Degradation of Democratic Value Due to Digital Technology Simulacra in The Post Truth Era

Bambang Santoso[1], Harjono[2], Muhammad Rustamaji[3]

[1, 2,3] Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta - Indonesia

hatchi_ajie@yahoo.com

Abstract-Jean Baudrillard through Simulation (1983) makes a thought block that predicts that reality is ultimately dead. The 'new world' that Baudrillard calls the 'Simulacra Galaxy', has engulfed all aspects of life including democracy. Dialectics on democracy which provides an opportunity for every child of the nation to freely express opinions, actually leads to freedom which crashes into the boundaries of the human rights of fellow citizens. Secretly the primordialism of religion, class, ethnicity, regionalism, and all exclusive social groupings reawakened with the liberal political process which since the reforms has emerged as a new fetter that limits the national life. Regional autonomy that is increasingly liberal-scented federation is increasingly strengthening the barriers to the new primordial revitalism. Dictation of the threat of "independence" and "referendum" which erupted in one or two regions during the 2019 election process which tends to harden, shows how short the reasoning of some of the nation's children in this country. Democracy finally experiences siltation which at this stage is no more than a textual narrative and is separated from its context. Democracy actually brings up simplification which reduces the details of various things that envelop the complexity of the post truth reality in it. Various debates are presented through television, mass media and even the rise of hoaxes through social media based on digital technology, which in Baudrillard's view is a field that conditions the general public to draw all their attention and concentration into an area like a black hole. He called it the Simulacra, that is, existing reality is virtual reality, artificial reality, artificial reality (hyper-reality). Finally, the contestation of democracy that upholds the values of civilization and humanitarian values is submerged in the rise of the digital world full of shallow truths (post truth) due to the monofaset's purification of democracy.

Keywords-Superficial Values of Democracy, Digital Technology, Post Truth.

I. INTRODUCTION

Disseminated through digital technology, dialectics on various facets (sides) of democratic practice in the form of general elections some time ago, it turns out that it is still so fiercely discussed today. Various news media, including television, newspapers, magazines and even social media based on digital technology and the internet, seemed to compete in reporting the dynamics of democratic practices and their tug-of-war, both on the presidential election arena, the electability of people's representatives, and freedom of expression. In this context, the development of democracy in Indonesia, which actually provides opportunities for every child of the nation to freely express their opinions, on the one hand can be said to show positive growth in the maturation of national life. However, when freedom of opinion is not accompanied by high responsibility, what actually happens next is that the boundaries of the human rights [1] of fellow citizens are exposed to a counterproductive phenomenon.

Such a counterproductive side picture can be seen when it secretly turns out that primordialism of religion, class, ethnicity [2], regionalism, and all exclusive social groupings and compartments, revive and compound with the liberal political process which has since transformed as a new barrier wall which intimidates national life. At the same time, regional autonomy that was increasingly liberal-scented federation increasingly strengthened the barriers of the new primordial rivalry. The various signs with the emergence of the dictatorship of the threat of "independence" and "referendum" which erupted in one or two regions during the 2019 election process which from day to day tend to harden and sharpen, even more shows how short the reasoning of some of the nation's children in this country [3].

Democracy finally experiences siltation which at this stage is no more than a textual narrative and is separated from its context. Democracy actually raises simplifications that reduce the details of the various values they contain because of the complexity of the post truth [4] reality that accompanies them. Various debates are presented through television, mass media and even the rise of hate speech (both in the form of insults, incitement, defamation, unpleasant acts, defamation and hoaxes / lies) [5] through digital social media based on digital technology is what often gives superficial truth (post truth)[6], a concept which in Baudrillard's view is a field that conditions the general public to be drawn all attention and concentration into an area (field) like a black hole. He called it the Simulacra, that is, existing reality is virtual reality, artificial reality, artificial reality (hyper-reality) [7]. Finally, the contestation of democracy which is supposed to uphold the values of civilization and humanitarian values is immersed in the rise of the digital world which is full of shallow truths (post truth) due to the monofaset's purification of democracy.

Of the various images that have been presented before, the urgency and the question that then arises is, what and where did the post truth or superficial or post-truth come from? How can the simulakra of digital technology emerge as a result of the presence of post truth or superficial truth that actually shifts the truth? What theoretical study is the basis of the experts when digital

technology simulakra actually reproduces post truth or superficial truth? Until the questions about how the excesses or adverse effects of post truth or superficial truth or post-truth for the life of the nation and how to prevent it? Here are some important points that are trying to be revealed in this article.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

Research regarding the superficiality of democratic values as a result of the occurrence of digital technology simulacra, pursued by Sociolegal Research [8]. Sociolegal Research Methods actually still places the object of research in the form of law, in this case the legislation related to the post truth issue which is a form of digital technology simulacra. In the next stage, methods and theories of social sciences are also used to assist researchers in analyzing the superficiality of democratic values. This research is also categorized as a qualitative study that is intended so that researchers can reveal more deeply social and legal phenomena because it will make it easier for researchers to adjust to the situation or deal with multiple realities [9]. Its essence is directed as a method of understanding the uniqueness, dynamics and holistic nature of human presence and its interactions with the environment. Qualitative research is complex and broad, which intends to give meaning to phenomena holistically and researchers are key instruments so they must play an active role in the entire research process. The sampling technique is done by using purposive random sampling which is used to find suitable sources, namely from stakeholders in the digital technology sector, democracy experts and anti-hoax activists. Data collection techniques using in-depth interviews, observation, documentation and FGD. Data validity test uses triangulation [10] and interactive analysis techniques as stated by Miles and Huberman [11] become data analysis techniques used in this study.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

If we look closely and at the surface level, the production of superficial truths in the form of spreading hate speech (insults, incitement, defamation, unpleasant acts, defamation and hoaxes / lies) can simply be explained as a result of increasingly massive and globalizing the use of smartphones connected to the internet. Various specifications of the relatively cheap smartphone when equipped with various social media applications, turned out to have great access when used without taking responsibility. Through an internet connection with an almost unlimited digital technology-based network, one can easily and lightly disseminate information without first feeling the need to check its truth through various social media applications that are actually already embedded in the smartphone. A form of laziness that is not very critical, light as the thumb of the smartphone user touches every virtual keyboard keys on his gadget.

But when observation optics are directed much deeper to find the theoretical roots of the emergence of digital technology simulacras and relationships (intertwining), the production of superficial truths (post truth), there are at least two studies that can be used to trace them. The two studies are: First, through a review of simulacras put forward by Jean Baudrillard and Second, through a study of post-modernism philosophy. Schematically, the two such theoretical studies can be described as follows.
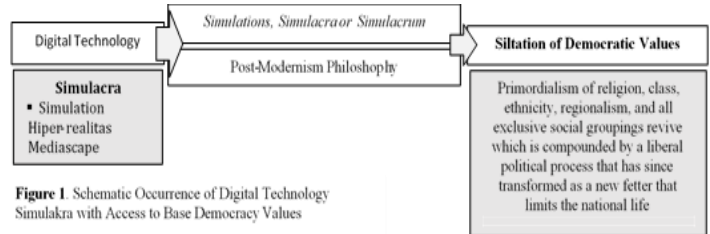

Figure 1. Schematic Occurrence of Digital Technology Simulakra with Access to Base Democracy Values

When a theoretical search of the concept of simulacra, it seems necessary to read again the magnum opus Baudrillard's work, Simulations (1983). In this book, Baudrillard introduces a distinctive character of Western culture. According to Baudrillard, today's western culture is a representation of the world of simulation, that is, a world formed by the relationship of various random signs and codes, without clear relational references. This relationship involves real signs (facts) that are created through the production process, as well as pseudo marks (images) that are created through the process of reproduction [12].

Basing studies in simulated culture, the two signs overlap and intertwine together to form a single unit. Therefore, in such conditions it can no longer be recognized which is real (real) and which are fake or pseudo. Everything becomes part of the reality that is lived and lived by western society today. This unity is what Baudrillard calls simulacra or simulacrum, a world that is built from a chaotic value, facts, signs, images and codes. Reality no longer has a reference, except the simulacra itself. In the postmodern era, the principle of simulation became commander. In this context, reproduction with 'assistance' information technology, communication and the knowledge industry, replaces the principle of production. While at the same time, the play of signs and images dominates in almost all human communication processes.

In the point of view of a simulated community like this, everything is determined by the relation of signs, images and code. A person's identity, for example, is no longer determined by and from within himself. A person's identity is now more determined by the cross-sectional construction of signs, images and codes that form a mirror of how an individual understands themselves and their relationships with others. In other words, in the world of simulations, it is not reality that mirrors reality, but models offered by television, advertisements or even fictional fictional characters in animation and cartoons [13].

Also in the discourse of simulation, humans inhabit a space of reality, so the difference between the real and the fantasy, the original and the fake is very thin. Humans now live in a real fictitious space, a factual fiction. Simulation realities become a new space of life that places man to discover and actualize his existence. Through television, for example, the world of simulation appears perfectly. This is the space that no longer cares about the real categories, pseudo, true, false, references, representations, facts, images, production, reproduction all melt into one in a chaotic cross of the sign.

As for in the current era, television which has actually begun to twilight, managed to double the ability of production and reproduction through social media based on digital technology. In such culmination, through social media, reality is not only produced, disseminated, or reproduced, even manipulated. Reality simulations like this form a new awareness for the community. Television, which Baudrillard refers to as the most convincing postmodernism artifact, is in fact as real as the History or Ethics lessons at school because they both offer information and shape human views and lifestyles [14].

Therefore, when the essence of Baudrillard's thought in the Simulations was based on the present of digital technology as a medium of democracy, we could witness the emergence of digital technology simulacras that occur. Referring to the concept put forward by Baudrillard, the massive digital technology utilized at the democratic party was apparently also not immune to simulacra or simulacrum. Digital technology-based social media is not only a media to convey the vision and mission of the campaign that revives democracy, but at the same time social media is also diverted to vent hate speech, whether in the form of insults, incitement, defamation, unpleasant acts, unpleasant acts and hoaxes / news / news lie to constituents supporting political rivals. In this second condition, democracy is not only reduced, but democracy is far from the civilization that it should uphold. The conditions to revive and reduce democracy have sought to capture the attention of all constituents through digital technology networks, which finally present a reality of democracy that is built up from a chaotic values, facts, signs, images and codes.

Basing on a study in Baudrillard-style simulation culture, the conditions of building and reducing democracy accumulate and intertwine together to form a unity. It can no longer be recognized which are the original aims and values of democracy to elect leaders, which ones provide real freedom for the people to elect their representatives, and which ones are false to seize power only through political channels, or which are false by spreading promises to the people to gain votes.

Everything becomes part of the reality that is lived by the people of Indonesia in the frenetic democracy mediated by today's digital technology. In the end, the reality of democracy no longer has a reference, except the simulacra itself. Elected leaders must struggle with a variety of insults, incitement, defamation, unpleasant acts, defamation and hoaxes / hoaxes that increasingly show that the simulation becomes commander in chief. In this context, the reproduction of various democratic issues with 'assistance' information technology, communication and the knowledge industry, replaces the real principle of democratic production. Concrete steps to foster and print credible party cadres, guard the marwah of parties that are not dazzled by the seizure of ansich positions, are often replaced by money politics and the recruitment of celebrities to boost electability of political parties through sensuality of verifiable information and reproduction of news on social media.

The description of the above democratic simulation can still be explored by the composition of the lines by quoting Baundrillard's thought through Simulacra and Simulation (1989), which is a continuation of Simulations. In his follow-up work, Baudrillard gave birth to his idea of a hyper-reality society. Baudrillard's study was actually a response from Marshall McLuhan's thought which first opened the conversation about the idea of hyper-reality in Western culture. Through his two books[15], McLuhan predicts that the transition of technology from the era of mechanical technology to the era of electronic technology will also bring the transition to the function of technology as an extension of the human body in space, towards the extension of the nervous system[16]. This idea was subsequently taken over and developed by Baudrillard. Baudrillard's thinking bases itself on several assumptions of human and media relations, which Baudrillard calls mediascape reality. In the context of that mediascape reality [17], mass media eventually becomes the most dominant cultural product. Through the mass media, the position of the media in the present era is no longer limited to the extension of the human body as McLuhan revealed, but the media today is a space for every human being to shape his identity.

According to Baudrillard, the simulation reality produced by various digital technologies in the form of micro-processors, memory banks, remote controls, telecards, laser discs, optical cables, drones, has been able to defeat the real reality and even become a new reference model for the community. Imagery is more convincing than facts, and dreams are more believable than everyday reality. This is the world of hyper-reality, which is reality that is more real than real, pseudo and explosive [18].

Examining more deeply about the hyper-reality world, the original objects which are the product of production struggle to become one with the hyper-real objects which are the result of reproduction. Hyper realities, such as online media, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, shopping malls and television seem more real than the actual reality. In such conditions, the existence of models, images and hyper-reality codes metamorphorically act as controllers of human thought and behavior. So when the hyper-reality of digital technology is really utilized, it is

not surprising when then pops up a variety of political party advertisements that are packed with millenial and postmillenial-style slang discourse to portray the political party as the most suitable place to represent the voices of the present generation, for example.

Therefore, when the practice of democracy is dissected with the study of simulacra in the context of the reality of the mediascape, the mass media ultimately becomes the most dominant cultural product in creating images of democratic practices. With mass media and online media that are utilized to the maximum in democratic practices, the media are no longer limited to McLuhan's human body extension, but furthermore the media has now become a space for every human being to form their identities, not least for political parties, politicians along with the cadres. Through television, mass media and even social media, artificial realities that are designed to form an image, eventually succeed even become more real when compared to the original reality. As an illustration, artificial reality in the context of democracy manifests the birth of various political parties with their respective images, becoming clear evidence that digital technology is suddenly able to bring up a hyper-reality that no longer has the origin, reference, or depth of meaning. This condition is well known, because the image is more convincing when compared with the facts. Even dreams are more believable than everyday reality. This is a hyper-reality world, that is, a reality that is more real than real, pseudo and explosive which has another name Post truth produced as a superficial truth can be explained by its existence because in the hyper-reality world, the original objects which are the result of production struggle to become one with hyper-real objects which are the result of reproduction. Hyper realities created by digital-based social media seem more real than actual reality. In such conditions, the existence of models, imagery and hyper-reality codes metamorphically as controllers of human thoughts and actions so that what emerges next is post truth which is a state that makes emotions and personal beliefs (not objective facts) become the basis for forming public opinion. Therefore, those who are exposed to the post-truth will not care about the values of truth when expressing something. They are more hopeful through the statement that their desired goals can be realized. for post truth.

Furthermore, although post truth develops very rapidly due to the globalization of the use of the internet and social media, a number of experts consider this post-truth reasoning or superficial truth to be born by post-modernism philosophy. Lee McIntyre for example, Lee argues that the mother of post truth is a post-modernism philosophy that rejects "objectivity and objective truth". The truth in Lee's view is only the subjective ideological view of its originator [19]. Ralph Keyes whose definition of post truth / post truth was adopted by Oxford Dictionaries in 2016, also stated the same thing. According to him, the rejection of post-modernism on objective truth which resulted in all forms of truth being

relative has made post-modernism a vessel for post truth. Keyes revealed that "Postmodernism is the ship on which this development sails. The core postmodern concept is that there's no such thing as objective truth; only what we say is true. This shifts the emphasis of intellectual thought from facts to meaning" [20].

Therefore, truth is not as described by Rene Descartes or Georg Hegel as a match between thought and thought. That's why Michel Foucault considers 'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements' [21] For Hegel, truth is a procedural system for producing, organizing, distributing, circulating and executing statements [22]. That is why truth is always associated with forms of procedural system discourse.

With this view of Hegel, Donny Danardono managed to provide a picture that is easier to understand. Donny argues, an action can be right in one discourse and be wrong in another discourse. For example, hitting will be considered a crime in the criminal and religious law discourse. Criminal sanctions will be added if there is proven preparation to hit. But in boxing discourse, hitting while obeying the rules of boxing — even if it can cause a lifetime of disability and death — will be considered an achievement. Another example is that when science was not so developed, people regarded lightning as a kind of divine power (Thor). But after Benjamin Franklin was struck by lightning and examined the lightning, he could actually explain the lightning as an electro-magnetic wave. In this case religion and science are two different discourses that produce different opinions about the same phenomenon. Thus, the rejection of post-modernism on objectivity and objective truth cannot be regarded as its downfall in decadent relativism [22].

In line with the views of previous experts, post-modernism also gets a clear picture as stated by Michel Foucault. In this context Foucault wants to show, that the formation of truth is always based on the subjective interests of scientists. It could be that subjective interests are shaped by the circumstances and the spirit of his day. But there are no objective facts outside the subject that recognize them. If objectivity and objective truth do exist, it is very strange when there are differences and changes in the truth about a thing in different spaces and times [23].

In more detail, in the context of Indonesian democratic life, the nature of intellectual maturity can be a milestone for the enlightenment of national life in this country. The current life of democratic life, including the political contestation that has just passed, must be recognized as having drained the spiritual energy of the country's children to be stunted, naive, and short-circuited. Democracy which should be virtuous and wise, and filled with excitement like a party, but besides it has been noisy, it has also turned into an ideological and political war of

identity which is completely constructed like a battlefield. Civilization is also shattered by hardened political attitudes which tend to be rough because of being provoked by increasingly wild and niretic social media. In such nadir, the children of the nation seem to lose the moral standard and virtue values that have been the national identity of the religious, Pancasila, and noble culture of Indonesia. The construction of a nation's virtue that has been passed down to be a legacy of Indonesian character seems to stop at the normative level and the rhetoric mosaic, not to become a real action movement (mode for action) in the life of the nation and state in the real world.

Religious symbols and the presence of religious leaders are in fact partly carried by the flow of partisans in the interests of traffic who either for and on behalf of what? This is what Faucault stated earlier that the formation of truth is always based on subjective interests, which in the example above can take the form of involvement in the swift flow of power struggles. Mutual claims and accusations that tend to be stigmatized and authoritative in the name of religion, both those that go "left" or "right" in the verbal category, place religion not as an enlightening force of life. On the contrary religion becomes a sacred instrument of legitimacy which absurdly hardens the feud, so that the religious community becomes a crowd that loses its parent and lacks knowledge and virtue.

Even when careful scrutiny is carried out, it still shows that the Government of Indonesia since the 2004 general elections to 2019 has never considered the spread of hate speech, hoaxes and slander in the form of identity politics or whatever as freedom of opinion. Various forms of post truth behavior are always enforced by the law of the ITE Law and the Criminal Code. As an illustration, in 2016 a court sentenced a People's Torch editor to convict hoaxes and slanders [23] with an 8-month prison sentence which was further aggravated at the level of appeal to a one-year prison term [24]. In the 2019 presidential election the police also arrested the spreaders of lies and slanders, starting from Ratna Sarumpaet, the mothers of false news spreaders, as well as 733 complaints of hoax content [25] disseminated through WhatsApp in 2018. Penalties against false news spreaders are necessary, because these two actions are not freedom of opinion guaranteed by law. Did not the previous discussion reveal that hitting was understood differently in religious and legal discourse on the one hand, and in the discourse of boxing on the other. The two discourses show there is no objective truth in hitting.

IV. CONCLUSION

The basicity of democratic values that originated from the dissemination of hate speech through digital technology, can be explored, both in examining the surface and in exploring its theoretical dimensions. If it is observed in plain view and at the surface level, the

resulting post-truth or superficial truth in the form of spreading hate speech (insult, incitement, defamation, unpleasant acts, defamation and hoaxes / hoax) can simply be explained as a result from the increasingly massive and globalized use of internet-connected smart phones. Various specifications of the relatively cheap smartphone when equipped with various social media applications, turned out to have great access when used without taking responsibility. Furthermore, when making theoretical lines the emergence of post truth in the realm of democracy there are at least two theories that can explain it. First, such post truth can be examined in depth when reading is directed towards simulakra. References which can then be extracted are of course the magnum opus Baudrillard's works, Simulacra and Simulation (1989) which is a continuation of Simulations (1983). Second, although post truth develops very rapidly due to the globalization of the use of the internet and social media, a number of experts consider post-truth reasoning or superficial truth to be born by post-modernism philosophy. Thus the dialectics of democracy that is covered by superficial truth (post truth) is explained in a sequential manner, although on the one hand it provides an opportunity for every child of the nation to freely express opinions, but if responsibility occurs, then that freedom will only end with the rights boundaries being hit by human rights of fellow citizens of the nation. Finally, the silting of democratic values really manifests itself in the form of religious primordialism, class, ethnicity, regionalism, and all social groupings which are exclusive and compound with the liberal political process which since the reforms has emerged as a new fetter that limits the diversity of national life.

REFERENCES

[1] F. M. Suseno, Introduction to *Hukum Hak Asasi Manusia,* Yogyakarta: Pusat Studi Hak Asasi Manusia Universitas Islam Indonesia, 2010.

[2] F. Pebrianto, J. Hantoro "Kronologi Kerusuhan di Manokwari dan Sorong, Papua Barat", Harian Tempo, Selasa, 20 Agustus 2019.

[3] H. Nashir, "'Kompas' dan Nurani Kecendekiaan", Harian Kompas, 28 Juni 2019.

[4] D. Danardono, "Pasca-Kebenaran, Ilmu dan Hukum", article in 6th Asosiasi Filsafat Hukum Indonesia (AFHI)'s Conference. Mataram-Lombok, 24 – 27 Juni 2019.

[5] Surat Edaran Kapolri: SE/6/X/2015 (Chief of Police's Office Note Number: SE/6/X/2015).

[6] Concise Oxford English Dictionaries, Oxford: Oxford Corpus, 2016. Bruce mcComiskey, *Post-Truth Rhetoric and Composition*, Colorado: Utah State University Press, 2017. David Block, *Post-Truth and Political Discourse*, Cham: Macmillan Palgrave, 2019.

[7] L. Sinurat, 'Simulacra dan Realitas Semu', www.lusius-sinurat.com/2013/07/simulacra-dan-realitas-semu, downloaded October, 8th, 2015.

[8] E. Warassih, *Bahan Kuliah Metodologi Penelitian Hukum*, Yogyakarta: Program Pascasarjana Fakultas Hukum Universitas Islam Indonesia, 2007.

[9] S. Danim, *Menjadi Peneliti Kualitatif*, Pustaka Setia, Bandung, 2002.

[10] L.J.Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, Remaja Rosdakarya, Bandung, 1996.

[11] Milles, M.B. and Huberman, M.A. *Qualitative Data Analysis*. London: Sage Publication, 1984.

[12] M. Hidayat, "Jean Baudrillard, Simulasi dan Hiperrealitas" https://medhyhidayat.com/jean-baudrillard-simulasi-dan-hiperrealitas/.

[13] M. Hidayat, Rubrik *Oeuvre*, Surabaya Post, June 2009.

[14] Y. A. Piliang, *Sebuah Dunia yang Dilipat,* Bandung: Mizan Pustaka,1997.

[15] M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, London: Routledge, 1964.

[16] Douglas Kellner, *Baudrillard a Critical Reader,* USA: Blackwell LTd, 1994.

[17] J. Baudrillard, *Simulations,* New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.

[18] M. Hidayat, "Jean Baudrillard, Simulasi dan Hiperrealitas" https://medhyhidayat.com/jean-baudrillard-simulasi-dan-hiperrealitas/. Medhy Hidayat, Rubrik *Oeuvre*, Surabaya Post, medio Juni 2009.

[19] L. mcIntyre, *Post-Truth*, London: MIT Press, 2018.

[20] R. Keyes, *Life in the Post-Truth Era,* Oklahoma Humanities, Spring-Summer, 2018.

[21] M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Sussex:The Harvester Press,1980. James D. Faubion (ed.), *Michel Foucault: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984: Power* – volume 3, London: Penguin Books, 2000.

[22] D. Danardono, "Pasca-Kebenaran, Ilmu dan Hukum", article in 6th Asosiasi Filsafat Hukum Indonesia (AFHI)'s Conference. Mataram-Lombok, 24 – 27 Juni 2019.

[23] Elvan Dany Sutrisno, "Jejak Obor Rakyat: 'Hajar' Jokowi di 2014, Divonis 2016", Rabu 12 Desember 2018, 14.34 Wib. DetkNews.

[24] Putusan Nomor 516/Pid.B/2016/PN.JKT.PST dan Putusan Banding Nomor: 4/Pid/2017/PT.DKI.

[25] Press Release Number: 17/HM/KOMINFO/)1/2019, selasa 22 Januari 2019.