.	(Lau & Wihardja, 2024)	Text: Scientific findings indicate changes in political preferences and the erosion of opposition. Discursive: Academic knowledge production confirms the crisis of political representation. Social: Describes a fragile political structure that could hinder long-term democratic planning towards 2045.

The above evidence confirms that the digital space has become an important arena in shaping the discourse on Indonesia's future democracy, especially in the lead-up to the Indonesia Emas 2045 vision. Online media, whether in the form of expert opinion, editorials, or policy analysis, consistently portray street demonstrations and the political participation of the younger generation as determinants of the direction of democratic consolidation. The narrative that has been constructed shows a close relationship between political protests, the crisis of legitimacy, and the collective imagination regarding the future of Indonesian democracy.

The table above shows that online media places the discourse on democracy within the framework of long-term challenges, ranging from the crisis of public trust in the political elite, increasing social polarization, to the potential fragmentation of political participation. Expert opinions and analyses published on various news portals emphasize that the sustainability of Indonesian democracy depends not only on formal mechanisms such as elections, but also on the state's ability to respond to street voices and digital

activism. Thus, the media plays an active role in shaping public discourse, which has implications for how the public envisions the direction and quality of Indonesian democracy in 2045.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that street politics remains an important element in Indonesia's post-Reformation democratic ecosystem. Public protests widely reported by online media not only reflect dissatisfaction with state policies, but also serve as crucial indicators of political legitimacy that continues to be negotiated (Marschlich & Ingenhoff, 2022). Media narratives highlighting issues such as the amendment of the TNI Law, the relocation of the capital, and the elimination of DPR member allowances show that the media plays an active role in framing political dynamics as a process of structural correction of power practices that are considered deviant. This reinforces the argument of Mourão & Brown (2022), regarding the power of media framing in shaping political perceptions and shows how street politics has transformed into a strategic arena of discourse, rather than merely a collective emotional expression.

The involvement of the media in framing street politics also reveals the close relationship between media representation and the formation of public opinion (Geise et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, international media narratives tend to be more critical of the decline in the quality of democracy (Iannone, 2022), while national media sometimes show ambiguity due to their structural proximity to power (Putra, 2024). This phenomenon supports the findings of Ferreira (2024), who asserts that the media in developing democracies play a dual role: as agents of information and political actors. Within this framework, this study emphasizes the importance of viewing street politics not only as visual events, but as discursive constructions that are produced, circulated, and interpreted through the media field.

Furthermore, the findings of this study show that Indonesia's younger generation has undergone a transformation in the form of political participation, from conventional patterns to digital and performative models (Jalli, 2025). Digital activism manifested through hashtags such as #ReformasiDikorupsi, political memes, and short TikTok videos has become a relevant medium of political articulation for Gen-Z and Millennials. This participation is not only expressive but also mobilizing, capable of connecting online and offline protests simultaneously (Chung et al., 2021). In this context, the theory of hybrid political participation proves relevant, where online and offline practices reinforce each other in building political pressure on the state. Digital politics is not a complement

but a primary channel in the formation of political awareness and solidarity among the younger generation (Showden et al., 2025).

However, this study also notes ambivalence in digital participation. On the one hand, social media provides a new, inclusive, and fast space for mobilization, but on the other hand, limitations in the form of disinformation, echo chambers, and algorithmic capitalization also threaten the quality of public deliberation (Reyero et al., 2022). The high level of engagement of the younger generation in the digital space must still be viewed critically so that they do not get caught up in shallow symbolic politics (Lorenz-Spreen et al., 2023). Therefore, the state and civil society need to design interventions that can strengthen digital-political literacy, so that digital spaces can truly be utilized as arenas for substantive democratic deliberation, rather than merely performative populism (Orosz et al., 2024).

Media discourse on the future of Indonesian democracy towards 2045 consistently shows that public protests, both physical and digital, play an important role in shaping the collective horizon of democracy. This discourse is not merely narrative, but also normative, directing the public towards an imagination of how democracy should be carried out (López-Rabadán, 2022). The context of Indonesia Emas 2045 is used as a projective lens by the media and public actors to assess whether the current political system is sufficiently inclusive, adaptive, and accountable in responding to socio-political challenges. Thus, online media has become a field for articulating

the future of democracy, which is constructed through interactions between criticism, hope, and legitimacy (Congge et al., 2023).

Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on hybrid democracy by showing the close relationship between street politics, digital activism, and media discourse production as determinants of the direction of democracy. Unlike previous studies that discussed these three elements separately, this study offers a conceptual synthesis that shows that non-formal political practices have significant transformative power in Indonesia's digital democracy ecosystem (Waeterloos, Walrave, et al., 2021). The practical implication of these findings is the need for more inclusive and responsive state policies toward voices outside formal institutions, as well as the strengthening of digital spaces as channels for healthy deliberation (Townley & Koop, 2024). With such a framework, Indonesian democracy has the opportunity not only to survive but also to develop adaptively toward 2045.

The phenomenon of student street politics in Indonesia shows a pattern similar to the dynamics of protests in Hong Kong, Chile, and Turkey, where physical activism gains wider resonance through digital amplification (Smith et al., 2023). However, unlike the contexts of those countries, which tend to end in radical confrontation, the Indonesian case shows a more ambivalent model of hybrid participation that, on the one hand, strengthens democratization but, on the other hand, remains constrained by elite co-optation and state regulation (Milan & Beraldo, 2024). This confirms that student street politics in Indonesia is

not merely a temporary protest practice, but a strategic arena in the consolidation of hybrid democracy (Blackington et al., 2024). Thus, this article makes an important contribution to enriching the global literature on street politics and digital democracy in developing countries.

CONCLUSION

The main findings of this study show that youth street politics in Indonesia cannot be separated from the digital dynamics that now shape the public sphere. Critical discourse analysis of national and international media coverage and online conversations reveals that youth demonstrations have a dual function: as a collective expression in physical space and as a political practice that gains wider resonance through digital amplification. Thus, street politics is not merely a legacy of conventional mass action, but an integral part of hybrid democracy that connects physical mobilization, media representation, and digital participation in a mutually influential ecosystem.

However, this study has a number of limitations that should be noted. First, reliance on mainstream media representations and certain digital conversations may result in discourse bias that does not fully reflect the diversity of protesters' experiences and the dynamics on the ground. Second, this study has not integrated ethnographic data or direct interviews that could enrich our understanding of the motivations, perceptions, and strategies of street political actors. Third, the focus of the analysis on a specific period limits the generalization of broader political events,

so the interpretation of the findings must take into account the temporal context.

Based on these findings, this study provides several practical recommendations for strengthening democratic consolidation towards Indonesia Emas 2045. The state, media, and civil society need to build more constructive physical-digital interaction mechanisms, particularly through improving digital literacy, providing

inclusive spaces for participation, and more dialogical institutional responses to public aspirations. In addition, street politics can be directed towards political education, policy advocacy, and public accountability if managed with a collaborative approach, so that the energy of mass mobilization does not result in polarization, but rather strengthens a more participatory, resilient, and sustainable democracy.

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