

Indonesian media framing against Trump in the 2020 presidential election



Ahmad Sahide^a   | Misran^b  | Ali Maksum^c 

^aUniversitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Abstract The presidential election of the United States has always captured the world's attention. This is because America is a superpower in the global political arena. Therefore, the figure who is elected to occupy the White House has always impacted the global political scene for four years. Donald Trump, President of America 2017-2021, has had a tremendous impact on the global political scene with some controversial policies. Trump protectionism policies triggered the trade war between America and China, greatly impacting the global economy. This article looks at the sentiment of national media framing in Indonesia (Kompas, The Jakarta Post, and Republika) against the Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election, which Trump lost to Joe Biden. In this research, the writer reads news related to the presidential election of the U.S. from September 2020 to November 2020 from the three national media outlets in Indonesia to see the framing. In this framing analysis, we wanted to determine whether the framing was positive, negative, or neutral when making news about Trump's figure. The results of this study indicate that the highest percentage of mainstream media framing in Indonesia is negative. Trump has been widely reported to have negative sentiment toward the media in Indonesia. News outlets with positive sentiment are the lowest against Trump. This means that the national media in Indonesia also does not like Trump's controversial leadership style.

Keywords: America, presidential election, Donald Trump, media framing, Indonesia

1. Introduction

The presence of Donald Trump as the main actor, as President of the United States, in the global political arena in 2017-2021 has shaken the global political order (Pfiffner, 2017). This is due to several factors. First, Trump's character contradicts his various political statements that influence global political dynamics. Second, Trump's leadership style is different from that of previous American presidents. America under Trump tends to take a unilateral approach that prioritizes domestic interests.

The United States withdrew from the international forum because of Trump. It did not benefit America economically. The direction of United States policy during Trump's presidency was considered to be narrower because of the focus on domestic political policy (Yom, 2020). Under Trump's leadership, the U.S. seeks to reduce its commitment at the international level (Wardhana & Dugis, 2019). Of course, this contradicts the previous line of American politics in which America was a superpower that was seen as the 'world's police.' This direction of Trump's political policy provides space for China to emerge as a dominant actor in the global political arena, which threatens America's global political supremacy (Sahide, 2019).

Another political policy that impacts the global political order is protectionism, which is the implementation of his 2016 campaign slogan "America First" against the elites and establishment in the country. This slogan shows that Trump does not adopt a free-market economy that allows everything to go through according to market mechanisms. Trump shows the importance of the state's role in protecting America from the onslaught of products that come from outside. Trump does not want everything to go according to market mechanisms because it has been proven that doing so has done much to the detriment of America (Bouet and Laborde, 2017). Trump shows his policy direction inward-looking, which is implied by Trump's desire to review all trade agreements. For example, the US withdrew the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), withdrawn US capital from the country, and imposed penalties on US companies that give jobs to other nations. This is undoubtedly bad and worrying news for the world economy, as it has significantly slowed global trade growth, which was estimated to be only approximately 1.7% in 2016 (Sahasrad, 2017).

Trump's protectionist policies have further impacted the ongoing Trade War since 2018, involving America versus China as the main actors. Until Trump's leadership ended on January 20, 2021, this trade war was still ongoing, disrupting the global economy, not just America and China. WTO Director-General Roberto Azevedo stated that the WTO is experiencing one of its most challenging periods because there is a risk that the trade war will cause a decline in global economic growth (Adirini Pujayanti, 2018). This was also acknowledged by the Deputy Prime Minister of China, Han Zheng, who said, "Nobody



benefits from the Trade War. This will only have more serious consequences and have negative effects" (Kompas, 26/03/2018). Therefore, the Trade War hurt everyone, not just America and China.

This is the impact of Trump's policies, which will be felt directly by the world and the international community. Therefore, Trump is a figure who is seen as having experienced a global catastrophe. Some even call this abnormal (Klassen, 2021). Trump's leadership has also been characterized by political instability, racism-related violence, and the rise of right-wing and national populism (Rizvi et al., 2020). He will also be remembered as the U.S. President who built a 'politics of lies.' The Washington Post notes that Trump lied 2,140 times in his first year in the White House (Sahide, 2021). Trump used Twitter as a medium to spread "fake news". During his four years in charge of the White House, Trump often attacked the media, which he considered less favorable for him in making news. Trump described the media as "important," "beautiful," "so bad," and "unfair". In 2018, Trump made several statements via Twitter that called the media "the enemy of the people" (Grynbaum, 2019).

Therefore, media reports portray Trump as a figure of controversy. Trump's attitude is what makes him the US President, who is less liked by the media. It cannot be denied that the media plays a significant role in the political arena, both nationally and internationally. The media becomes very decisive in killing or lifting specific figures (Bradshaw et al., 2020). The election of Donald Trump in the 2016 American presidential election, defeating Hillary Clinton, cannot be separated from the role of the media. Trump succeeded in building an emotionally charged anti-establishment narrative on social media (Scholz, 2019). In many cases, the media is used as the "propaganda mechanism" to influence public perceptions (Elareshi et al., 2020).

Moreover, his victory in the 2016 American presidential election is a bad precedent for American democracy. The same thing was found by Ashish Mehta and his friends, who said that Trump's victory in 2016 was accompanied by very negative emotions (Mehta et al., 2020). Even the most embarrassing for America as a champion country of democracy was when Donald Trump refused to admit his defeat of Joe Biden in the U.S. presidential election in November 2020. In May 2020, Trump attacked Twitter to interfere with Joe Biden's 2020 presidential election (Fried & Harris, 2020). After the election, Trump accused Biden's victory of being fraudulent. Moreover, Trump mobilized the masses to besiege Capitol Hill before the inauguration of Joe Biden-Kamala Harris on January 20, 2021. Moreover, at the time of the inauguration of the new U.S. President and Vice President, Trump chose not to attend this historic moment. This return is rare for American leaders.

2. Materials and Methods

The controversial view of Trump as the most influential country in the world makes him attractive for many scientists to study. Therefore, many articles in reputable international journals have been written discussing Trump, starting from his leadership style and personality and the impact of his political policies.

Eric Dunning IAA, University of Maryland, wrote an article titled *#TrumpStyle: The Political Frames and Twitter Attacks of Donald Trump* (2018). This study explores President Donald J. Trump's tactical and policy frameworks on the social networking site Twitter. A substance review of Leader Trump's Tweets (n = 453) was conducted using implications for practice as the driving technique (Dunning, 2018). Sandra Vlatković (2018) also wrote a paper about Trump related to the media. Her article titled *New Communication Forms and Political Framing: Twitter in Donald Trump's Presidential Campaign*. This article explored how technologies advanced much further, affecting the structure of news channels and user behavior, with Trump opting for Twitter as his movement's social media outlet. As expressed in the hastening of time and compression of scope, the hurried existence of the social realm affected the shortening of form in interaction. In contrast, the need for more significant interaction caused the lengthening of the interaction process (Vlatković, 2018).

In 2019, Thomas Rudolph wrote an article titled *Populist Anger, Donald Trump, and the 2016 Election*. This study examined the predictor variables of nominee acceptance during the 2016 campaign using three statistically valid polls from the American electorate. Questions about whether the primaries influenced Trump's reputation are at the heart of the investigation (Rudolph, 2021). Along with Meredith A. Repke and Shannon C. Houck, Lucian Gideon Conway wrote an article explaining that President Trump and Conservative Interaction Patterns. From such a viewpoint, Donald Trump is not the trigger of deviant cultural behavior; instead, his popularity is (in part) the result of the importance of restrictive communication norms. To demonstrate, all of them look at the essential collection of context communication in query, as well as Donald Trump's adherence to them (Conway et al., 2017).

Moreover, articles examining the policies or the impact of Trump's policies were written by Robert P. Haffa. Haffa's article explained that both Democrats and Republicans followed that aim in their defense choices for the Trump presidency. Despite widespread consensus on that goal, the significant initiatives pursued by those administrations varied significantly, owing primarily to perceptions of resources that are available to devote to the armed forces as a tool of international affairs (Haffa, 2017). Another article discussing Trump's policy was written by Todd Donovan and David Redlawsk. They believe that the 2016 election is far from the end of right-populist problems elsewhere in Europe. We chose these instances as reflecting when such contestants—who used subtle use of right-winged discourse—were at or near their peak electoral success. Hanson, Peters, and Farage ran in other elections where polling data were collected. However, we chose such instances as



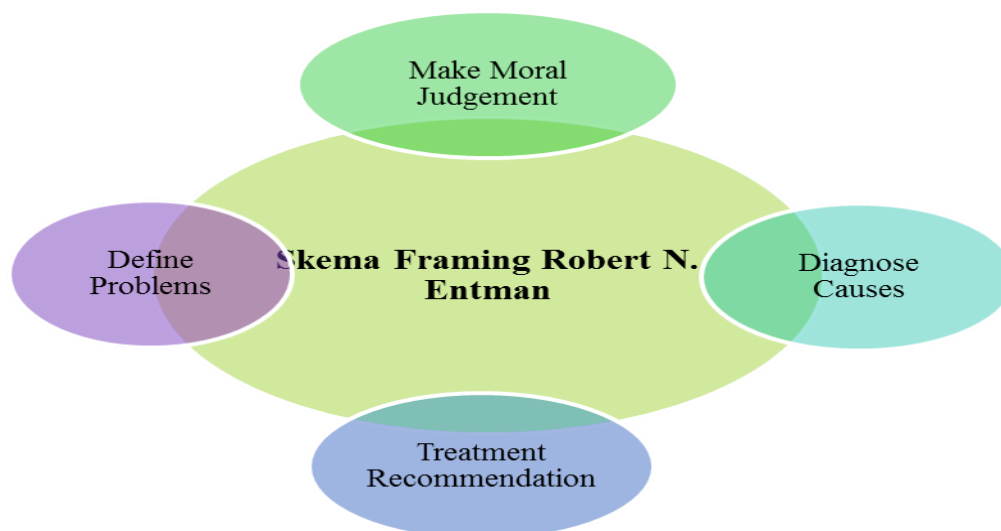


Figure 2 Framing Instruments By Rober N. Entman.

Robert N. Entman's framing model is how the communication text is presented and how the representation displayed prominently can influence the audience. Eriyanto described the Entman framing concept as selecting issues and highlighting certain aspects of the reality of media content. In issue selection, this aspect is related to fact selection. From a complex and varied reality, journalists choose certain aspects of an issue. This process included part of the issue in the news (included) and excluded some issues (excluded). The accentuation of aspects is related to the writing of words. When certain aspects of an event have been selected, it relates to using certain words, sentences, images, and images in writing news that will later be published to the public. Forming and constructing reality is the result of a particular part of reality that is more prominent or more easily recognized. As a result, the public is more likely to remember certain aspects prominently presented by the media (Eriyanto, 2005).

From this theory, we can see that the media framing of the presented facts as news has a massive influence on readers' perceptions. This theory is what the author used to explain the coverage of the national mainstream media in Indonesia, namely, *Kompas*, *Republika*, and *The Jakarta Post*, during the 2020 United States presidential election.

2.2. Methods

This article aims to read the framing and sentiment of the national mainstream media in Indonesia in welcoming the 2020 presidential election in America. This research involved three mainstream media outlets in Indonesia, namely, *Kompas*, *Republika*, and *The Jakarta Post*. We chose these three media outlets because they are media outlets with a broad audience and have their respective segments. *Kompas* is a national print media platform with segments of the educated as well as the elite. This media framing often influences even the policies taken by the Indonesian government.

Moreover, *Republika* is a national print media whose ideological basis is Islam. Historically, *Republika* was formed to counterbalance the domination of *Kompas*. *Kompas* is seen as a medium that accommodates moderate national and Islamic thoughts in Indonesia. Moreover, *Jakarta Post* is the only national media outlet in Indonesia written in English with a broader audience segment focused on corporations. In this media framing analysis, we read media news related to the American presidential election every day from the beginning of September 2020 to the end of November 2020. What we want to see is the media sentiment toward Donald Trump. We use three keywords when reading news content or opinion articles in the media, namely, Positive, Negative, and Neutral.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Kompas Daily Framing Against Trump

As the largest and most influential print media in Indonesia, *Kompas* did not escape news related to international issues or the American election in 2020; this is one of the issues highlighted by daily *Kompas*. From the beginning of September 2020 to the end of November 2020, news about the *Kompas* daily covering the presidential election in America contained 37 news stories and 31 (84% newsframed) negative comments about the figure of Donald Trump. There were 3 (8%) framed news stories. In addition, 3 (8%) of the framed news items were positive. Some news in *Kompas* daily highlighted that Trump was a dangerous person (*Kompas*, August 21, 2020).

Other news framed negatively by the *Kompas* daily against Trump's figure is about when Trump was infected with coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). However, Trump seemed to have violated health protocols because of a brief quarantine

period to catch up with his electability from Joe Biden (Trump Wants to Campaign, 2020). Several other things that were highlighted were that Trump often appeared in public without wearing a mask; thus, Trump was considered to be underestimating Covid-19 even though America was one of the countries whose people are infected with Covid-19, which was relatively high (the most powerful people health puzzle, 2020, p.). This was what Joe Biden exploited to attack Trump in the face of the 2020 American presidential election. After the presidential election was completed, in which the winner was Joe Biden-Kamala Harris, Trump continued to claim victory in the contest and was accused of being fraudulent and unsportsmanlike in the election process. However, *Kompas* has again framed this news by criticizing Trump (negative framing) ("Trump - Biden Suggests to Take a Legal Path," 2020). Trump's refusal to admit that this defeat also impacts America's image as a champion of democracy in the world. Trump has demonstrated unsightly democratic practices in Uncle Sam's country. However, democracy is tarnished by the presence of Trump in American and world politics not only in 2020 but also since he was elected President of the U.S. in 2016. Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt responded to Trump's appearance by writing the book *How Democracies Die* (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). Trump is seen as a democratically elected figure who has an authoritarian leadership style. Even Trump is seen as the U.S. President who caused the democratic decline (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018) (Figure 3).



Figure 3 Kompas Daily Framing Against Trump.

Therefore, among the national mainstream media outlets, Donald Trump's figure in the 2020 American presidential election has the highest percentage rate (84%).

3.2. *Republika Daily Framing against Trump*

As the national media outlets are seen as accommodating the aspirations of the Islamic community in Indonesia, *Republika* also does not escape reporting on the U.S. election. From the beginning of September 2020 to the end of November 2020, the news in the daily *Republic of California* covering the presidential election in America contained 25 news stories, and 11 (44%) negatively framed news stories about the figure of Donald Trump; there were 6 (24%) framed news stories. Similarly, 8 (32%) of the framed news items were neutral.

Republika also highlighted when Trump was exposed to the Covid-19 virus. One of the things that *Republika* has highlighted with its negative framing is mixed news about Trump, which is seen as a reflection of the poor credibility of the White House (Trump: See Some Today," 2020). On October 23, 2020, the daily *Republika* published a story titled *The Impact of the U.S. Presidential Election on the World Season (Friday Dialog)*, where one of the points raised by *Republika* from its



framing was that U.S. Muslim groups hoped that Trump would no longer be elected in the November 2020 U.S. presidential election. The support of US Muslims and several figures, such as the Palestinian Prime Minister, stated that if Trump were re-elected, it would be a disaster for the Palestinian people, even the world ("The Impact of the US Presidential Election on the World Season (Dialog Friday)," 2020). Here are some examples of negative framing from the news in the Republic of the newspaper on the figure of Donald Trump. *Republika* is indeed a little different from Kompas and The Jakarta Post, where many Islamic aspects are in the spotlight of Trump. We know that Trump had shown a leadership attitude that was less friendly to the Muslim world for four years, leading America and the world. As one of the national mainstream media outlets in Indonesia, which is based on accommodating the aspirations of the Muslim community, *Republika* certainly pays more attention to these issues (Figure 4).



Figure 4 *Republika* Daily Framing Against Trump.

3.3. The Jakarta Post's framing of Trump

Jakarta Post, a national media outlet written in English, made 20 news stories about the American presidential election from the beginning of September 2020 to the end of November 2020. Ten (50%) news items were framed negatively, 7 (35%) were framed positively, and 3 (15%) were framed positively. *The Jakarta Post* also highlighted the US presidential debate between Trump and Joe Biden, which was a debate that did not reflect the maturity of American democracy. The chaos of this debate is then framed by negative sentiment toward Trump, in which Trump was seen as the main factor in the chaos, which often interrupted and ignored the debate rules that the organizers had made. This can be observed in the news on Thursday, October 1, 2020, titled *Interruptions, Insults March 1 Trump-Biden Debate*, and Friday, October 2, 2020, with the title *Planners vowing less chaos at the next Trump-Biden Debate*. Other news framed negatively by *The Jakarta Post* regarding Trump ahead of the 2020 American presidential election was related to the handling of Covid-19. On Thursday, October 8, 2020, *Jakarta Post* published an opinion article from JEFFREY D. SACHS. Jeffrey stated that Trump's attitude as the U.S. President, who underestimated COVID-19, was bad and anti-scientific (Figure 5).



Figure 5 The Jakarta Post Daily Framing Against Trump.

The percentages of news frames of the three media outlets are shown in the Figure 6.

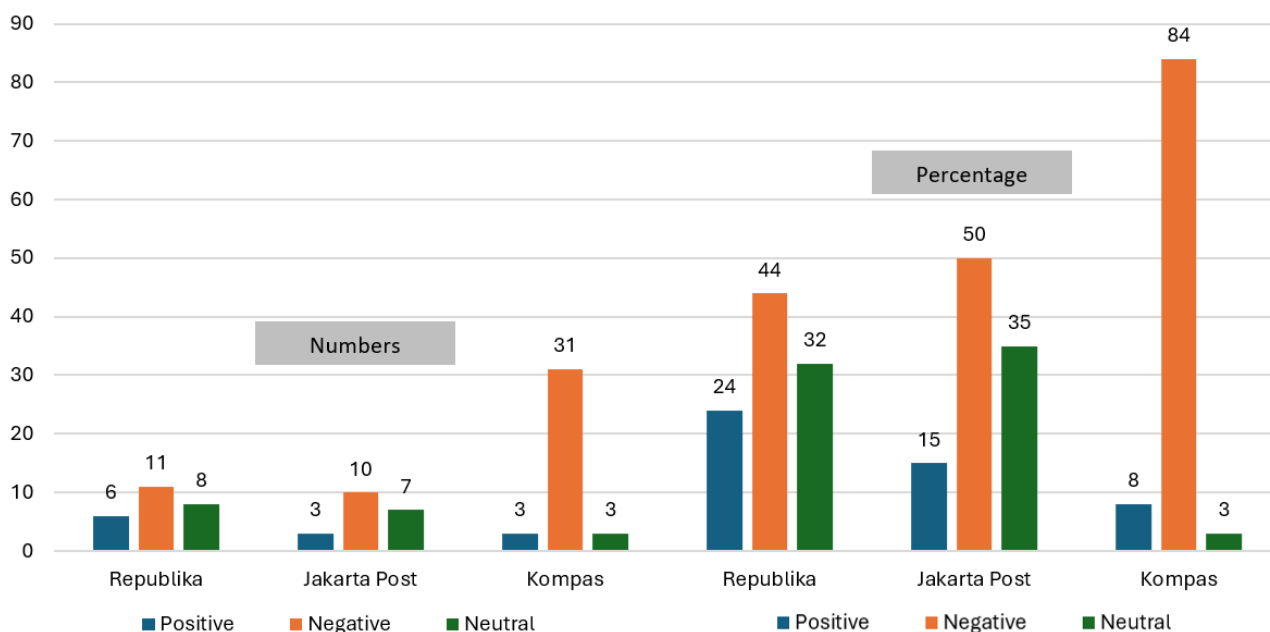


Figure 6 Total Numbers and Percentage of three mainstream media reporting on Donald Trump.

5. Final considerations

The discussion and analysis above show that the mainstream national media outlets in Indonesia that made news about the American presidential election in 2020 with negative framing were the most prevalent against Trump. Although the framing percentage is different and Kompas is the media outlet with the highest negative framing percentage (84%), this is followed by Jakarta Post (50%) and Republika (44%). Moreover, the percentage of positive media framing Trump is meagre, Kompas is only 8%, Jakarta Post is 15%, and Republika is somewhat high at 24%. A high percentage of negative framing is inseparable from Trump's controversial leadership style outside the mainstream. Therefore, when Trump was declared defeated in the November 2020 presidential election, the world warmly welcomed Joe Biden-Kamala Harris because his victory was deemed to have saved the world from Trump's dangers. The Conversation, for example, contains a news headline that frames negatively against Trump. Biden's presidency marked a return to normalcy after the chaotic Trump years (Klassen, 2021).

The majority of media framing is hostile toward this, not only in the 2020 American presidential election but also since Trump first appeared in the U.S. and world political arena, as the media in Indonesia has negatively framed Trump's figure (Sahide, 2018). For example, the Jakarta Post published news that had negative framing of Trump after the 2020 American election with the title US election offers terrible precedent for democracy: Experts (Post, 2020). The New York Times carried more or less the same headline, Biden Wins Presidency, Ending Four Tumultuous Years Under Trump (Martin & Burns, 2020). After Trump lost his ability to Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election, he was remembered by the world as a controversial



president. The election of Trump to become the President of the U.S. from 2017-2021 became a black spot in the American democratic process.

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Ethical considerations

Not applicable

Conflict of Interest

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