In-depth Analysis "Fake News" on Indonesian Elections

Introduction

Fake news is now seen as one of the greatest threats to democracy, journalism, and freedom of expression. It has weakened public trust in governments and its potential impact on the contentious “Brexit” referendum and the equally divisive 2016 U.S. presidential election - which it might have affected- is yet to be realized. The reach of fake news was best highlighted during the critical months of the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign, where the top twenty frequently-discussed false election stories generated 8,711,000 shares, reactions, and comments on Facebook, ironically, larger than the total of 7,367,000 for the top twenty most-discussed election stories posted by 19 major news websites [Silverman 2016]. Our economies are not immune to the spread of fake news either, with fake news being connected to stock market fluctuations and massive trades. For example, fake news claiming that Barack Obama was injured in an explosion wiped out $130 billion in stock value [Rapoza 2017]. These events and losses have motivated fake news research and sparked the discussion around fake news.

In Indonesia, fake news has gripped the election cycle and caused public outrage at what many consider and contend to be corruption and meddling with the
actual results of elections. This resulted in protests arising on the streets and unrest in many cities throughout the country. And even more importantly, a variety of fake websites and domains were created that drew in Indonesian citizens to vote, only to use their information to falsely vote for the candidate that those behind the website want to back.

**Overview**

I will work with Professor Indriyo, who is part of an Indonesian election commission, and gather information on the sources of this unrest and investigate the reported attacks on the online polling sites and fake websites that were created to draw in voters.

I will also design and build an application that helps with analyzing articles and voter data to highlight trends between fake news and voting patterns based on past election results. We will note the source of the fake news and the frequency by which it occurs and measure the impact that it has on political sentiment in the country. I will be using the Twitter API and Twython in order to parse through Twitter. Then, I will analyze the data and draw connections to the ways that the users disseminate information amongst themselves to see if that propagates the spread of fake new. I currently do not know how many articles or "posts" I expect to receive "hits" on and thus, analyzing the volume of articles in comparison to politically involved users and political activity will have margins for error that I still need to determine as I continue with my project. Further, I will also note the nature of social media and how it may impact the content of the data researched.
**Deliverables**

1. Utilize various libraries in order to perform tasks necessary to parse through articles and text.
   - Use Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp in order to see detailed information on who is sharing false information and how it is disseminating.
   - Gather enough articles/posts in order to gain a relatively accurate picture of correlation between language and false articles and voter sentiment at that time.

2. Note sentiment of potential voters/political participants
   - Use actual data achieved from analysis and look to explain reasoning behind such opinions.

3. Analyze the impact that we see and also address methods that Indonesian elections could be made more secure through protocols.
   - Possibly Suggest ways to improve fake news detection
   - Publish results and note the pattern of fake websites and news in order to establish general trends between how users spread fake news and what makes some more effective than others.