

Analyses of Indonesians' Engagement with the Anticommunist Master Narrative

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Abstract. Research on narrative engagement centers on personal narratives and how these personal narratives challenge master-narratives. Less attention is paid to narrative engagement in an online context, so the current study aims to explore online narrative engagement of master narratives attached to Indonesia's 30 September Movement. We observed online political discourse by retrieving 3,057 tweets using the keyword "PKI." We used content analysis to identify relevant themes. Two main themes emerged and represented either support or opposition toward the anti-communist master-narrative. Most tweets in our dataset supported the anti-communist narrative while the remaining were critical of it. We observed that the tweets found predominantly supported anti-communist narratives. Moreover, our research details the unique mechanisms of narrative engagement operative within the online environment. Additionally, we recommend that reconciliation efforts should adopt a subtle approach in challenging the anti-communist narrative to prevent intense opposition.

Keywords: Conflict, master narratives, reconciliation, narrative engagement

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Introduction

The study of narratives has sparked much interest in psychology and there exists different conceptualizations of narrative in the psychology literature. Hammack and Pilecki (2012) for example propose that narrative is "*the sensible organization of thought through language, internalized or externalized, which serves to create a sense of personal coherence and collective solidarity and to legitimate collective beliefs, emotions and actions*" (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012 pp. 78). These authors view that narratives operate at both the personal and social level. On the individual level people try to make sense of their surrounding environment and on the social level these narratives exist in cultural products for example history books, films, and museums. McLean and Syed (2016) suggest that master-narratives can be identified through life stories, structure of personal stories, or specific episodes or events. These narratives function to guide perceptions towards ingroups and outgroups and inform which behaviors and attitudes are socially appropriate (McLean & Syed, 2016). One of the central characteristics of a master-narratives is its rigidity. Despite active opposition and the creation of

alternative narratives, master narratives persist due to their entrenchment within power structures and long-established societal existence (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012; McLean & Syed, 2016).

In conflict situations, narratives function to help people make sense of the conflict and deal with the uncertainty situation (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). Building upon this understanding, Bar-Tal et al. (2014) further suggest that conflict-supportive narratives consist of two interconnected types: collective memory and ethos of conflict. Collective memory encompasses narratives concerning historical accounts of the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007). The nature of these narratives, while often based on actual events, tends to be biased and serves the social needs of a specific group. This biased interpretation of history then feeds into the second type of conflict-supporting narrative: the ethos of conflict. The ethos of conflict comprises social beliefs that are held during a conflict. These beliefs, often rooted in the selective memory of past events, are related to ingroup victimization, justification of ingroup goals, delegitimization of the opponent, and feelings of constant threat in the face of an enemy (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006).

Although these conflict narratives may have negative implications toward conflict resolution, internalization of these master-narratives do not occur automatically. In fact, people and communities may engage in active negotiation with these master-narratives which may lead to resistance (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012; McLean & Syed, 2016). According to McLean & Syed (2016), the influence of master and alternative narratives on personal narratives depends on the individual's level of alignment with them. People who align with the master-narrative support the status-quo and existing structures. They further argue that although people may align with an alternative counter-narrative, however this also means that people recognize or refer to the master-narrative indicating unconscious internalization of the master-narrative.

Research on narrative engagement have focused on the development of identity where personal narratives challenge master-narratives in varying contexts like national identity, sexual identity, homelessness (Barsigian et al., 2023; Hammack, 2006; Toolis & Hammack, 2015). In the context of the Palestinian and Israeli conflict, participants of a co-existence program negotiate what it means to be Palestinian and Israeli. The research identified the possibilities of developing a common human identity which acknowledges the perspectives of the outgroup. This identity negotiation process challenges each groups' master-narrative which prioritizes the primacy of the ingroup. In a different context, homeless youth challenge homeless master narratives associated with being lazy and incompetent (Toolis & Hammack, 2015). However, some research has shown some nuance in challenging master narratives (Hochman & Spector-Mersel, 2020). It is possible to challenge master narratives through personal stories associated with a political event, but at the same time adhere to master-narratives associated with ethnic identity (Hochman & Spector-Mersel, 2020) showing that people may be negotiating with multiple master-narratives while telling their story.

The common method for analyzing narrative engagement is by having participants explain their life story, and through this interview process the interviewer identifies how personal narratives challenge master-narratives. What has received limited attention is narrative engagement in an online context. Research has shown that several actors use social media to communicate specific narratives (Merry, 2022; Zhang et al., 2020). Politicians may communicate using twitter (now referred to as X) to promote narratives focusing on threats from outsiders to gain political support (Merry, 2022). During a crises governments tend to use twitter to communicate nationalism narrative while the public tended to communicate power and contestation narratives

(Zhang et al., 2020). To the authors' knowledge, one study explores narrative engagement in an online context (Barsigian et al., 2023). This study shows that LGBTQ+ youth use social media to connect and form communities with like-minded individuals and determine how they present themselves in an online community (Barsigian et al., 2023).

Given the limited research of narrative engagement in an online context, the current study endeavors to fill this gap. Our approach to analyze narrative engagement diverges significantly from previous research (Barsigian et al., 2023; Hammack, 2006; Hochman & Spector-Mersel, 2020; Toolis & Hammack, 2015). While previous research identifies narrative engagement through personal stories, the current study adopts a naturalistic observational approach where we observe online discourse. Through this approach we hope to uncover how people naturally discuss topics which have significance to master-narratives. While the approach contrasts with previous studies, we believe that this approach is still able to capture narrative engagement. Hammack and Pilecki (2012) suggests that political discourse is an important element of a narrative. Therefore, we believe that online discourse which reflects an active process of interaction with a master-narrative also constitutes a form of narrative engagement.

In the current study our aim is to explore narrative engagement within the context of an Indonesian political conflict which occurred in 1965. Among Indonesians, this conflict is known as the 30 September Movement. This event is one of the most important national events in Indonesia, second to the declaration of Independence (Hakim et al., 2015). Discussion of 30 September 1965 is a sensitive topic. The master narrative suggests that communists are the ultimate enemy of the state, and opinions that are contrary to this can lead to legal consequences. In fact, the law which prohibits the promotion of communism remains still in effect (Saptohutomo, 2022). Given this context, we believe that an online context provides the appropriate setting to analyze narrative engagement. Greater anonymity online fosters disinhibition, potentially leading users to express behaviors deemed inappropriate offline (Lieberman & Schroeder, 2020). This environment also facilitates wider dissemination of information, making it a powerful tool for large-scale persuasion (Lieberman & Schroeder, 2020). Based on these factors we believe that this study will increase our understanding of narrative engagement takes place in an online setting. This understanding will then provide a crucial foundation for exploring the origins and development of the anti-communist narrative, which we will address in the following section.

30 September movement and the birth of the anti-communist master-narrative in Indonesia

Anticommunist attitudes in Indonesia have been shaped by past social and political conflicts, particularly during the early years of independence. One event prior to 1965 which intensified anti-communist sentiments was the Madiun Affair (McGregor, 2009). This was marked by a conflict between the Indonesian government and the left-wing group Front Demokrasi Rakyat (FDR) which occurred in 1948 in the city of Madiun, East Java (Sugiyama, 2011). Events like the Madiun affair created a political atmosphere in 1965 of which polarization between the communists and their opponents intensified (Mortimer, 1969). It was within this context of communist antagonism that led to the event known as the Gerakan 30 September / Partai Komunis Indonesia (30 September Movement / Indonesian Communist Party) commonly abbreviated as "G30S / PKI." On the day of the event, a group naming themselves the "30 September movement" attempted a coup and murdered 6 military generals (Cribb, 2001).

The coup attempt had failed by the evening of October 1st and in response Major General Soeharto quickly mobilized forces for the counter-attack. It was this counter-attack that started the mass campaign to eliminate the communists and eventually led to the killings of 400-500 thousand communists and alleged communists (Cribb, 2001). This event in addition to leading to mass violence, also gave birth to the anti-communist master-narrative. This master-narrative makes reference to the events of the 1965 coup however its accounts of the event are distorted to suit the needs of the anti-communist political forces, especially Major General Soeharto, who was able to ascend as president following the event (Heryanto, 2006). In the following section I propose some of the central elements of the anti-communist master-narrative. Scholars of narrative research have mentioned that master-narratives can be identified through the recollection of a specific event or through social beliefs related with the conflict (McLean & Syed, 2016; Bar-Tal et al., 2014). In line with this approach I propose that the Indonesian anti-communist narrative contains three main themes namely accounts of the 30 September attempted coup, beliefs of a communist threat, and negative characterization of PKI.

Official account of the 30 September Movement /PKI: PKI as sole mastermind

One of the central themes of the anti-communist master-narrative relates with who was primarily responsible for the 30 September coup. The official account which remains in existence to this day is that the Indonesian Communist Party was solely

responsible for the attempted coup and the murder of the generals (Roosa, 2006). The production of the master-narrative was mainly based on historical accounts and also cultural products like movies, novels and school textbooks (Heryanto, 2006). Early attempts to create a formal narrative of the event occurred a few months after the coup (Adam, 2018). History lecturers from *Universitas Indonesia* were commissioned by the defense minister General Nasution to prepare a book which was entitled 40 Days of Failure of the G30S, 1 October-10 November 1965 (Pusat sedjarah Angkatan Bersenjata R.I., 1965). This publication was released by the Institute of History, Staff of Defense and Security and concluded that the Indonesian Communist Party was involved in the coup.

Following the release of the first historical account, other books were released for example "*The Coup Attempt of September 30 Movement in Indonesia.*" Other publications were also released in 1997 and they all suggested that the Indonesian Communist Party was responsible for the attempted coup. In addition to these publications, perhaps one of the more effective mediums to socialize the master-narrative at scale was the film *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (Treason of the G30S/PKI) (Heryanto, 2006). This film was produced by the state's film company Perusahaan Produksi Film Negara (PPFN), in 1982-1983 and released in 1984. When the film was initially released, students in Indonesian schools were required to pay to attend regular screenings at movie theaters during school hours (Heryanto, 1999). From that time onwards the state television network TVRI broadcast the film annually on 30 September, and it continued to do so until the last few years of the New Order regime.

Communist threat

Heryanto (1999) argues that the communist threat is a master-narrative which has secured the Soeharto regime's legitimacy and power for three decades. The discourse of the communist threat takes its origin from the events of 1965 however the regime had an interest in creating the communist threat as never dying (Heryanto, 1999). In doing so, the regime cautioned about the communist threat in consideration of the current political developments. This can be seen from the speeches made by Indonesians officials in relation to the commemoration of the 1st of October or the commemoration of *Hari Kesaktian Pancasila* (The Pancasila Sanctity Day) (McGregor, 2002). In the initial speeches the former President Soeharto focused on the need to guard against a recurrence of a tragedy like the G30S/PKI and the alleged treachery or betrayal of the Indonesian Communist Party. In the mid 1990s, regime. In recent developments the communist threat was expressed within the presidential election. The

candidate Joko Widodo was alleged to be PKI or Neo-PKI (a new form of communism) and liberals were also labeled as being PKI (Miller, 2018).

Negative characterization of PKI

Recent research related to the 1965 tragedy has highlighted how negative characterizations of communists are present among Indonesians to this day (Putra et al., 2019). Interviews conducted towards some Muslims found that people associated communism with evil and atheism. The interviews revealed that participants perceived PKI as cruel, barbarous, and dangerous and associated atheism with being ruthless killers. These negative depictions of the PKI can be traced back to the year of the attempted coup. Negative depiction of the PKI was particularly intensified following the failure of the coup (Roosa, 2006; Wieringa, 2003). The army news outlets *Angkatan Bersenjata* and *Berita Yudha* were most responsible for disseminating the negative portrayals of the PKI and falsely reporting that the murdered generals were tortured before being killed (Wieringa, 2003).

Having elaborated on the main themes of the anti-communist narrative, we believe that it is important to understand how Indonesians engage with the anti-communist master-narrative. To the knowledge of the author there is limited psychology research concerning Indonesia people's thoughts on the Indonesian Communist Party or the 1965 tragedy. The available research on Indonesians' perception of communists have focused on their negative judgment of Indonesians affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party (Putra et al., 2016; Putra et al., 2019) conducted an experiment that showed that people tended to give negative ratings to people who were descendants of the Indonesian Communist Party. Furthermore, through interviews with Muslim Indonesians, Putra et al. (2019) found that participants viewed that members of the Indonesian Communist Party are dangerous and a threat to Indonesian unity and therefore past violence toward the alleged communists were justified. These studies show that although communists have no significant presence in Indonesia however their attitudes reflect those of the past and research on such events remain relevant to this day. These studies also show that attitudes toward Indonesian communists are implicitly guided by past anti-communist narratives. To the knowledge of the authors this is the first study which examines anti-communist narratives and how Indonesians engage with them.

In order to analyze engagement with the anti-communist narrative, we will analyze tweets about the Indonesian context of the 1965 tragedy. Analysis of social media data provides a way for researchers to capture a "snapshot" of what people are thinking at a large scale but with efficient resources compared to

traditional survey methods (Chew & Eysenbach, 2010). Some psychological research has made use of twitter to gain insights into attitudes and behaviors based on political identities. For example, Sylwester and Purver's (2015) study analyzed tweets and found that Democrats tend to use more uniqueness, swear words, positive sentiment, anxiety, feeling and religion in their tweets, while Republicans tend to use less on the said aspects. At the time of conducting this research, twitter allowed wide access to its data, unlike Facebook which places more restrictions on access to data (Murphy, 2017). In Indonesia in early 2023, 24 million Indonesians Twitters (Kemp, 2024) which shows the potential for research especially for controversial topics.

Methods

Research approach

A qualitative approach is adopted in the current study. This is because we focus in describing and explaining the phenomena (Willig, 2008), in this case engagement with anti-communist narrative. Furthermore, we adopt this topic due to the sensitive nature of the topic. Therefore, in line with the qualitative approach, this study may "give a voice" to individuals whose opinions are marginalized (Willig, 2008). Aligned with this approach we are observing digital traces which refers to data which is available from social media, more specifically twitter data (Sloan & Quan-Haase, 2022). Previous research has shown that people may use twitter to disclose feelings related with sensitive issues for example suicide (Azizy & Thontowi, 2024). The main variable is narrative engagement and according to McLean and Syed (2016) this can be seen by how a person agrees or challenges a master-narrative. Here we are interested in the contents which indicate a person's adherence or non-adherence to the master-narrative.

Data collection

Tweets were obtained using the tweepy (tweepy.org) python-based package. In this study we use twitter's rest API (Application Program Interface). Because we used the non-premium access to twitter API's, we were only able to access tweets that were 9 days old (Murphy, 2017). In collecting data, we used the key word "PKI". PKI is an abbreviation of "*Partai Komunis Indonesia*" or the Indonesian Communist Party which is also commonly used among Indonesians to refer to the communists and the 30 September event also known as G30S/PKI. We filtered retweets and so only included original tweets from a user. Data collection started on 30 September 2018 which led to the collection of tweets spanning from the 20th of September to 7th of October 2018. This time frame was most appropriate because twitter activity surrounding

discussion of Indonesian Communist Party and the 30 September Movement usually peaks the week approaching the 30th of September (Lahitani, 2015; Saputri, 2017).

In order to make sense of the tweets, content analysis was conducted following the guidelines of Elo and Kyngas (2008). We approached the analysis using inductive content analysis by reading through the tweets and developing initial categories through open coding. These initial categories were then grouped into higher order categories. Finally, major categories were formulated by developing a description of the words and expressions that qualified the inclusion of higher-order categories into the major category. For the validation process To ensure the coding process was not too subjective, all authors were involved in the coding process. Disputes concerning the coding were resolved through discussion between the four authors. When a dispute cannot be resolved through consensus, we would resort to voting whereby the decision would be based on the agreement of most parties. For example, in categorizing a certain tweet when 3 of the 4 authors agree, then we would follow based on the decision of the 3 authors. When there is a tie between the 2 authors, the first author's decision would have larger weight over the other authors since this authors has more training in research and understanding of the topic.

Results and Discussion

We obtained 4105 tweets with the keyword "PKI" from the 30th of, 2018, 12 AM, to October 7th, 2018, 12 PM. Because the goal was to investigate narrative engagement, we only included tweets which explicitly or implicitly showed either support or opposition to the master-narrative. In addition, we also excluded tweets which simply shared news links. As a result, 1048 tweets were excluded, leaving 3057 tweets for analysis. Our analyses resulted in the identification of two major categories that were associated with support or opposition to the anti-communist master narrative (official narrative). Each of these major categories consisted of sub-categories which gave more specific descriptions of the content of the major categories. For reporting of the tweet samples, we do not include information of the user id in text citation as well as references. This decision adheres to ethical guidelines of the internet mediated research as attempt to maintain anonymity of the user (British Psychological Society, 2021). We believe this is particularly important considering the sensitive nature of the topic in Indonesia.

The following section elaborates on the categories and sub-categories developed through our analysis.

Data analysis flow chart

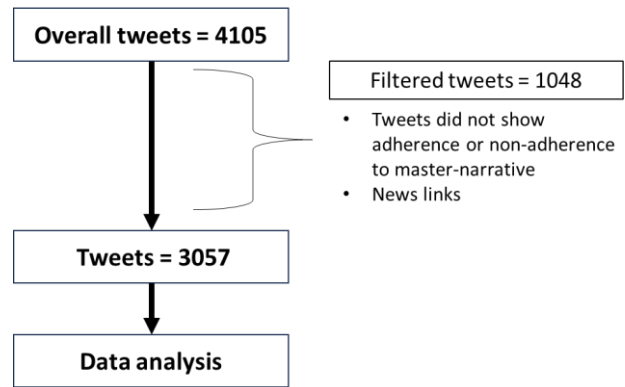


Figure 1. Flowchart of data collection and preprocessing of tweets

Support official narrative: the tweets that align with government's official narrative

This category consists of 2,173 tweets and constitutes a majority of all tweets (71.08%). Five sub-categories are descriptive of this category namely: (a) allegations of PKI association, (b) rejection and negative characterization of PKI, (c) agreement with anti-communist master narrative, (d) watch and / or support screening of G30S / PKI movie, (e) PKI resurgence.

Allegations of PKI association

This sub-category consists of 623 tweets (28.67%) of tweets within the pro-narrative category. Tweets are included in this category if a person labels another person, or political or social group as PKI. This allegation is particularly negative in Indonesia considering that the PKI is a banned organization and that activities associated with promoting communism can lead to legal sanctions (Heryanto, 2006). Although the tweets within this sub-category do not explicitly mention words that support the master-narrative, these tweets indicate that a person's attitudes and actions represent strong adherence with the anti-communist master-narrative.

In labeling a person as PKI, people tend to associate the current regime led by Joko Widodo (abbreviated as Jokowi) as being associated with PKI. Here is a sample of a tweet which alleges that the current president is associated with PKI.

"@jokowi didukung simpatisan PKI dan ini bukan pencemaran nama baik, lihat saja pendukung jkw (Jokowi), 98% tidak percaya PKI kejam dan Sejarah PKI, bahkan mereka menyalahkan TNI dan kaum Muslim. Mereka memandang pemberontakan PKI sebagai HOAX dan, G30S/PKI sebagai propaganda orde baru ☹️ #2019GantiPresiden"

"@jokowi is supported by PKI sympathizers and this is not slander, have a look at jkw (Jokowi)

supporters, 98% don't believe in PKI's cruelty and the history of G30S/PKI, and they even blame the Indonesian Army and Muslims. The PKI rebellion is viewed as a HOAX, G30S/PKI is viewed as New Order Propaganda(☹️)
#2019ChangePresident”

Here is an example which does not relate with the former president but provides samples of attitudes and behaviors that indicate a person's affinity with the PKI for example “not praying” or not believing the “cruelty of PKI” or the “history G30S/PKI.” Indeed, such attitudes and behaviors are used to label another user or social group as being affiliated with the PKI particularly related with the history of the September 30 movement 1965 (abbreviated as G30S /PKI).

“Jika agamamu Islam tapi tidak menjalankan sholat, ini tanda kamu akan tumbuh menjadi PKI.”

“If your religion is Islam but you don't want to perform shalat (prayers), these are signs that you may grow to become PKI.”

Rejection and negative characterization of PKI

This subcategory consists of 525 tweets (24.16%) and consists of tweets which show rejection of PKI as well as negative representations of PKI. This theme shows adherence to the master-narratives because it agrees on the demonization or delegitimization of the PKI. This subcategory focuses on adjectives used to describe the negative characteristics of PKI and also calls for rejection or elimination of the PKI. With regards to negative representation of PKI, people tend to use negative adjectives to describe the PKI. Some of the words used to describe PKI for example include inhumane, have negative intentions, atheist, act as victims, dangerous, anti-Islam, like to torture.

Table 1

Major themes associated with narrative engagement of the anticommunist master narrative

Themes	Frequency (%)
Support official narrative	2173 (71.08%)
Allegations of PKI Association	623 (28.67%)
Rejection and negative characterization of PKI	525 (24.16%)
Agreement with anti-communist master narrative	375 (17.26%)
Support screening of PKI movie	248 (11.41%)
PKI resurgence	238 (10.95%)
Counternarratives	884 (28.92%)
Scepticism of G30S/PKI issue	420 (47.51%)
Conspiracy of G30S/PKI	203 (22.96%)
Critique toward G30S/PKI movie	96 (10.86%)
Sympathy towards victims and PKI descendants	83 (9.39%)
Negative opinions toward the New Order	68 (7.81%)
Total tweets	3057

While some of the characterizations refer to PKI as a threat for example dangerous and inhumane, other characterizations are tied to religiosity namely atheist and anti-Islam. Here are some examples of the tweets:

“PKI harus dimusnahkan dari Indonesia”

“PKI should be eliminated from Indonesia”

“PKI Kejam. Mereka membantai kyai-kyai, siswa pesantren, jenderal, dan orang-orang yang anti-PKI. Jangan digiring ke arah teori konspirasi. Ini bukan kerja CIA dan Soeharto. PKI kejam dan ini fakta”

“PKI are cruel. They kill islamic leaders, islamic religion students, generals, and people who are anti-PKI. We should not try to sway this into thinking this a conspiracy theory. This is not the work of CIA and Soeharto. PKI are cruel, this is fact.”

Agreement with anti-communist narrative

This sub-category consists of tweets which reiterate the basic ideas of the anti-communist narrative (N= 375, 17.26%). This sub-category is a more explicit indication of master-narrative adherence because it echoes the messages of the anti-communist narrative. Most of the tweets in this subcategory reiterates the master-narrative by mentioning that PKI are the main actors of G30S/PKI, that they murdered the generals and that they tried to replace the Indonesian national ideology with communism. A sample of the tweets are given below

“Sejarah mencatat bahwa pada 30 September 1965, terjadi G30S dan pemerintah melarang Partai Komunis Indonesia, karena PKI ingin mengganti Pancasila, jadi tanggal 1 Oktober ditetapkan sebagai Hari Kesaktian Pancasila”

“History records that on the 30th of September 1965, there was the G30S and government banned the Indonesian Communist Party, because the PKI wanted to replace Pancasila, and so the 1st of October was established as Pancasila Sanctity Day.”

“Tujuan utama PKI adalah mengganti Pancasila dengan Komunisme, mereka melakukan ini dengan provokasi Muslim, menyebarkan fitnah terhadap Islam, menunjukkan bagaimana Islam dan Pancasila tidak sesuai, namun sebenarnya PKI yang ingin mengubah Pancasila ”

“The main goal of PKI is to replace Pancasila with Communism, they do this by provoking Muslims, spreading false information about Islam, try to show how Islam and Pancasila are incompatible, however it is actually PKI who wants to change Pancasila.”

Support screening and agree to validity of G30S/PKI movie

This category consists of 248 tweets (11.41%) and includes tweets which show explicit support of screening of the movie "Treason of G30S/PKI." This sub-category also adheres to the anti-communist master narrative because it agrees with the validity of movie the. Considering that the movie was once used as a tool for promoting the master-narrative, support for its validity indicates alignment with the master-narrative. With regards to the tweets, we found that support of the movie was indicated by a call or invitation to watch the movie "*cmon lets watch the film,*" or "*don't forget to watch.*" In addition to this, people also suggest that the movie was a valid source of reference in relation to the September 30 event. In suggesting its validity people mention that the movie was factual, reflects the true events and is not politicized.

"Semua orang harusnya naikkan bendera setengah tiang hari ini, Minggu, 30 September 2018. Untuk memperingati hari bersejarah kejahatan PKI terhadap 7 jenderal yang dikenal dengan G30S / PKI"

"All Indonesian people are encouraged to raise the flag at half-mast today, Sunday, September 30 2018. To commemorate the historic day of the PKI's atrocities against the 7 generals known as G30S / PKI."

"Hari ini, 53 tahun lalu. PKI menculik, menyiksa, dan mengubur hidup-hidup pahlawan dan jenderal kami. Hari ini 53 tahun lalu, kamu mungkin belum lahir, kamu masih bayi atau remaja, PKI kejam. Jika kamu PancasilaMuda, musuhmu PKI"

"Today, 53 years ago. PKI abducted, tortured and buried alive our countries heroes and army generals. This day 53 years ago, you may have not been born yet, you were still a baby, or a teenager, PKI are cruel. If you are PancasilaMuda, your enemy is PKI."

PKI Resurgence

This sub-category consists of 238 tweets (10.95%) and contains tweets associated with the belief that the PKI exists and continues to present a threat to Indonesia. This subcategory supports the anti-communist narrative because it supports the idea that the communists are a continuous threat in Indonesia. Tweets which were categorized under this sub-category mostly used the word PKI in conjunction with the word "*bangkit*" which we translate as "resurgence." The use of the phrase PKI resurgence was done in a number of ways, with some expressing caution toward the PKI resurgence. Other tweets explained the signs of the PKI resurgence. Not all tweets in this sub-category used the

word PKI resurgence explicitly, some tweets implicitly implied the PKI resurgence without mentioning it. These categories of tweets focused on the presence of the PKI and the need for caution. These tweets use phrases like "*PKI affiliates still exist*" or that they are "*operating underground.*" Here are samples of tweets under this subcategory:

"Pada saat yang bersamaan, PKI dan Komunis telah bangkit di NKRI"

"At the same time, actually the PKI and its COMMUNISTS have risen in NKRI,"

"Tandanya ada dimana-mana, PKI akan bangkit"
"The signs are everywhere that show that PKI will rise."

Counter-narrative: tweets that do not align with government's official narrative

In contrast to the tweets supporting the anti-communist narrative, a considerable number of tweets express opposition or critique toward the master-narrative either explicitly or through satire. With regards to the volume of tweets, this category consists of 884 or 28.92% of all tweets. This category consists of a number of sub-categories namely (a) Skepticism toward PKI issue, (b) G30S conspiracy, (c) critique of G30S/PKI film, (d) sympathy toward victims and PKI descendants, (e) negative views toward the New Order (Soeharto's) regime.

Skepticism of G30S/PKI issue

This subcategory consists of 420 tweets (47.51%) and contains tweets associated with expressions of doubts toward the official master-narrative. In showing skepticism toward the G30S/PKI, some people may simply tweet about their skepticism toward the PKI issue. However other people may question the validity of the official accounts of the 30 September coup. People may question who were the primary actors of the coup, what were their motives, and how the events chronologically unfolded. Another way people may show skepticism or doubt is by using satire to critique by ridiculing tweets that endorse the idea of a communist or PKI threat. These tweets tend to attack a person's intelligence or use laughing emoticons to indicate sarcasm. Skepticism can be considered a form of challenging the master narrative. [Hochman and Spector-Mersel \(2020\)](#) suggested that narrative resistance can take the form explicitly challenging the master narrative by offering contradictory personal accounts of an event or implicitly challenging an account. The current study does not offer contradictory memories challenging the master-narrative so here it appears that by showing skepticism they are employing implicit resistance since they attempt to change the way people perceive the story of the 30 September, its actors

and some of the beliefs attached to the event. The anti-communist master-narrative suggests that the 1965 event is a significant dark history of Indonesia, the members of the Indonesian communist Party are traitors, and the military who were able to crush the communist movement are national heroes. These beliefs were challenged in this category through skepticism and sarcasm and that is why we categorized this them as part of challenging the master narrative. Here is a sample of tweets from this category.

“Mudah memfitnah PKI. Sasaran utamanya adalah mereka yang tidak memiliki data internet dan tidak cerdas”

“It is so easy to slander PKI. The targets are those people who don't have any internet data (for mobile internet) and don't have any intelligence.”

“Dari semua literatur, kesaksian, video dan data; Saya tidak menemukan bahan yang menunjukkan PKI anti-agama dan antiPancasila”

“From all the literature, witness accounts, videos, and data; I have not found any material which suggests that PKI are antireligion and anti-Pancasila.”

Conspiracy of G30S/PKI

The conspiracy of G30S consists of 203 tweets (22.96%) and contains tweets which question the official accounts of the G30S. The official account claims that the PKI was the sole mastermind and executor of the 30 September movement. The tweets in this subcategory challenge the master-narrative particularly with regards to the PKI's sole involvement in the coup. Within this subcategory, one figure was often mentioned namely Soeharto. According to the master-narrative, Soeharto was the hero of the counterattack against the communist (Heryanto, 2006). However, in this subcategory, users tweet that Soeharto was involved in the coup. People suggest his involvement in the coup by using words like “*menunggangi*” or taking advantage of the situation. Other tweets mention the involvement of China, the army, CIA, United States, and Soekarno (Indonesian president at the time). Here are some sample tweets within this subcategory.

“Jika PKI melakukan kudeta, kenapa Soeharto menjadi presiden? Jika PKI kejam, kenapa jutaan anggota PKI yang dibunuh? Jika Let colonel Untung PKI, kenapa dia dekat dengan Soeharto”

“If PKI did the coup why did Soeharto become president? If PKI were cruel, why were millions of PKI members killed? If Let colonel Untung was PKI why was he closer to Soeharto?”

“Menurut opini analisis praktisi politik, Agung Wisnuwardana, pengkhianatan G30S/PKI

berkaitan dengan CIA, dan ketika PKI dilarang, ajarannya dilarang dan anggotanya dipersenkusi#BahagiadalamIslam”

“According to the opinions and analysis of political practitioner, Agung Wisnuwardana, the treason of G30S/PKI is associated with CIA, and when PKI was banned, its teachings were banned and its members were persecuted #HappytobeIslamic”

Critique toward G30S/PKI movie

This subcategory consists of 96 tweets (10.86%) and contains tweets related with critiques toward the G30S/PKI movie. This is included in the counter-narrative category because it challenges one of the important references of the master-narrative namely the G30S/PKI movie. In criticizing the film people use words that criticize the film. Some of the words used to describe the film include propaganda, fiction, manipulated, a hoax, dangerous, not consistent with history, and brainwashing. Another way of showing negative sentiment toward the film is by not supporting the collective screening of the movie. Some of the reasons why they do not support collective screening of the movie is because they felt the film was inconsistent with history, dangerous, and was a form of brainwashing. Here is a sample of the tweets.

“Percaya dengan kekejaman PKI/ Komunis karena menonton film pengkhianatan G30S/PKI sama saja dengan percaya bahwa US menang perang Vietnam karena menonton Rambo”

“Believing that PKI/Communism is cruel and inhumane because of watching the movie Treason of G30S/PKI is the same as believing that the US was triumphant in the Vietnam war because of watching Rambo”

“30 September. Nonton film (hoax) G30S / PKI dimana?”

“30 September. Where are we going to watch the movie (hoax) G30S / PKI?”

“Penelitian sejarah semakin banyak dan temuan mereka selalu berkembang; karya budaya seperti film, teater, music, buku juga semakin banyak yang memberikan perspektif alternatif. Tapi masih ada orang yang suka menyebarkan hoax; klaim mereka adalah bahwa film G30S/PKI satu-satunya sumber, sehingga mereka bisa mengaburkan kebenaran”

“Historical research is growing and the findings keep developing; cultural products like film, theater, music, books are also growing which give alternative perspectives. But we still have those people who like to spread hoax: they claim that the movie G30S/PKI is the only source, so they can distort truth.”

Sympathy towards victims and PKI Descendant

This sub-category consists of 83 tweets (9.39%) which show sympathy towards anyone who was affected by the mass violence and stigmatization of PKI members and their sympathizers. This sub-category is included within the counter-narrative category because it opposes negative characterization and rejection of PKI. Such tweets can also be considered as those which support reconciliation since the tweets perceive PKI as human beings. Within this sub-category, most of the tweets express the sympathy by criticizing the New Order regime of their involvement in the genocide, or by telling stories of the PKI's suffering. Other tweets also address concern towards the innocent people who were alleged to be affiliated with PKI and became targets of ruthless acts and discrimination. Here are a sample of the tweets.

"#G30SPKI. Non-sipil vs non-sipil. Elit vs elit. Korbannya? Jutaan WARGA SIPIL yang diburu, dibunuh, ditangkap, diperkosa dan mereka kesulitan hidup setelah G30S. Tidak peduli jika korban benar-benar PKI atau tidak, beberapa memang ada afiliasi tapi beberapa sama sekali tidak ada kaitan apapun dengan kudeta #Menolaklupa #Tolakordebaru"

"#G30SPKI. Non-civilian vs. non-civilian. Elite vs. elite. The victim? Millions of CIVILIANS were hunted down, killed, captured, raped, and had a difficult life after G30S. It didn't matter if the victims were real PKI members or not, some were affiliated and some even had nothing to do with the coup. #Neverforget #RejectTheNewOrder"

"Saya tidak menyatakan PKI tidak ada, tapi saya mempertanyakan akurasi dari sejarah PKI. Banyak korban yang diduga PKI dan dihukum tanpa proses hukum. Banyak korban yang berasal dari orang miskin"

"I am not claiming that PKI does not exist sir, but I am questioning about the accuracy of the history of PKI. Many victims were alleged to be PKI and were punished without any legal processes. These victims were actually coming from poor people."

"Saya muak dengan semua orang memanfaatkan isu PKI. Apakah mereka tidak tahu ratusan ribu dan bahkan jutaan orang yang orang tuanya dituduh PKI dan harus menderita tujuh keturunan??? Dari dulu dan sekarang orang tetap jualan isu PKI untuk meraih kekuasaan ... #PKIsudahmati"

"I am fed up with people who take advantage of the PKI issue. Don't they know about the hundreds of thousands or even millions of people whose parents were alleged to be PKI and have to

suffer 7 generations down??? From then and now people keep selling the PKI issue just to obtain power... #PKIisdead"

Negative opinions toward the New Order

The "New Order" is the label given to the regime led by Soeharto, the very person who initiated the counter-attack against the 30 September coup. In contrast to the official accounts, scholars have argued that the 30 September event was used as a pretext for Soeharto to gain power (Roosa, 2006). Heryanto (2006) also notes that the anti-communist narrative which was made by Soeharto's regime was used as a tool to secure power by attacking political opponents. Considering there is a close association between the anti-communist narrative and the Soeharto regime, attitudes toward the Soeharto regime may also reflect adherence or rejection of a master-narrative. In expressing negative attitudes, the New Order regime is described as being slaughterers, cruel, crueler than PKI, manipulative, and involved in murder of activists. This subcategory consists of 68 tweets (7.81%). Here is a sample of a tweet of this sub-category:

"Beberapa orang dibunuh Orde Baru bahkan sebelum Soeharto menjadi presiden, sampai 1998? Pembunuhan tersebut sangat kejam dan dilakukan pada skala yang sangat besar. PKI salah satu korbannya, mereka bukan pelaku"

"Some people were killed by the New Order even before Soeharto became president, until 1998? The murders were very cruel and were done on a large scale. PKI were one of its victims, they were not perpetrators."

Although this subcategory represents opposition toward the master-narrative, some tweets indicate both support and opposition to the master-narrative. These tweets may criticize the New Order regime however they may compare the negative characteristics of the New Order with the negative characteristics of PKI. Such tweets show that opposition toward a narrative does not mean entirely opposing a narrative but some adherence to it (McClean & Syed, 2016). Here's an excerpt tweet:

"Soeharto sangat manipulatif dan lebih kejam dari PKI dan jangan biarkan Orde Baru dan Cendana bangkit Kembali, karena dia bukan general yang baik"

"Soeharto is manipulative and crueler than PKI and don't let the new order and Cendana revive because he is not a good general"

As the excerpt shows Soeharto is perceived as cruel, however the PKI is used as a yardstick of cruelty. Therefore, in a sense this shows opposition to the master-narrative which supports the positive image of

the New Order and Soeharto in particular, however it also adheres to the master-narrative because it acknowledges the idea that PKI is also cruel.

Discussion

The goal of the current paper was to explore how Indonesians engage with the anticommunist narrative in an online setting. In contrast to past approaches to study narrative engagement, the current study analyzes tweets in relation to a political event, namely discussion of the 30 September Movement which occurred in 1965. In this research we identified themes which fell into two major categories, namely whether they supported or opposed the anti-communist narrative. Our findings highlight how master-narratives survive the test of time, and how they have been creatively adjusted to suit the times.

To understand the emergence of the themes in the current study, we need to understand the Indonesian political context and the events leading up to 2018, the year that the data was collected. One of the significant events which led to more discussion of the 30 September movement, was the establishment of the 1965 International People's Tribunal in Den Haag in 2015. This event aimed to pressure the Indonesian government to acknowledge that crimes against humanity were perpetrated by the state in 1965 (Tribunal, n.d). Following this event, in 2016, the government organized a national symposium aimed at discussing the mass killings of alleged communists in 1965 (Erdianto, 2016). These events were met with criticism particularly from military figures who argued that such events are signs that the latent threat of communists is coming into reality. An example is an article in the national army's official page with the title "Be Aware of the PKI Resurgence" (Hermawan, 2016). This article was published around 1 month after the national symposium in 1965. In this article the author mentions that the "*PKI organization is starting to show its existence by working under the umbrella of human rights and freedom of expression. We can easily find their propaganda through online media which is intentionally made to make it appear that they are victims, while in fact they are traitors...*" In 2017, Gatot Nurmantyo served as the National Military Commander proposed national screenings of the movie "Treason of the G30S/PKI" so that the current generation would be aware of the tragic events that occurred in 1965 (Hindarto, 2017). In 2018 Gatot Nurmantyo was no longer serving as National Military Commander but he tweeted a controversial message challenging the head of the Indonesian Army to organize a screening of the movie "Treason of the G30S/PKI" (Aji, 2018). It is within this political context where data was collected and so the online

political discourse cannot be separated from this context.

Concerning tweets which support the anti-communist narrative these themes engagement through their behaviors or thoughts / attitudes toward the master narrative. Most of the subcategories relate to conflict supportive narratives which are based on collective memory of a conflict as well as social beliefs related to the conflict (Bar-Tal et al., 2014). Bar-Tal et al. (2014) mentioned that conflict narratives differ in terms of the degree of dominance and that they are most prominent during the climax of a conflict. One of the most salient categories related with the anti-communist narrative relates with the de-legitimization of the PKI (Bar-Tal et al., 2014). Such tweets denied the humanity of PKI and agreed with actions to harm the rival group. The first element of delegitimization appears to be most salient in the current study. Evidence of delegitimization occurs in two forms namely by accusing the other as PKI or a descendant of PKI, and the other by tweeting about negative representations of the PKI and those affiliated with the party. The second element of delegitimization warrants a psychological permit to harm the rival group. This element was not salient, perhaps considering that the existence of the PKI itself is trivial considering the party is banned. However implicit endorsement of permitting psychological harm is evidenced by tweets which endorse continuous rejection of PKI. A second element of the conflict narrative which was salient was the theme of threat or danger. The theme which mostly corresponded with this ethos was the PKI resurgence which mostly included tweets giving evidence that the communists exist and are threatening. Another theme which was not explicitly found in the tweets is about being the sole victim. Although tweets did not mention explicitly that they were victims, victimhood may be assumed by tweets which explain that the PKI was a threat or cruel. Implying that Indonesians were victims of the PKI's cruelty. The absence of these themes may perhaps be since the actual conflict with the PKI has ended.

Furthermore, it is important to note that delegitimization occurred in the context of the presidential elections particularly allegations of Jokowi being affiliated to the Indonesian Communist Party (Wadipalapa, 2019). This shows that anti-communist narratives are dynamic and that its expression can adjust to contemporary times to meet certain political needs. In this respect, Wadipalapa (2019) uses the term "communist imaginary" which refers to Indonesians' perception of threats based on their understanding of the 1965 attempted coup. Such attacks were significant in which they were able to negatively affect Jokowi's electoral appeal in the 2014 and 2019 presidential election.

The current study also gives examples of themes which indicate the change of conflict narrative. These themes include (a) satire and skepticism toward PKI issue, (b) G30S conspiracy, (c) critique of G30S/PKI film, (d) sympathy toward victims and PKI descendants, (e) negative views toward the New Order (Soeharto's) regime. Bar-Tal et al. (2014) suggests that one of the core processes of peacebuilding is weakening the adherence to the conflict narrative and developing new ideas, beliefs, and attitudes that develop into new peace supportive narratives. Recent research has also suggested that leader's adherence to conflict narratives prevent them from promoting peace Rosler et al. (2021). The current study provides themes which may show some process of change of beliefs and attitudes. According to our dataset there indeed has been a change of attitude mostly in the form of critiques or satire toward the official accounts of the 30 September movement, as well as skepticism towards the PKI resurgence. Such responses explain that there is a process of change with regards to viewing the past. With regards to the humanization of PKI, some tweets did indeed relate with feelings of sympathy toward PKI and PKI sympathizers who were killed during the anti-communist purge in 1965-1966.

The results of the current study have important practical and theoretical implications. In terms of practical implications, the findings are particularly relevant for intergroup reconciliation. One of the key aspects of reconciliation is changing perceptions toward a past adversary (Staub, 2006) and in the current context this can mean how Indonesians may change their perceptions toward those alleged communists. The findings show that there remains wide acceptance of the anti-communist narratives and therefore when moving towards changing perceptions of alleged communists as equal Indonesians this may be met with strong opposition. In light of this, groups who are concerned with reconciliation or promoting an alternate narrative may need to address the issue with a more subtle and less confronting approach. Putra et al (2019) is an example of how positive essentializing of the human characteristics may ameliorate negative sentiments of communist descendants. Here the researchers did not directly ask people to forgive communists or punish perpetrators of violence but focus on the nature of humans which are prone to make mistakes. Priming participants using this strategy allowed them to have fewer negative attitudes toward alleged communist descendants. Hameiri et al. (2018) also shows that subtle techniques of paradoxical thinking may be effective in making reconsider past beliefs which tend to prolong conflict.

The current study also has theoretical implications associated with narrative engagement. Observing social media discourse allows the researcher to observe

a large number of interesting behavioral responses which reflect a person's adherence or rejection of the master-narrative. While previous research mainly shows how people challenge or support a master-narrative through their personal narratives, this study gives more samples of online behavior which can show narrative engagement. For those who support the anti-communist narrative they can show their agreement by endorsing the collective memories shaped by cultural products like movies, but also agreement with beliefs about the threat of communists. What I find particularly interesting are online aggression which appeared as a form of supporting the anti-communist narrative. This is particularly the case for the theme allegations of PKI association as well as rejection and negative characterization of PKI. We must note that labelling someone as PKI in Indonesia is extremely negative and this may be categorized as a form of online aggression. Such behaviors show a loyalty and emotional attachment to the master-narrative which is conveniently captured in the online context due to factors such as anonymity and disinhibition (Lieberman & Schroeder, 2020).

In addition, social media is equipped with additional features which may also become additional markers of narrative engagement. Although the current study did not make use of these features, narrative engagement can also be identified by likes, comments, retweets, and quotes. We can evaluate whether certain instances of narrative engagement were shared to a large audience through retweets and identify whether this was caused by the total number of followers. All these considerations may enrich our understanding of narrative engagement and may guide future research on narrative engagement in the digital space.

One of the limitations of the current research concerns the use of twitter data. We used the free API which limits access to only 1% of all tweets related with the query (Murphy, 2017). Therefore, the findings must be interpreted in light of the fact that the dataset may also be biased in that it may not represent all tweets related to the query. Furthermore, only 64% of Indonesians are internet users and 59% are active social media users (Kemp, 2020). Although there has been increased internet and social media use among Indonesians however the sample does not represent all views of Indonesians.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study we have demonstrated that we can analyze engagement with master-narratives through an analysis of tweets associated with a significant historical event. We have found that expressions of the master-narratives are contextualized within modern political contexts, for example the Indonesian presidential election and also controversy

surrounding the collective screening of the movie "Pengkhiatanan G30S/PKI." While tweets supporting the anticommunist narratives tend to endorse beliefs that communists are evil and continue to pose a threat, we have also found that people may endorse the narrative by engaging in communist labeling of opponents. Despite the dominance of tweets supporting the anticommunist narrative we have also found tweets that challenge the narrative through critiques and concern for the well-being of alleged communists who were victims of past violence. Overall, the analysis in the current study gives a snapshot of how people may dynamically engage with a master narrative. Some of the important implications of the study relates to how groups should be careful when implementing strategies for reconciliations. It is important to adopt subtle strategies considering that the anti-communist narrative remains relevant in Indonesian society.

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