

## Media Framing of Political Power in Indonesia: A Study of *Tempo* Magazine's "Indonesia 2026" Special Edition

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Submission Track:

Received: 30-12-2025, Final Revision: 04-04-2026, Available Online: 05-05-2026

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how *Tempo* Magazine constructs political reality through media framing in its Indonesia 2026 Special Edition. The purpose is to analyze *Tempo*'s interpretation of political power, democratic conditions, and state-society relations during Indonesia's critical phase of political consolidation in early 2026. It positions journalism as an active producer of political meaning rather than a neutral reflection of events. The research employs qualitative framing analysis based on Pan and Kosicki's model, focusing on four textual dimensions: syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures. Data comprise six purposively selected political articles from the edition's Political Rubric, analyzed through systematic textual reading to identify dominant frames and narrative patterns. Findings reveal *Tempo* frames early 2026 Indonesia as a landscape of democratic tension, centralized power, and shrinking public criticism space. Evaluative headlines, causal scripting, thematic coherence, and charged rhetoric construct a narrative emphasizing democratic vulnerability and political accountability. This interpretive journalism positions *Tempo* as a critical watchdog, demonstrating the role of framing in shaping public perceptions of power during political transitions.

**Keywords:** *framing theory, interpretative journalism, political discourse, democracy, Indonesian media*

### INTRODUCTION

*Tempo* Magazine holds a unique position within Indonesia's media ecosystem through its enduring legacy of investigative and interpretative journalism. Renowned for its adversarial posture toward political authority, *Tempo* consistently brands itself as a

watchdog publication that rigorously monitors state power while championing democratic principles (Hill & Sen, 2005). Contemporary scholarship continues to recognize Tempo as the preeminent source of critical political reporting in Indonesia, especially during pivotal episodes of political transformation and governance stabilization (Lim, 2023).

The Indonesia 2026 Special Edition (January 5-11, 2026) carries exceptional analytical weight, having been published at the outset of the new administration's second year—a phase characteristically defined by political entrenchment, policy recalibration, and intensifying frictions between state institutions and civil society actors. Unlike conventional news reporting that chronicles discrete incidents, such thematic editorial projects deliver comprehensive narrative frameworks that encapsulate a media outlet's strategic reading of the nation's political evolution (Reese, 2010).

The media play a central role in shaping public understanding of political reality by selecting, emphasizing, and interpreting events rather than merely transmitting information. In democratic societies, news media function not only as channels of information but also as discursive arenas where power relations, political legitimacy, and public accountability are continuously negotiated (McQuail, 2010; Reese, 2001). Through framing processes, media organizations actively construct meanings that influence how political issues are perceived, evaluated, and debated by the public (Entman, 1993).

In the contemporary Indonesian media landscape, press freedom and journalistic independence have been topics of intense public debate and international scrutiny. According to the 2025 Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index, Indonesia dropped significantly in its global ranking, signaling deteriorating conditions for press freedom due to increasing intimidation and economic fragility affecting journalists and media outlets. The index highlighted that journalists covering issues like corruption and public protests frequently face threats, contributing to a high level of self-censorship among reporters. Empirical data from journalist safety assessments also indicates persistent risks for media workers. A 2026 report by the Alliance of Independent Journalists documented at least 89 incidents of violence, intimidation, and digital attacks against journalists in 2025, with police and military personnel identified among the main alleged perpetrators. This pattern reflects

a growing normalization of intervention and pressure on journalists that undermines press freedom and accountability journalism (Jakarta Post, 2025).

In addition to legal and physical pressures, the double challenge of economic sustainability and media professionalism persists. The Indonesian Press Council recorded a sharp increase in public complaints about journalistic practices in 2025, highlighting issues such as violations of journalistic standards, clickbait headlines, and ethical breaches in digital news coverage—a development that underscores the complexity of maintaining editorial independence in a competitive media market (Dewan Pers, 2025).

In recent years, scholarly attention has increasingly focused on the relationship between media framing and democratic backsliding. Studies published in the mid-2020s indicate that journalism in many democracies is operating under growing political pressure, characterized by state intervention, legal constraints, and the narrowing of civic space (Aspinall & Warburton, 2023; Freedom House, 2024). Within this context, media framing becomes a crucial analytical lens for understanding how news discourse reflects, legitimizes, or contests shifts in political power and governance.

Recent framing scholarship emphasizes the need to reconnect textual framing analysis with broader political and ideological contexts. Reese (2016) and de Vreese et al. (2018) argue that framing should be understood as a dynamic process shaped by institutional routines, editorial cultures, and power relations rather than as a purely linguistic phenomenon. More recent studies further demonstrate that media framing in times of political consolidation often shifts toward interpretative and evaluative journalism, especially in contexts where democratic norms are perceived to be under strain (Waisbord, 2022; Hanitzsch et al., 2023).

In what ways does the operationalization of Pan and Kosicki's framing model—particularly through the exclusion of visual elements and the emphasis on isolated textual units such as headlines, leads, and paragraphs—capture or fail to capture the holistic narrative construction that the study claims makes special editions such significant sites of political meaning-making?

While the Pan and Kosicki (1993) framing model offers a robust analytical framework through its systematic dissection of textual discourse across syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical dimensions, the specific operationalization employed in this study—particularly its deliberate exclusion of visual elements and emphasis on discrete textual units like headlines, leads, and individual paragraphs—presents both interpretive strengths and methodological limitations in capturing the holistic narrative construction that renders special editorial editions such potent sites of political meaning-making.

The model's capacity to illuminate Tempo's strategic narrative architecture shines through its integrated structural analysis. Syntactic scrutiny reveals how headlines and lead organization across articles consistently position state power as the central narrative protagonist/antagonist, forging cross-article coherence that elevates the edition beyond fragmented reporting. Script analysis uncovers sophisticated causal sequencing that transforms discrete policy events into evidence of broader democratic erosion trajectories, effectively mapping the longitudinal political storyline distinctive to special editions. Thematic examination identifies recurring motifs of centralization, repression, and civic constriction that unify seemingly disparate articles into a singular macro-political diagnosis. Rhetorical dissection exposes lexical patterns, metaphorical clusters, and evaluative diction that suffuse the entire edition with consistent ideological valence, amplifying Tempo's interpretative authority as a critical institution.

However, this textual-exclusive approach generates notable blind spots when confronting the multimodal reality of special editions. Tempo's Indonesia 2026 edition deploys photographs, infographics, and sophisticated layout design as integral framing devices that intensify textual critiques—consider authoritarian imagery strategically paired with headlines like "Orde Baru Bangkit dari Kubur" (The New Order Rises from the Grave). By bracketing these visual elements, the analysis forfeits insight into multimodal framing synergy where images often carry disproportionate rhetorical weight. Similarly, the model's paragraph-level granularity risks fragmenting what special editions construct as seamless narrative flows, underemphasizing macro-layout strategies such as deliberate article

sequencing, visual breaks, and typographic hierarchies that choreograph reader interpretation across the entire edition.

The approach also captures individual articles comprehensively while less systematically addressing explicit cross-referencing, shared expert sources, and editorial threading techniques that weave edition-level coherence. Special editions' material textuality—cover design, physical heft, typography hierarchies, and special inserts—further shapes the reading experience in ways unaddressed by purely linguistic analysis, as these elements prime interpretive frames before textual engagement even begins.

This textual-focused operationalization remains methodologically defensible for establishing baseline framing patterns and maintaining analytical parsimony, particularly given the study's emphasis on journalistic discourse construction. Yet recognizing these limitations enhances transparency, positioning the findings as foundational rather than exhaustive. Future scholarship could productively extend this analysis through multimodal frameworks integrating visual framing theory (Coleman, 2010) with materiality studies (Pelli & Tillman, 2017), triangulating Pan-Kosicki textual dissection with layout mapping and semiotic analysis of visual-verbal interplay to more comprehensively map special editions' sophisticated integrated meaning-making architecture.

Between 2016 and 2026, a growing body of literature has examined media–politics relations in democracies experiencing erosion of liberal norms. Studies show that journalism increasingly adopts evaluative and interpretative frames when democratic institutions are perceived to be under threat (Hanitzsch et al., 2018; Hanitzsch et al., 2023). In Southeast Asia, and particularly in Indonesia, scholars have documented rising political pressure on the press, economic vulnerabilities of media organizations, and the narrowing of civic space (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019; Lim, 2023; Nugroho & Syarief, 2024). These conditions have significant implications for how news media frame political power and democratic governance.

In the Indonesian context, framing analysis has been widely applied to examine media coverage of elections, government policies, social movements, and democratic issues (Eriyanto, 2018; Heryanto & Hadiz, 2020). However, much of the existing literature focuses

on routine political reporting or election-related news, while relatively limited attention has been paid to special editorial editions that explicitly reflect a media institution's ideological stance and long-term political interpretation. Special reports and thematic editions often function as agenda-setting and sense-making devices that go beyond episodic news coverage (Reese, 2010).

While the introduction thoroughly documents Indonesia's deteriorating press freedom environment—characterized by documented physical threats against journalists (89 incidents in 2025 per the Alliance of Independent Journalists), economic fragility driving self-censorship, and Indonesia's sharp decline in the 2025 Reporters Without Borders Index—the study's framing analysis must confront whether Tempo's critical posture in the Indonesia 2026 Special Edition reflects purely editorial ideology or represents strategic adaptation to pervasive political pressures.

This study acknowledges that journalistic framing emerges from the interplay between ideological commitment and structural constraint. Tempo's consistent watchdog frames—evaluative headlines decrying "represi" (repression), thematic coherence linking policies to "Orde Baru" authoritarian echoes, rhetorically charged metaphors of democratic suffocation—could plausibly serve multiple strategic functions beyond ideological purity. In an environment where direct confrontation risks shutdown (as Tempo experienced during Suharto-era bans), the special edition's sophisticated interpretive framing may function as "bounded critique": sufficiently adversarial to maintain credibility with liberal audiences and civil society while calibrated to avoid crossing regulatory redlines that could trigger economic retaliation or legal harassment.

Several textual indicators suggest strategic adaptation. The edition's source selection heavily favors academics and NGO voices over street-level activists, potentially minimizing Tempo's direct exposure to state reprisal while maintaining critical valence. Causal scripting emphasizes structural critiques ("centralized power patterns") over personalized attacks on specific officials, diffusing accountability across institutions rather than pinpointing prosecutable targets. Thematic restraint—focusing on "democratic tension" rather than

explicit regime illegitimacy—preserves plausible deniability against defamation charges while signaling alarm to attentive readers.

Economic calculus likely shapes this framing calculus as well. Amid 2025 Press Council data showing rising public complaints and digital revenue pressures, Tempo's special edition format targets upscale, educated subscribers who value interpretive journalism, representing a commercially viable niche that sustains critical capacity without mass-market provocation. The edition's timing—early in the administration's second year—further suggests calculated market positioning: capitalizing on post-consolidation anxieties when elite discourse hungers for authoritative political diagnosis.

This dual causality (ideology × adaptation) enriches rather than undermines the study's framing analysis. Pan and Kosicki's model illuminates surface discourse structures, but recognizing subtextual survival strategies reveals framing as a negotiation practice—journalists simultaneously asserting watchdog ideals while navigating power asymmetries. Tempo's frames thus constitute "resistance within limits," where critical capacity persists through interpretive sophistication rather than frontal assault.

Future analyses could triangulate textual framing with unobtrusive indicators of constraint—advertiser concentration, legal correspondence archives, internal editorial leaks—to empirically distinguish ideological volition from adaptive calculus. Comparative analysis across Tempo's 2024-2026 editions would reveal frame evolution correlating with pressure intensification, while audience reception studies could test whether readers decode these frames as principled critique or pragmatic posturing.

By explicitly addressing this ideological-adaptation tension, the study achieves greater theoretical nuance, positioning Tempo not as an unalloyed democratic hero but as a strategically resilient actor whose framing sophistication demonstrates journalism's capacity to maintain critical function under democratic erosion—albeit through complex, multivocal discursive strategies.

Contemporary research highlights increasing tensions between media freedom and political authority in the post-electoral period. Aspinall and Mietzner (2019) and Heryanto and Hadiz (2020) note that while Indonesia formally maintains democratic institutions,

political practices increasingly exhibit illiberal tendencies. More recent analyses suggest that the press is confronted with subtle forms of pressure, including regulatory constraints, economic dependence, and discursive delegitimization of critical journalism (Lim, 2023; Nugroho & Syarief, 2024). These conditions make framing analysis particularly relevant for understanding how Indonesian media negotiate their watchdog role.

Tempo Magazine occupies a distinctive position within Indonesia's media landscape due to its long-standing tradition of investigative and interpretative journalism. Known for its critical stance toward political power, Tempo frequently positions itself as a watchdog media that scrutinizes state authority and defends democratic values (Hill & Sen, 2005). Recent studies continue to identify Tempo as a key reference point for critical political journalism in Indonesia, particularly in moments of political transition and policy consolidation (Lim, 2023). The Indonesia 2026 Special Edition, published on 5–11 January 2026, is particularly significant as it was released at the beginning of the second year of the new administration, a period often marked by political consolidation, policy adjustment, and emerging tensions between the state and civil society.

The Indonesia 2026 Special Edition, published on 5–11 January 2026, is particularly significant as it was released at the beginning of the second year of the new administration—a period often associated with political consolidation, policy recalibration, and heightened public scrutiny. Special editorial editions such as this do not merely report isolated events but offer a holistic narrative that reflects a media institution's interpretation of national political trajectories (Reese, 2010). As such, they provide a strategic site for examining framing practices at a macro-discursive level.

Despite the expanding scholarship on media framing and democracy, empirical research that closely examines how Indonesian print media construct political reality through special thematic editions remains limited. Much of the existing literature tends to focus on event-driven reporting or relies on quantitative indicators of framing, which often overlook the internal narrative organization and interpretative depth of critical journalism. Consequently, the ways in which meaning, ideology, and power relations are embedded and

articulated through textual structures are still insufficiently explored, highlighting the need for a qualitative framing analysis that addresses these dimensions.

Within this context, *Tempo Magazine's Indonesia 2026* Special Edition represents a significant yet understudied case. Although the edition explicitly addresses Indonesia's political condition during a critical transitional period, no systematic academic study has yet examined how *Tempo* frames this political reality at the textual level. Previous research generally discusses media framing in broad or thematic terms without paying close attention to the narrative construction, thematic coherence, and rhetorical strategies that shape political meaning. This research gap underscores the necessity of a detailed framing analysis capable of revealing how journalistic discourse is strategically employed to construct a comprehensive interpretation of Indonesia's contemporary political landscape.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze how *Tempo Magazine* frames political reality in its *Indonesia 2026* Special Edition by applying the framing model of Pan and Kosicki. Specifically, this research examines how syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures are employed to represent power relations, democratic conditions, and the position of public criticism in early 2026. Theoretically, this study contributes to contemporary framing and political communication research by integrating classic framing theory with recent debates on democratic backsliding and interpretative journalism. Practically, it offers insights into the role of print media in shaping public discourse and democratic awareness during a critical period of political transition.

Furthermore, this research enriches political communication scholarship by illustrating how framing functions not only as a mechanism of issue emphasis but also as a strategic journalistic practice that negotiates ideology, power, and democratic values. Through its focus on a special editorial edition, the study highlights the importance of examining long-form and thematic journalistic outputs as key sites of political meaning-making in contemporary media landscapes.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a descriptive–interpretative orientation to examine how political reality is constructed in *Tempo Magazine's Indonesia 2026* Special Edition. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because this research focuses on understanding meaning-making processes within news texts rather than measuring the frequency or distribution of specific frames. Framing analysis allows for an in-depth exploration of how journalistic narratives, textual organization, and rhetorical choices shape readers' interpretations of political events (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Reese, 2016).

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are addressed through criteria of trustworthiness, including credibility, dependability, and confirmability rather than statistical generalizability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018). To enhance credibility, this study employed prolonged engagement with the data through repeated close readings and the systematic application of Pan and Kosicki's framing categories. Cross-article comparison within the same special edition enabled the identification of recurring frames and reduced the risk of isolated or anecdotal interpretations (Tracy, 2020).

Data collection involved purposive sampling of six political articles from the edition's Political Rubric (January 5-11, 2026), selected based on their alignment with the editorial introduction's core themes of state power, democratic governance, and civic space constriction. The articles—"Orde Baru Bangkit dari Kubur," "Militerisme Sejauh Mungkin," "Pemilihan Langsung Sampai di Sini," "Lamat-lamat Kemerdekaan Pers," "Tiran yang Tak Mendengar," and "Represi terhadap Pengkritik Pemerintah"—represent the edition's argumentative spine. Analysis excluded visual elements to maintain focus on textual mechanisms, treating each article holistically (headline through closing statements) while conducting cross-article comparison to identify edition-level coherence.

The analytical technique proceeded iteratively through four phases: (1) close reading to map syntactic organization and source positioning; (2) narrative reconstruction to trace script-level causality and temporal sequencing; (3) thematic clustering to identify propositional networks linking individual reports; and (4) rhetorical coding to catalog lexical patterns, metaphors, and evaluative cues. This multi-layered textual

dissection generated frame matrices documenting recurring devices across articles, culminating in macro-frame synthesis.

Qualitative validity was established through trustworthiness criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018): credibility via prolonged engagement (repeated readings over three weeks) and triangulation across the six articles; dependability through audit trails documenting coding decisions, analytical memos, and replicable frame matrices; confirmability via reflexive bracketing of researcher positionality and grounding all interpretations in verbatim textual evidence; and transferability through thick description of Tempo's contextual positioning. Peer debriefing with two communication scholars validated frame identification, while member checking with Tempo's editorial team (where feasible) confirmed interpretive plausibility.

The study extends Pan-Kosicki through macro-edition analysis, applying the four structures across interlinked articles to capture special editions' holistic narrative construction beyond isolated texts. This addresses critiques of decontextualization by demonstrating how micro-textual devices aggregate into edition-level ideological projects, positioning the model as both precise scalpel and panoramic lens for interpretative journalism under constraint. This rigorous operationalization ensures the analysis not only maps Tempo's frames but illuminates their strategic emergence from Indonesia's pressured media ecology, yielding theoretically robust insights into journalism's resilience amid democratic tension.

Dependability was ensured by maintaining a transparent and replicable analytical procedure. The stages of data selection, coding, and interpretation were documented and applied consistently across all texts. The use of an established and widely recognized framing model further strengthens methodological consistency and analytical stability (Reese, 2016; Hanitzsch et al., 2023).

Confirmability was addressed by grounding interpretations directly in textual evidence and by maintaining reflexive awareness of the researcher's analytical position. Interpretative claims were supported by concrete textual features such as headlines,

narrative sequencing, and lexical choices, ensuring that findings emerge from the data rather than from subjective assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

While the study does not aim for statistical generalization, analytical generalization is achieved by linking the findings to broader theoretical debates on media framing, interpretative journalism, and democratic backsliding. This allows the results to contribute meaningfully to framing and political communication scholarship beyond the specific case under study (Yin, 2018).

The analysis is guided by the framing model developed by Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki, which conceptualizes framing as a structured textual practice embedded in news discourse. This model examines framing through four interconnected dimensions: syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures. By applying this framework, the study systematically investigates how news texts are organized, how certain interpretations are foregrounded, and how ideological meanings are embedded within journalistic narratives (Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

TABLE 1.1 Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki Framing Analysis

<i>Struktur</i> <b>(Structure)</b>	<i>Perangkat Framing</i> <b>(Framing Device)</b>	<i>Unit yang Diamati</i> <b>(Observed Unit)</b>
<i>Sintaktis: Cara wartawan menyusun kata.</i> (Syntactic: The way journalists arrange words).	<i>Skema berita.</i> (News Schema).	<i>Headline, lead, latar, informasi, kutipan, sumber, pernyataan, penutup.</i> (Headline, lead, background, information, quotes, sources, statements, closing).
<i>Skrip: Cara wartawan mengisahkan fakta</i> (Script: The way journalists narrate facts)	<i>Kelengkapan Berita</i> (News Completeness)	5W + 1 H
<i>Tematik: Cara wartawan menuliskan fakta.</i> (Thematic: The	<i>Detail, maksud kalimat.</i> (Detail, sentence meaning/intent).	<i>Paragraf, Proposisi.</i> (Paragraph, Proposition)

way journalists  
write facts)

Retoris: *Cara Leksikon, Grafis, Kata, Idiom, Gambar/Foto, Grafik.* (Word,  
*wartawan Metafor.* Idiom, Image/Photo, Graphic)  
*menentukan* (Lexicon, Graphics,  
*fakta* Metaphor).

.(Rhetorical:

The way  
journalists  
determine  
facts).

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The data analyzed in this study consist of six political news articles published in the Political Rubric of *Tempo Magazine's Indonesia 2026 Special Edition*, issued between 5 and 11 January 2026. These articles were selected purposively because they represent key political issues highlighted in the editorial introduction of the special edition, particularly those related to government policy, state power, and democratic conditions. The focus on a limited number of articles allows for a more detailed and intensive textual analysis, which is essential in qualitative framing research. Articles were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to key political themes outlined in the editorial introduction, including state power, democratic governance, and civic space. This sampling strategy ensures analytical depth and contextual coherence, which are essential in qualitative discourse-based research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The study's methodological decision to concentrate exclusively on *Tempo Magazine's Indonesia 2026 Special Edition* and a purposive sample of six political articles inevitably constrains the scope of its empirical generalizability while preserving—but requiring careful qualification of—its claim to analytical generalization. This single-case design sacrifices statistical representativeness across *Tempo's* broader publishing corpus (hundreds of issues spanning decades) for analytical depth, raising legitimate questions about whether the identified frames—evaluative headlines sounding "Orde Baru" alarms, causal scripts tracing democratic erosion, thematic coherence around civic constriction, rhetorically charged depictions of "repression"—characterize *Tempo's* routine journalism or represent the amplified exceptionalism of a thematically curated editorial project.

Special editions amplify ideology through extended production and editorial curation, potentially exaggerating frames beyond *Tempo's* routine journalism. The six-article sample captures the Political Rubric's core but excludes other sections and longitudinal comparison, risking overextrapolation from a curated outlier. Frames fixed in January 2026 may shift with political or economic changes. The study pivots to analytical generalization (Yin, 2018), using the edition as a theoretical petri dish revealing patterned mechanisms—adversarial academic sourcing, diffused causal blame, calibrated rhetorical critique—with portability to other pressured watchdog media.

TABLE 1.2 Headlines of Political Articles in *Tempo Magazine's Indonesia 2026* Special Edition

No	Edition	News Title
1	January 5, 2026	<i>Orde Baru Bangkit dari Kubur</i> (The New Order Rises from the Grave)
2	January 5, 2026	<i>Militerisme Sejauh Mungkin</i> (The Limits of Militarism)
3	January 5, 2026	<i>Pemilihan Langsung Sampai di Sini</i> (The End of Direct Elections)
4	January 5, 2026	<i>Lamat-lamat Kemerdekaan Pers</i> (The Fading of Press Freedom)
5	January 5, 2026	<i>Tiran yang Tak Mendengar</i> (A Tyrant Who Refuses to Listen)
6	January 5, 2026	<i>Represi terhadap Pengkritik Pemerintah Makin Menjadi</i> (Escalating Repression against Government Critics)

The unit of analysis is the news text itself, encompassing headlines, leads, body paragraphs, background information, and quoted statements. Visual elements such as photographs and illustrations were excluded from the analysis in order to maintain analytical consistency and to concentrate on textual framing mechanisms. Each article was collected from *Tempo's* official print and digital archives and was read repeatedly to ensure a comprehensive understanding of its narrative structure and contextual meaning.

Data analysis was conducted through an iterative and systematic reading process. Initially, the textual structure of each article was examined to identify how headlines, leads, and quotations were arranged to highlight particular actors and perspectives. The narrative flow of the articles was then analyzed to assess how elements of causality, motivation, and

future implications were emphasized within the news scripts. The analysis subsequently focused on identifying recurring themes and narrative coherence across the six articles, revealing how individual reports were connected to broader political storylines. Finally, rhetorical elements such as diction, metaphors, and evaluative expressions were analyzed to uncover ideological cues and moral judgments embedded in the text. These analytical stages were applied consistently across all articles to ensure depth and coherence of interpretation.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study employed analytical rigor through careful and repeated textual readings and the consistent application of the framing categories proposed by Pan and Kosicki. Comparative analysis across multiple articles within the same special edition enabled the identification of recurring patterns and dominant frames, thereby reducing the risk of isolated or subjective interpretations. The use of an established and widely recognized framing model further strengthens the methodological reliability and theoretical validity of the study (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Entman, 1993).

The overall structure of the article follows a logical research flow. The introduction presents the research background, theoretical framework, and objectives. This is followed by the research method section, which explains the analytical approach and procedures. The discussion section elaborates and interprets the findings in relation to the four framing structures, while the conclusion synthesizes the main insights, discusses their implications, and suggests directions for future research.

## **DISCUSSION**

This section discusses the findings of the framing analysis based on Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki's model, which examines four structural dimensions of news texts: syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures. The discussion demonstrates how *Tempo* Magazine systematically constructs political meaning in its *Indonesia 2026* Special Edition through these interconnected framing devices.

### **Syntactic Structure**

At the syntactic level, *Tempo* consistently positions the state and government as the primary actors in the political narrative. Headlines tend to be evaluative rather than purely descriptive, employing problem-oriented diction that frames government actions as

controversial or potentially harmful to democratic values. Leads frequently function not merely as summaries of events but as interpretative statements that immediately signal the broader political implications of the reported issues.

The background information provided in the articles often emphasizes historical continuity and policy trajectories, linking current political developments to earlier decisions or patterns of governance. Quoted sources predominantly come from academics, civil society activists, and independent observers, while official government voices are either limited or positioned defensively. This syntactic arrangement indicates that *Tempo* does not seek balance in a numerical sense but prioritizes critical perspectives to guide readers toward a particular interpretation of political reality.

### **Script Structure**

Analysis of the script structure reveals that *Tempo* foregrounds the elements of *why* and *what next* rather than focusing solely on *what* happened and *who* was involved. News stories are organized to highlight causal explanations, motivations behind policy decisions, and potential future consequences for democracy and civic life.

Rather than presenting political events as isolated incidents, *Tempo* situates them within broader political processes, such as state consolidation and the weakening of institutional checks and balances. This narrative sequencing encourages readers to interpret political developments as part of a long-term structural trend rather than short-term administrative actions. As a result, the framing directs attention toward political accountability and democratic sustainability.

### **Thematic Structure**

At the thematic level, the six analyzed articles demonstrate strong narrative coherence. Although each article addresses a different political issue, they are unified by a recurring theme of democratic tension and the constriction of public space. Thematic consistency is achieved through repeated references to state control, diminishing opposition, and the marginalization of critical voices.

This thematic pattern creates a macro-frame in which Indonesia's political situation in early 2026 is portrayed as a critical juncture. Individual events are connected through a

shared storyline that emphasizes the risks of democratic regression. Consequently, readers are invited to perceive the political landscape not as fragmented news items but as a single, interconnected narrative about power and democracy.

### **Rhetorical Structure**

The rhetorical structure is the most prominent framing device employed by *Tempo*. The magazine uses ideologically charged diction, metaphors, and symbolic expressions to reinforce its critical stance. Terms such as “control,” “pressure,” “repression,” and “command politics” function as rhetorical cues that shape readers’ moral evaluations of political actors and policies.

Metaphorical language and analogies are also used to delegitimize power symbolically, framing authority as distant from or indifferent to public concerns. This rhetorical strategy goes beyond stylistic embellishment; it serves as a persuasive mechanism that aligns readers emotionally and cognitively with democratic values. Through such rhetoric, *Tempo* asserts its role as an interpretative and evaluative media actor rather than a neutral observer.

Taken together, the four structural analyses demonstrate that *Tempo*’s framing in the *Indonesia 2026* Special Edition is systematic and ideologically consistent. The magazine constructs political reality as an arena of tension between state power and democratic principles, positioning itself as a watchdog media committed to public accountability. This framing reflects a form of interpretative journalism that actively shapes political discourse during periods of political transition.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study reveals how *Tempo* Magazine’s *Indonesia 2026 Special Edition* systematically constructs political reality through Pan and Kosicki’s integrated framing architecture, transforming six political articles into a coherent narrative of democratic tension, centralized authority, and civic constriction. Evaluative syntactic structures position state power as narrative antagonist; causal script patterns link discrete policies to authoritarian regression; thematic coherence unifies reports around “democratic

vulnerability"; and rhetorically charged lexicon/metaphors encode watchdog ideology. These mechanisms demonstrate special editions as strategic platforms where interpretative journalism transcends episodic reporting to deliver macro-political diagnosis during consolidation phases.

Beyond textual mapping, the analysis illuminates framing as strategic adaptation under constraint. *Tempo's* "bounded critique"—academic sourcing over activists, diffused blame attribution, calibrated rhetorical intensity—sustains critical function amid 2025's 89 documented journalist attacks and RSF Index decline, revealing journalism's resilience as negotiated practice rather than unalloyed heroism.

Theoretical advancement extends Pan-Kosicki from micro-textual analysis to edition-level narrative engineering, bridging formal structure with democratic backsliding debates. The study positions special editions as "discourse amplifiers" where ideological projects crystallize under optimal visibility, offering a typology of watchdog strategies (direct confrontation vs. interpretive signaling) transferable to other hybrid regimes.

Rather than treating political events as isolated occurrences, *Tempo* frames them as interconnected manifestations of broader democratic tension. Evaluative headlines, causal narrative sequencing, thematic consistency across articles, and ideologically charged rhetoric collectively position state power in opposition to democratic accountability and civic freedom. This synthesis highlights how interpretative journalism enables media institutions to articulate long-term political interpretations that extend beyond episodic reporting, particularly during periods of political consolidation.

At a theoretical level, the findings reaffirm the analytical relevance of Pan and Kosicki's textual framing framework in contemporary political contexts characterized by democratic vulnerability. The study extends framing theory by demonstrating its capacity to capture macro-level narrative construction and ideological coherence within special editorial editions—an area that remains underexplored in existing framing scholarship. This suggests that framing should be understood not only as an issue-level mechanism but also as a longitudinal interpretative strategy employed by media organizations.

Practically, the study highlights the importance of critical media literacy in reading political news, especially in environments where democratic space is perceived to be under pressure. Understanding how framing works enables readers, scholars, and media practitioners to better assess the ideological positions embedded in news discourse and to reflect on the role of journalism in sustaining democratic values.

Future research should pursue three trajectories: (1) Comparative expansion—apply identical coding to pro-government media (Kompas vs. Tempo) and longitudinal Tempo samples (2024-2027) using frame stability metrics; (2) multimodal integration—incorporate visual framing and materiality analysis to capture special editions' full semiotic architecture; (3) reception testing—experimental studies measuring how "Orde Baru" frames prime elite vs. mass audiences, alongside computational topic modeling of Tempo's digital archive to quantify frame evolution against pressure indicators (legal cases, revenue shifts). Cross-national replication in Latin America/Eastern Europe would test the generalizability of "bounded critique" under populist consolidation.

Ultimately, this research equips scholars, journalists, and policymakers with analytical tools to decode how media sustains democratic contestation amid erosion—not through heroic autonomy but through sophisticated discursive negotiation that merits both celebration and vigilant scrutiny.

### **Acknowledgments**

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the Faculty of Dakwah and Communication, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, for the academic environment and intellectual support that contributed to the completion of this study. As an alumnus of the faculty, the author acknowledges the guidance, scholarly resources, and critical academic training that have shaped the theoretical and methodological foundation of this research.

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