

ARGUMENT STRATEGIES ON POLITICAL DEBATE IN INDONESIA

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ARGUMENT STRATEGIES ON POLITICAL DEBATE IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

This study aims at explaining argument strategies on political debates in Indonesia. The data of the study is taken from the 2014 presidential debate as uploaded on Youtube. Results from the data analysis reveal argument strategies applied by political debaters are defensive and offensive strategies. In addition to these two strategies, fallacies are sometimes used as argument strategy. The findings demonstrate two conclusions. *First*, arguments in political debates are greatly influenced by debaters respective political logics and interests. Differences of perspectives lead to differences in the way with which debater views certain political issues in the debates. *Second*, argument in political debates lies between two interests, i.e., rationality interest that aims to produce sound argument and the interest of their political goals.

Key words: political debate, argument, strategy, fallacy

1. Introduction

In the world of politics, political debate has a significant role in mobilizing voter's support. This significant role is shown in the events of "The Great debate" between Kennedy (John F. Kennedy of the Democrats Party) and Nixon (Richard M. Nixon from the Republican party) on November 1960. This debate is called "The Great Debate" for two reasons. *First*, the debate was the first presidential debate. *Second*, the debate has a tremendous political impact, the change in the support of the American people, who previously favored Nixon, which in turn drove Kennedy, a Catholic of Irish descent became the 35th US president. Some even regard it as a miracle in the world of politics (Dwikisetiyawan, 2010). Fifty years later, the role of political debates can be seen in the events of the US presidential debate between Obama and McCain. Presidential candidates debates between Obama and McCain seemed to repeat the history of Kennedy and Nixon debate. Obama won the final score, and he glided smoothly to the White House became the 44th US president for the period 2008-2012.

In Indonesia, the role of political debates can be seen in the victory of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) over Megawati in the presidential elections of 2004 and 2009. The victory was less influenced by the performance of SBY in the presidential debate. Kusumastuti (2009) states that SBY has advantages compared to Megawati and Jusuf Kalla (JK). In 2014, Jokowi-Jusuf Kalla won the game over Prabowo-Hatta. It seemed to prove the experts that the debate will have much effects on the voters in the presidential election.

Political debate can also be seen from the perspective of Lasswell communication (in Hasan 2008), ie, who said what, with what channel, to whom, and what effect. The political debate involves communicators (candidates), message (issue or program), audiences, media (television, radio, newspapers, etc.), as well as the results or effects of the debate. McKinney and Carlin (in Hasan, 2008) state that political debate has four effects, ie behavioral, cognitive effects, image evaluation, and latent effects. Behavioral effects can be seen from the changes in the voter favour after watching political debates. Cognitive effects associated with messages or issues raised by debaters. In this case the debate participants are required to prioritize the issues that come into contact with the public and package it as good as possible. The next effect is the image evaluation. Image evaluation of candidates linked to the public perception on the candidates' character when they were arguing. Meanwhile, from the perspective of politics, the political debate on TV addresses two interests, the interests of formal logic and the interests of the political goals. The first relates to the interests of the political message and the second relates to the interests of political motivation, i.e the intention and political calculations (Vedung, 1982: 20).

To win the debate, participants ought to have a good strategy. Kruger (1960: 107) suggests two strategies that can be used in the debate, defensive strategies and offensive strategies. In my previous study on the strategy of reasoning in political debates on TV, I

classify the strategy of debate into affirmative and negative strategies. Affirmative strategy is done by (1) affirming, (2) elaborating, (3) repeating, (4) compromising, and (5) questioning, while negative strategy is done by (1) refusing, (2) rejecting, (3) denying, (4) postponing, (5) contrasting, and (6) provoking (Jazeri, 2011).

This paper addresses some strategies applied by presidential debaters during the debate. How do they defend their claims? How do they offend opponent's claims? Do they use fallacy as argument strategies? These are some research questions to be observed.

2. Research Methods

This research is a qualitative in nature. The source of research data is communicative event in the presidential candidate debate on TV of the 2014 general election. The presidential candidates are Prabowo-Hatta Rajasa (PB-HR) and Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla (Jokowi-JK). This debate took place in four rounds. Each round rose different issues; Economic development and Social welfare (round 1); Food, Energy, and Environment (round 2); International politics and National defense (round 3); and Democracy, Good governance, and Law enforcement (round 4). These presidential debates aired by several Indonesian TV channels such as RCTI, ANTV, SCTV, and TV One. However, for this research, the documents were downloaded from youtube.

The research data were analyzed with qualitative data analysis adopted from Miles and Huberman consisting of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, as well as verification and final conclusions. Debate strategies are classified as suggested by Kruger (1960:107) and Jazeri (2011). Since the political debate is full of interest, to understand the true meaning behind the text, the researcher uses political messages analysis of Vedung (1982). This analysis consists of two steps, namely content analysis and function analysis. Content analysis concern with the contents of the message while the functions analysis associated with the motivation and the political calculations led to the production of the arguments.

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3. Findings and Discussion

Based on the data analysis, it is found that debaters in the presidential debate apply two kinds of strategies; defensive strategies and offensive strategies. Defensive strategies are affirming, elaborating, repeating, compromising, and rebutting. While offensive strategies are questioning and provoking. In addition, fallacies are also serve as argument strategy. The findings and discussions are as follows.

3.1 Defensive Strategies

3.1.1 Affirming

Affirming in political debate conducted by agreeing and adding the idea of opponent. The following data is an example of affirming strategy.

JK:

Indonesia pendukung utama daripada *Kyoto Protocol*. Karena itu artinya adalah dunia harus bertanggung jawab kepada kerusakan lingkungan di daerah-daerah atau seperti *tropical forest* Indonesia. ...Karena itulah di Bali, tentu Pak Hatta tahu kita menjalankan REDD (*Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation*). Jadi karena itulah maka Indonesia mendukung itu, dan ingin menjalankan itu sebaik-baiknya, karena kita sangat berkepentingan dan dunia sangat berkepentingan.

The above data explains that JK approve the idea of Prabowo about the *Kyoto Protocol* relating to the forest sustainability. According to JK, "*Indonesia pendukung utama daripada Kyoto Protocol.*" Indonesia is a major supporter of the implementation of the *Kyoto Protocol* to preserve the forest sustainability to keep the world from extreme climate changes that could endanger the sustainability of the world.

3.1.2 Elaborating

Elaborating in the political debate is indicated by explaining the detail, or by giving examples. The following data is worth discussing.

PB:

Mengenai pemilihan alat pertahanan tentunya sudah melalui rangkaian pembahasan dan penelitian dari pihak-pihak yang berwenang; Kementerian Pertahanan, Angkatan Darat, dan selanjutnya. Jadi, kalau dilihat ada yang berpendapat kalau Leopard mungkin tidak

cocok untuk wilayah Indonesia. Ternyata itu adalah pandangan yang keliru. Battle tank sejenis Leopard bisa dipakai di sebagian wilayah nusantara, itu yang pertama. *Kedua*, kita juga sangat aktif berperan dalam PBB, kita sekarang mempunyai pasukan di Lebanon, Congo, Afrika Tengah. Kalau tidak salah pasukan perdamaian kita ada 4000 prajurit. Dalam hal *peace-making*, battle tank sejenis Leopard akan sangat berguna bagi TNI.

The above data explains that PB apply defensive strategy in a way of giving detail. Prabowo elaborate on the reasons of purchasing Leopard tank; (1) it has been approved by the Ministry of Defense and the Army, and (2) Indonesia has peacekeeper army which require Leopard tanks.

3.1.3 Repeating

Repeating strategy is based on the principle that if an opinion is delivered continuously in different ways, it will attract debaters attention and consideration to approve the opinion addressed by the speaker. This technique is often used in advertising some products.

PB:

Jadi Bapak berniat akan membeli kembali Indosat apabila bapak menjadi presiden? Berarti memang bapak akui sebagai sarana strategis yang harus dikuasai untuk bangsa Indonesia dan seharusnya memang tidak dijual untuk bangsa lain?

Jokowi:

Tadi sudah jelas sekali saya sampaikan, saat itu adalah saat kondisi krisis dan terimbas krisis. Bayangkan kalau kita kondisi krisis, butuh uang dan anggaran untuk menggerakkan ekonomi, dan yang kita punya dan bisa kita jual adalah barang itu, tentu akan dilakukan. Dengan catatan, masih bisa kita beli lagi.

The above data show that PB urged Jokowi to admit that the policy of selling Indosat by the Megawati era is a mistake. Along the debate, PB asked the question twice. Jokowi answers that the sale of Indosat is reasonable since at that time the state needs money to run the economic growth. In such conditions, the sale of Indosat is not a mistake. Moreover, Indosat may be repurchased by the Indonesian government.

3.1.4 Compromising

Compromising in the political debate is usually done if both debaters are totally disagree in an issue. Compromising is an attempt to find common ground rather than differences. Here is an example of compromising strategy.

PB:

Saya sependapat dengan Bapak, kita harus memperkuat industri dalam negeri. ... Tetapi Tank Leopard ini sudah menjadi keputusan Angkatan Darat dan TNI, harus kita gunakan dan memanfaatkan sebagai bagian dari arsenal kita.

JK:

Terima kasih kepada bapak Prabowo-Hatta telah setuju dengan kami. Pemekaran itu dilihat tujuannya agar bisa lebih baik, baik kesejahteraannya, investasinya, pengelolanya, dan demokrasinya.

Two of the above data are examples of a compromising strategy by approving the opponent idea, but then it followed by his own opinion which is not yet approved in the hope that the debate will accede to his opponent's opinion. PB said "*Saya sependapat dengan Bapak, kita harus memperkuat industri dalam negeri*", but he added his opinion that the purchase of the Leopard tanks are reasonable. By doing so, Prabowo hoped that Jokowi-JK could agree with his opinion. Meanwhile, Jusuf Kalla said, "*Terima kasih kepada bapak Prabowo-Hatta telah setuju dengan kami*". By saying so, Jusuf Kalla expect that Prabowo-Hatta would agree with his opinion about the importance of extending administrative area.

3.1.5 Rebutting

Rebutting in the political debate is usually done by using the opinions of experts or famous figures, so that the opponent will be directly confronted with an expert or figure. In addition, rebutting can also be done by using public opinion and addressing different meaning of statements form the meaning as it is intended by opponent.

Jokowi:

Ya, perlu saya tambahkan kalau tadi menyinggung kota Solo, kota Solo pernah mendapatkan *Green City* dari Kementrian Lingkungan Hidup, dan apa Menteri Kehutanan. Silakan bapak cek di sana!

The above data shows that Jokowi applied rebutting strategy by conveying strong evidence. "... kota Solo pernah mendapatkan Green City dari Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup, dan apa Menteri Kehutanan". The statement was delivered by Jokowi as the answer to Hatta Rajasa question on Jakarta and Solo, once led by Jokowi, do not get Adipura trophy.

3.2 Offensive Strategies

3.2.1 Questioning

Questioning can also be applied as a strategy of debate. The strategy is used when the opponent addresses an argument without sufficient evidence. Questioning is usually asking for evidence and asking for clarification.

JK:

Pada hari Kamis lalu di Bandung bapak bicara bahwa, ada pihak-pihak yang ingin merubah demokrasi ke kleptokrasi, kekuasaan para maling-maling. ... Pertanyaannya, pidato Bapak itu ditujukan kepada siapa?

Based on Prabowo speech in Bandung, JK asks Prabowo who is the cleptocracy group in this country. Do the Jokowi-JK accused cleptocracy? JK need to make it clear who is meant cleptocracy group by Prabowo. According to JK, there are only two presidential contestants, the Jokowi-JK and Prabowo-Hatta. Who is the cleptocracy group intended by Prabowo? Prabowo does not respond the question directly, rather than he said that cleptocracy is anywhere, in both Prabowo-Hatta group or Jokowi-JK group.

3.2.2 Provoking

Provoking is useful for both defensive and offensive strategy. Provocation generally is in the form of interrupting, accusing, mocking, and challenging. The provoked opponent will be emotional, thus in the one hand he is easily attacked, on the other hand he is not capable to attack.

JK:

Berkaitan dengan visi misi bapak di depan, bagaimana Prabowo-Hatta akan menyelesaikan kasus-kasus pelanggaran HAM di masa lalu dan menjaga HAM di masa depan?

JK accused Prabowo who has been linked to the issue of human rights violations when he was a soldier. Prabowo said that as a soldier he must protect the country from all threats, both from within and outside the country. In carrying out the task, he responsible to his boss. He states, "Jadi, saya bertanggung jawab, hati nurani saya bersih, saya pembela HAM yang paling keras di negeri ini, saya tidak ragu-ragu".

3.3 Fallacy as Argument Strategy

3.3.1 Argumentum ad Hominem

Jokowi:

Pertanyaan saya kepada Pak Hatta sebagai Menko Perekonomian saat itu, menurut bapak apa yang keliru dan apa yang salah? Dan juga kepada Bapak Prabowo, sebagai ketua HKTI, upaya apa yang telah bapak lakukan? Terima kasih.

HR:

Pertanyaan saya tadi itu, dari apa yang dijelaskan mengapa misalkan, DKI sekarang tahun ini tidak dapat? biasanya setiap tahun dapat. Atau misalkan Solo, belum pernah dapat. Apa yang salah? misalkan di dalam menerapkan konsep kota bersih, sehat, hijau, atau kriterianya yang tidak tepat? Terima kasih.

Two of the above data are examples of *argumentum ad hominem*, which is directly attacking the opponent instead of attacking the argument. Jokowi attacked Hatta Rajasa as Coordinating Minister of Economy and Prabowo as chairman of HKTI (Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia). Meanwhile, Hatta Rajasa do the same way, directly attack Jokowi as mayor of Solo and governor of Jakarta province which are not able to win the Adipura award.

3.3.2 Argumentum ad Populum

PB:

Kita ingin air bersih, pangan murah, sekolah yang baik, poliklinik yang baik, rumah sakit yang terjangkau, jalan yang bagus, kereta api, masa rakyat tidak akan mendukung pemerintah yang ingin berbuat untuk kesejahteraan rakyat?... Karena kita adalah pelayan rakyat, kita hanya bekerja untuk kepentingan rakyat Indonesia."

The above data is an example of *argumentum ad populum* used as a strategy in the presidential debates. In the argument, Prabowo did not make logical argument, but rather based

on the interests of the people or *populum*. By saying "Karena kita adalah pelayan rakyat, kita hanya bekerja untuk kepentingan rakyat Indonesia." Prabowo stands by the people in order to get the support of the people to be elected as president.

Based on the above findings, it is found that political debate is different from other kinds of debate, such as scientific debate. Hess-Luttich (2007) calls the political debate as (pseudo) argument. He also stated that the political talk show on TV is entertainment as well as confrontation. It is called entertainment for the event is intended to entertain viewers. It is also called confrontation for the confrontation of arguments between politicians about a particular issue.

Generally, the patterns of political debates are the same. Moderator create an emotional atmosphere by asking provoking questions. When one of the debater attacked, the moderator interrupted and pointed to the other debater to answer, so that the coherence of a debate is difficultly comprehend. In order to understand the coherence of speech in the political debate, Laurbach (2007) use intertextuality structure of argument. Laurbach (2007) also found some fallacies in the political debate. Therefore, an analysis of the political arguments should be in an integrative approach. Vedung (1982: 20) offers two models of analysis; the analysis of the content (content-oriented analysis) and analysis of the functions (function-oriented analysis). Both models of the analysis carried out simultaneously.

In the work of Toulmin (1990), the validity of the argument is based on the underlying context of a discourse, such as topics and institutional domains. Walton (1989) and Walton and Krabbe (1995) has extended the idea of Toulmin to distinguish some major types of argumentation discourse. The model of Walton and Krabbe makes illogic argument or fallacy in a type of discussion could be allowed (assumed to be true) on the other type of discussion. For example, *argumentum ad baculum* may be considered misleading in critical discussions, but may be considered to be useful in the negotiation discussion. Luginbuhl (2007) found that in political debate fallacy is often serve as argument strategy.

Hamlin (1970: 12) said that Aristotle's definition of fallacy is no longer acceptable in political debate. It is in line with Walton (1990: 362) who supports the use of fallacy as a strategy in political debate. He states that in some respects, there is no objection that some fallacies may be an argument such as *argumentum ad baculum*, *argumentum ad verecundiam*, and *argumentum ad populum*.

In the political debate, the question often arouse to attack the opponent, either directly or indirectly. Such question is so called *argumentum ad hominem*. Such argument in traditional logic is an error of reasoning or fallacy. Nevertheless, according to Walton (1991) questions that attack opponent in political debate is powerful strategy of argument.

4. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, we come into the following conclusions:

- a. Argument strategies applied by political debaters are defensive strategies (affirming, elaborating, repeating, compromising, and rebutting) and offensive strategies (questioning and provoking).
- b. Fallacies such as *argumentum ad hominem* and *argumentum ad populum* are sometimes used as argument strategy.
- c. The use of arguments strategies in political debates are greatly influenced by debaters respective political affiliation interests. Differences of perspectives lead to differences in the way with which debater views certain political issues in the debates.
- d. Argument in political debates lies between two interests, i.e., rationality interest that aims to produce sound argument and the interest of their political goals. In other words, political debate is a double game between presenting rational arguments and avoiding them at the same time.

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