

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Ideological Representations of Indonesia's August 2025 Protests in Arabic Media

Najmi Ramadhani Syofyan*¹, Ulil Abshar²

^{1,2} Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, South Tangerang City, Indonesia

*) Corresponding Author

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Abstract

This study looks at how protests in Indonesia, an understudied topic in Arab media discourse, are portrayed by three Arabic-language news organizations: Al Jazeera Arabic, Asharq Al-Awsat, and Okaz. The study conceptualizes news reporting as a social practice shaped by ideology, power relations, and institutional positioning rather than as an impartial representation of events, using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Selected articles about protests that were posted on the three outlets' official websites make up the data. These articles are qualitatively examined at the textual, discursive practice, and social practice levels, paying close attention to evaluative language, sourcing patterns, and social actor representations. The results show systematic variations in how protests are framed. Al Jazeera Arabic tends to foreground protesters' social grievances while remaining cautious toward state authority, resulting in a relatively plural narrative. Asharq Al-Awsat emphasizes order and security through reliance on official sources, whereas Okaz recurrently employs discursive strategies of symbolic delegitimization that construct protests as threats to national stability. Although based on a limited corpus and not intended for broad generalization, the analysis relies on recurrent linguistic and discursive patterning across texts to mitigate overinterpretation. This study

advances knowledge of how Arab media influence public perceptions of political protests beyond their immediate national contexts by offering a reflexive, cross-cultural CDA of protest reporting, which explicitly acknowledges the researcher's linguistic, cultural, and theoretical positionality in interpreting Arabic media narratives about Indonesian political events.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Norman Fairclough, Pragmatic Positioning, Media Representation, Arab Online Media*

INTRODUCTION

Demonstrations have always been a platform for social conflict, ideological debate, and power struggles in modern countries to be expressed and heard. Digital and social media platforms play an important role in this mediation process because they allow the rhetoric of demonstrations to cross national borders and influence community understanding in ways that neither the state nor mainstream media can (Poell & van Dijck, 2018).

In the contemporary connected landscape, public demonstrations are no longer considered merely local events; they are influenced and disseminated globally through media networks that often use specific frameworks to legitimize or delegitimize actions (Harlow, Kilgo, & García-Perdomo, 2017). Wodak and Meyer (2016) state that the way the media talks about a demonstration is crucial for global audiences to decide whether the demonstration is legitimate or not.

At the end of August 2025, large demonstrations took place in Indonesia against a number of socio-economic issues, including low wages, high living costs, high unemployment, and policies considered unfair to the ruling class. Arabic-language media, such as Al Jazeera Arabic, Asharq Al-Awsat, and Okaz, were the main sources of news about these events for people in the Middle East and the Arab world.

Many meta-analyses of protest narrative frameworks suggest that digital or alternative media can provide a more diverse narrative framework for protest groups and make them appear more legitimate. In contrast, traditional coverage often focuses on conflict and delegitimization (Geremew Chala Teresa, 2022). A framing study (Achmad Jamil et al., 2020) states that Indonesian national media used certain framing techniques

during the Omnibus Law protests. These techniques changed the way people viewed the goals and objectives of the protest movement.

Most previous studies on how the media depicts demonstrations have focused on protests in the East or Western media. Traditional news sources report demonstrations directly, but social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook provide people with new ways to share mobilization messages and different stories (Herlin Triana et al., 2023). Although these patterns have evolved due to digital media and international networks, a number of studies suggest that media coverage of demonstrations still follows certain patterns that focus on conflict, delegitimization, or threats to social order (Theocharis et al., 2019). This suggests that, although relevant to cross-cultural discourse studies, the issue of Arab media coverage of non-Arab demonstrations has not been widely discussed.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is one way of looking at language. CDA argues that communication is inherently subjective, intertwined with ideology, power relations, and specific interests. CDA seeks to explain how texts describe certain people, events, and ideologies in order to construct, maintain, or critique social domination. Discourse is currently defined as ideas, concepts, or effects that emerge in a particular context and influence the ideas and behaviors of others, rather than simply a collection of words or statements in a text (Hwita, 2019).

In Indonesia, there is a clear tendency in AWK research to analyze the vocabulary of demonstrations, especially slogans and local media. According to research by Mudiawati et al. (2023) and Gusti & Setiawati (2025), the claims made by students and teachers during demonstrations are a way for them to ideologically reject government policies. In analyzing national media coverage, researchers found that the media often uses representation methods to make dominant policies appear normal and hide those who commit state violence. This reinforces hegemonic discourse (Pranata et al. 2024; Samsuri et al. 2022). Researchers have also observed how Norman Fairclough's methods can be used to analyze online news coverage of political campaigns (Azwar et al., 2021).

Studies show that Al Jazeera Arabic's coverage is heavily influenced by regional ideology and geopolitical objectives within the Arab media sphere. The channel's choice of

words and tone of voice demonstrate this (Yuhandra et al., 2024). This study does not explore the portrayal of political events in non-Arab countries such as Indonesia, as its focus remains on Middle Eastern issues.

To fill this information gap, this study analyzes three major Arab media sites to see how they use language in covering demonstrations in Indonesia. One focus of this study is how demonstrations are covered as political events. Another focus is how the ideological tendencies of different media sources influence the way they portray demonstrators, government institutions, and social and economic issues.

RESEARCH METHOD

To examine media discourse methodically and contextually, this study uses a qualitative descriptive methodology that focuses on non-numerical variables, such as text and linguistic meaning (Nuryadin & Nur, 2021). Language is viewed as a social activity that produces and reproduces ideology and power dynamics, rather than just a means of communication (Fairclough, 1996). The framework is applied reflexively to Arabic news discourse and is guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model, which consists of textual, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 1996). In order to retain linguistic subtleties and sociocultural specificity, CDA was performed directly on the original Arabic texts, despite its roots in a Western critical tradition.

Instead of using rigid English-based grammatical templates, analytical categories like lexical choice, modality, transitivity, evaluative language, and social actor representation were used as interpretative heuristics, enabling sensitivity to Arabic structural and functional particularities. These textual patterns were interpreted in light of larger institutional and ideological contexts, where ideological positioning is viewed as discursively instantiated rather than statistically generalized, and were connected to sourcing, quotation, intertextuality, and framing practices (Fairclough, 1996).

Three Arabic news stories from Al Jazeera Arabic, Okaz, and Asharq Al-Awsat constitute the purposively selected corpus. Consistent with the qualitative orientation of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study prioritizes analytical depth over statistical generalization. Institutional ideology is inferred not from frequency but from the

coherence of discursive patterns across textual, discursive, and social practice levels. The findings therefore offer a contextually grounded interpretation of how ideological positioning is articulated in selected institutional texts rather than representing all Arabic-language media. By situating recurring linguistic and framing patterns within broader political and institutional contexts, the analysis advances CDA's critical aim of examining how media discourse contributes to the reproduction of social power relations, while remaining analytically bounded to the chosen outlets.

To collect the data, the researcher used a documentation strategy by analyzing articles from the official websites of each media organization. We found the articles by searching for keywords, downloading and saving the documents to ensure data accuracy, and converting the Arabic text into digital format as part of the data collection procedure. To make reporting and analytical exposition easier, the articles were translated into Indonesian; however, to reduce the possibility of interpretive distortion, the analysis was based on the original Arabic texts.

The study acknowledges that translation can affect how ideological meanings are understood, especially when it comes to modality, evaluative language, and pragmatic positioning all of which are highly language-specific (Al-Mushawwat, 2025; Zein et al., 2024). Accordingly, key linguistic elements like modal expressions, evaluative adjectives, and stance-marking constructions were examined in the original Arabic to reduce the possibility of translation bias; Indonesian translations were mainly used for illustrative purposes. Arabic passages were cross-checked when needed to make sure the translated interpretations maintained the original pragmatic and grammatical subtleties.

To achieve explanatory analysis at the level of social practice, the study operationalized Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in a sequential manner. Micro-linguistic factors, including lexical choices, transitivity, modality, evaluative language, and social actor representations, were examined at the textual level as indicators of ideological orientation rather than as discrete stylistic components (Bednarek, 2016). To investigate how journalistic norms influenced protest narratives,

these textual patterns were then connected to discursive activities such as sourcing, quoting, intertextuality, and framing routines.

Within CDA's qualitative framework, institutional ideology is not inferred from numerical frequency but from the consistency and coherence of discursive patterns across textual, discursive, and social practice levels. The study therefore does not claim statistical generalization, but offers a theoretically grounded interpretation of how ideological positioning is articulated in selected institutional texts. Importantly, the analysis does not assume a deterministic relationship between institutional alignment and textual outcomes. Rather, discourse is approached dialectically as both shaped by and actively constructing institutional positioning. By situating recurrent linguistic and framing patterns within broader political and editorial contexts, while acknowledging professional routines and intra-institutional negotiations, the study advances CDA's critical aim of examining how media discourse participates in the reproduction and negotiation of social power relations without reducing texts to predictable reflections of ownership structures.

Lastly, by placing recurring textual and discursive patterns within the unique institutional, political, and economic contexts of each outlet specifically, Al Jazeera Arabic within Qatar's transnational and geopolitical media positioning and Asharq Al-Awsat and Okaz within Saudi-owned, state-aligned media environments the analysis was able to explain why specific ideological representations were systematically produced rather than just pointing out differences in framing.

Analyzing discourse at the level of practice highlights a focus on framing and intertextuality, particularly with the use of quotes from security forces and state authorities, as well as attention to issues related to national stability, security, and order. Research shows that media coverage of demonstrations, through selective source selection and adherence to certain narrative frameworks, reduces the legitimacy of demonstrators' calls for greater freedom and equality (Kilgo & Harlow, 2019). At the level of social practice, the language surrounding protests is analyzed through the framework of ideological conflict between the state, the media, and civil society. The aim is to explain

the naturalization of language related to state legitimacy and security, with restrictions on social criticism within a certain hegemonic framework (Lubis, 2021).

By analyzing patterns of consistency, evaluative loading, and contextual alignment across texts, the study distinguishes between traditional newsroom norms such as reliance on official sources or security-oriented framing and ideological positioning to prevent overattributing ideological intent to routine journalistic practices. Only when journalistic conventions are consistently used in conjunction with particular lexical choices, modality patterns, and framing techniques that consistently favor particular actors or viewpoints are they regarded as ideologically significant. The analysis distinguishes routine reporting norms from discursively constructed ideological positions by triangulating micro-linguistic features with discursive practices and their larger socio-political contexts.

Source triangulation, which means comparing discourse representations from the three media sources studied, maintains the validity and meaning of the data. Sahmeni and Afifah (2019) emphasize that previous ideas and research in pragmatics, discourse analysis, and media studies were rigorously examined to strengthen the validity of the study.

Only data organizing and linguistic refinement (e.g., academic terminology and clarity) were done using AI tools like Claude and ChatGPT (OpenAI). They did not participate in interpretive analysis, coding choices, or theory formulation. The researcher manually created and verified all analytical categories, critical assessments, and links between linguistic patterns and ideological implications using the source texts as a guide. In order to maintain the transparency of the analytical trail, AI-assisted reformulation was only used after the analytical framework was developed. The researcher bears whole responsibility for the interpretation and theoretical assertions.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

A. Textual Analysis

To reduce interpretive distortion, all ideology-laden elements (modality, evaluative language, transitivity, and social actor representation) were methodically found and examined in the original Arabic texts. Only in the reporting stage, to provide analytical instances, was translation into Indonesian utilized; it was not the foundation for interpretation (Liu & Guo, 2016). Arabic grammatical structures, lexical semantics, and discourse-pragmatic patterns served as the foundation for coding and interpretive conclusions, including assertions regarding pragmatic meaning and symbolic delegitimization. To guarantee correctness, these interpretations were frequently compared to the source texts. Instead of being mediated through translated representations, this process made sure that evaluative and ideological contents were extracted straight from the original language.

Data 1:

Using a linguistic framework that evolves from describing events to legitimizing official security rhetoric, Al Jazeera Arabic's report released on 9/1/2025 (21:12) describes protests in Indonesia. The events are described as a terrible crisis from the outset by reinforcing security terminology. The statement clearly states:

عززت السلطات الإندونيسية الإجراءات الأمنية اليوم الاثنين بعد مقتل ستة أشخاص، على خلفية تصاعد اضطرابات اندلعت خلال الاحتجاجات التي عمّت البلاد، تنديداً بتدني الأجور مقابل زيادة مخصصات المسؤولين
“azzazat as-sulṭāt al-indūnīsiyyah al-ijrā’āt al-amniyyah al-yawma al-ithnayn ba‘da maqtali sittati ashkhāṣ, ‘alā khalafiyyati taṣā‘udi idṭirābāt indala‘at khilāla al-iḥtijājāt allatī ‘ammat al-bilād, tandīdan bitadannī al-ujūr muqābila ziyādati mukhaṣṣāṣāti al-mas’ūlīn.”

” Indonesian authorities tightened security measures on Monday after six people were killed amid escalating riots that broke out during

demonstrations sweeping the country, protesting low wages amid rising allowances for officials.”

By using the word عززت, which means “to tighten,” together with the phrase الإجراءات الأمنية, which means “security measures,” the state is linguistically described as strong, responsive, and authoritative. From the outset, the protests were described not only as political manifestations; they were also considered a cause of security problems, which allowed the authorities to legitimately intervene.

Furthermore, using the metaphor of escalation, the story shifts to the geographical spread of the protests:

واتسع نطاق الاحتجاجات ليشمل مدنًا رئيسية في الأرخبيل، بينها يوغياكرتا وباندونغ وسيمارانغ وسورابايا وميدان في مقاطعة سومطرة الشمالية

“*wa it-tasa‘a niṭāqu al-iḥtijājāti li-yashmala mudunan ra’isiyyah fī al-arghabīl, baynahā Yūghyākartā wa Bāndūng wa Sīmārāng wa Sūrābāyā wa Mīdān fī muqāṭa‘ati Sūmaṭrah ash-shamāliyyah.*”

“The demonstrations spread to major cities across the archipelago, including Yogyakarta, Bandung, Semarang, Surabaya, and Medan in North Sumatra Province.”

The construction “اتسض نطاق” is used to highlight the increasingly intense and uncontrollable nature of the demonstrations, which further reinforces the idea that the state must act quickly.

Meanwhile, as seen in the subheading, the text uses sharp semantic conflict to point out the economic basis of the demonstrations:

محرومون ومدللون

maḥrūmūna wa mudallalūn.

“The marginalized and the pampered.”

This opposition is developed through quantitative data:

يتلقى جميع المشرعين، البالغ عددهم 580 نائبًا، بدل سكن شهريًا قدره 50 مليون روبية (3075 دولارًا)، وهو ما يعادل نحو عشرة أضعاف الحد الأدنى للأجور في جاكرتا

yataqallā jamī‘u al-musharri‘īn, al-bāligha ‘adaduhum 580 nā’iban, badala sakanin shahriyyan qadrahu khamsūna milyūna rūbiyyah (3075 dūlāran), wa huwa mā yu‘ādilu naḥwa ‘ashara aḍ‘āfi al-ḥaddi al-adnā lil-ujūr fī Jākartā.

“All 580 members of the legislature receive a monthly housing allowance of 50 million rupiah (approximately US\$3,075), equivalent to nearly ten times the minimum wage in Jakarta.”

The numerical comparison supports the evidence from a discursive perspective. However, structural accusations against the state do not focus on this economic criticism; instead, the criticism is placed in the background.

The demonstrators' views were then expressed:

ويرى المحتجون أن هذا البدل الجديد ليس مفرطاً فحسب، بل يُدفع من ميزانية البلاد في وقت يعاني فيه معظم الناس من ارتفاع تكاليف المعيشة والضرائب وارتفاع معدلات البطالة

wa yarā al-muḥtajjūna anna hādhā al-badala al-jadīda laysa mufriṭan faḥasb, bal yudfa‘u min mīzāniyyati al-bilād fī waqtin yu‘ānī fīhi mu‘zamu an-nāsi min irtifā‘ takālīfi al-ma‘īshah wa aḍ-ḍarā’ib wa irtifā‘ mu‘addalāti al-baṭālah.

“The protesters believe that this new allowance is not only excessive, but also burdens the state budget at a time when most people are facing rising living costs, taxes, and unemployment rates.”

The use of this sentence makes the demonstrators appear to be rational people (يرى المحتجون), not just an angry mob, which gives legitimacy to their demands.

However, this legitimacy begins to change when the text discusses the violence that occurred after a civilian was killed:

وأثار مقطع فيديو نُشر على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، يُظهر وفاته خلال تجمع جماهيري في جاكرتا، صدمةً واستياءً واسع النطاق ضد قوات الأمن

wa athāra maqṭa‘u fidiyū nushira ‘alā wasā’ili at-tawāṣul al-ijtimā’ī ṣadmatan wa istiyyā’an wāsi‘a an-niṭāq ḍidda quwwāti al-amn.

“A video published on social media sparked widespread shock and outrage against the security forces.”

The victim's identity was then humanized:

قال شهود عيان إن سيارة مدرعة تابعة للشرطة الوطنية انطلقت فجأة عبر حشد المتظاهرين واصطدمت
بكورنياوان ودهسته

qāla shuhūdu ‘iyān inna sayyārah mudaṛṛa‘ah tābi‘ah li-ash-shurṭah al-waṭaniyyah inṭalaqat faj’atan ‘abra ḥashdi al-mutaṣāhirīn wa iṣṭadamat bi-Kurniyāwān wa dasat-hū.

“Eyewitnesses stated that an armored vehicle belonging to the national police suddenly drove into the crowd of demonstrators, hitting Kurniawan and running him over.”

By describing the actions in detail and providing visual material, this narrative builds an implicit criticism of the authorities without making direct accusations.

In the final section, the state uses the symbolic criminalization of protests to regain control over the discourse:

حذّر الرئيس سوبيانتو من أن أعمال العنف قد تتحول إلى خيانة وإرهاب، مؤكداً أن الدولة لن تتسامح مع
محاولات زعزعة الاستقرار

ḥadhdhara ar-ra’īsu Sūbiyāntū min anna a‘māla al-‘unfi qad tataḥawwal ilā khiyānah wa irhāb, mu’akkidan anna ad-dawlah lan tasāmaḥa ma‘a muḥāwalāti za‘za‘ati al-istiqrār.

“President Subianto warned that violent actions could turn into treason and terrorism, while emphasizing that the state would not tolerate any attempts to destabilize the country.”

The ideological weapons used to minimize resistance and legitimize state authority in Fairclough's paradigm are the words *إرهاب* and *خيانة*.

A study of Al Jazeera Arabic's coverage shows a fairly diverse intertextual structure, in which government sources, demonstrators, and citizens' voices appear in the same news frame at the same time. In this context, a moderate position can be formed pragmatically: demonstrations are described as a public reaction to

economic injustice, while the state's actions are explained in a neutral and descriptive tone.

To achieve an ideological position, the media takes an implicit stance rather than openly criticizing society or politics. This allows them to strike a balance between two extremes. This structure reflects international journalism, which allows for subtle negotiation of ideological positions through the weakening of opinions and the restriction of judgments.

Data 2:

An article published on September 1, 2025 (16:23) in Asharq Al-Awsat describes the demonstrations in Indonesia through a more “formal” narrative focused on institutional security. The article depicts the state as the main figure and the demonstrations as a potential threat to stability. This is clearly stated in the headline:

مظاهرات حاشدة في إندونيسيا وسط تدابير أمنية مشددة

Muzāharāt ḥāshidah fī Indūnīsiyā wasaṭa tadābīr amniyyah mushaddadah.

“Massive demonstrations in Indonesia amid tightened security measures.”

The initial use of the phrase “tight security measures” (تدابير أمنية مشددة) describes the demonstrations in the context of security, rather than social or economic issues. As a result, the focus is on the security of the event rather than its social justice implications, leading readers to believe in the security aspect.

The first storyline then highlights the presence of the authorities while magnifying the scale of the protests:

تظاهر آلاف الأشخاص في مدن إندونيسية عدة، في ظل تشديد السلطات إجراءاتها الأمنية بعد اضطرابات عنيفة
أسفرت عن مقتل ستة أشخاص

Tazāhara ālāfu al-ashkhāṣ fī mudun indūnīsiyyah ‘iddah, fī zilli tashdīdi as-sulṭāt ijrā’atihā al-amniyyah ba‘da idṭirābāt ‘anīfah asfarat ‘an maqtali sittati ashkhāṣ.

“Thousands of people demonstrated in a number of cities in Indonesia, amid tightened security measures following violent riots that killed six people.”

Implicitly, the strengthening of state security is justified, and the construction in ظل links the protests with اضطرابات عنيفة and death. Instead of describing the demonstrations as an independent political expression, the media portrays them as a stage for violent acts.

Visual and numerical details about the security mechanisms are then presented in the article:

تجمع نحو 500 متظاهر أمام مقر البرلمان في العاصمة وسط انتشار عشرات الجنود

Tajamma‘a naḥwa khamsimi‘ati muḏāhir amāma maqarri al-barlamān fī al-‘āṣimah wasaṭa intishār ‘asharāti al-junūd.

“About 500 demonstrators gathered in front of the parliament building in the capital amid the deployment of dozens of soldiers.”

By using the term “انتشار عشرات الجنود,” the presence of the military in civilian areas becomes commonplace. According to Fairclough, this reinforces the idea that when political conflict arises, public spaces can be legitimately regulated by the state.

Although presented in a very limited way, Asharq Al-Awsat still included the voices of the demonstrators:

هدفنا الرئيسي هو الإصلاح... نريد للبرلمان أن يستمع إلينا بشكل مباشر

Hadafunā ar-ra‘īsī huwa al-iṣlāḥ... nurīdu lil-barlamān an yastami‘a ilaynā bishaklin mubāshir.

“Our main goal is reform... we want parliament to listen to us directly.”

This quote gives an impression of balance, but it is immediately counterbalanced by narratives of escalating violence:

وبدأت الاحتجاجات بشكل سلمي، ثم اتسع نطاقها وازدادت عنفاً عقب انتشار فيديو يظهر مركبة للشرطة تدهس سائق دراجة نارية

Wa bada‘at al-iḥtijājāt bishaklin silmi, thumma ittasa‘a niṭāquhā wazdādat ‘unfan ‘aqiba intishāri fīdiyū yuḏhir markabah lil-shurṭah tadhasu sā‘iqa darrājatin nāriyyah.

“The demonstration began peacefully, then spread and became increasingly violent after the circulation of a video showing police vehicles running over motorcyclists.”

Although the construction of the sentence implies a complex cause-and-effect relationship, it does not go so far as to offer a comprehensive critique of the equipment. There is an acknowledgment of state brutality, but it is not presented as a fundamental structural problem.

Another quote from the president that supports the security narrative is:

الحق في التجمّع السلمي يجب أن يُحترم ويُحمى، لكن القانون ينص على أنه إذا أردت التظاهر، يجب أن تطلب إذنًا
Al-ḥaqqu fī at-tajammu‘ as-silmī yajibu an yuḥtarama wa yuḥmā, lākinna al-qānūna yanṣu ‘alā annahu idhā aradta at-taẓāhur, yajibu an taṭluba idhnān.

“However, within the formal legal structure of the state, the establishment of contrasts serves to limit civil liberties.”

At the end of the article, the focus is on the victims, the damage, and the government's response:

ارتفعت حصيلة الضحايا إلى ستة قتلى، وأقامت الشرطة حواجز في أنحاء عدة من جاكرتا لحماية المواطنين
Irtafa‘at ḥaṣīlat aḍ-ḍaḥāyā ilā sittati qatlā, wa aqāmat ash-shurṭah ḥawājiza fī anḥā‘ ‘iddah min Jākartā liḥimāyati al-muwāṭinīn.

“The number of victims rose to six, and police set up security posts in various areas of Jakarta to protect residents.”

This time, the power structure was depicted as a shield, not as an object of investigation.

Asarq Al-Awsat presents a much greater authority. Evidence shows that institutional views are consistently given greater weight than those of the demonstrators. This imbalance, according to the pragmatic paradigm, establishes the state as the primary epistemic authority, with protests being portrayed as a threat to public order rather than as legitimate political activity.

Data 3:

News released on August 31, 2025 (06:03) by Okaz presents protests in Indonesia in a much more aggressive and sensational manner than what you see on Al Jazeera Arabic. Just by looking at the headline, the impression that arises is that Indonesia is a place where national stability is threatened by chaos:

إندونيسيا في قلب الفوضى.. حرائق برلمانية ومظاهرات دامية تهز البلاد

Indūnīsiyā fī qalbi al-fawḍā'... ḥarā'iq barlamāniyyah wa muḏāharāt dāmiyah tahuzzu al-bilād.

“Indonesia is in the heart of chaos... parliamentary fires and bloody demonstrations are shaking the country.”

The phrase “في قلب الفوضى” (in the midst of chaos) places chaos at the center of the country, not as a temporary event. The phrase ‘دمية’ (bloody) and the verb “تهز” (shake) make people feel as if they are in a crisis and feel afraid. This makes readers immediately think that the protests are a major threat to national order.

اندلعت احتجاجات دامية في جاكرتا وسورابايا وماكاسار، وتحولت إلى فوضى عارمة بعد إحراق مبنى البرلمان

indala‘at ihtijājāt dāmiyah fī Jākartā wa Sūrābāyā wa Mākāsār, wa taḥawwalat ilā fawḍā ‘ārimah ba‘da iḥrāqi mabnā al-barlamān.

“Bloody demonstrations broke out in Jakarta, Surabaya, and Makassar, and turned into massive chaos after the burning of the parliament building.”

The word تحولت indicates a shift from political activity to chaos, while فوضى عارمة emphasizes the severity of the chaos. There is no room in the language for peaceful protests or reasonable demands; everything is turned into violence.

The article also uses physical damage as the main evidence that the protests were illegitimate:

أضرم المتظاهرون النار في مبنى المجلس الإقليمي، ما أدى إلى مقتل ثلاثة أشخاص وإصابة آخرين

aḏrama al-mutazāhirūna an-nāra fī mabnā al-majlis al-iqlīmī, mā addā ilā maqtali thalāthati ashkhāṣ wa iṣābati ākharīn.

“The demonstrators set fire to the regional council building, killing three people and injuring others.”

The perpetrators of the violence are clearly identified (المتظاهرون), unlike Al Jazeera, which usually uses vague language. This method makes it clear what Okaz believes, namely that the people are the main cause of the violence.

People are still talking about the economic reasons behind the protests, but only a few:

اندلعت الاحتجاجات بسبب بدل السكن الشهري البالغ 50 مليون روبية، وهو ما يعادل نحو عشرة أضعاف الحد الأدنى للأجور

indala‘at al-iḥtijājāt bisababi badali as-sakan ash-shahrī al-bālighi khamsīna milyūna rūbiyyah, wa huwa mā yu‘ādilu naḥwa ‘ashara aḍ‘āfi al-ḥaddi al-adnā lil-ujūr.

“Demonstrations erupted over a monthly housing allowance of 50 million rupiah, equivalent to about ten times the minimum wage.”

Narratives of violence, arson, and anarchy quickly overshadowed rigorous informative discussions about economic considerations.

The report went on to state that the murder of a motorcycle taxi driver was linked to the escalation of protests:

توفي سائق دراجة نارية يعمل في توصيل الطعام بعد أن دهسته مركبة مدرعة للشرطة، ما فجر غضبًا شعبيًا واسعًا

tuwuffiyya sā‘iqu darrājatīn nāriyyah ya‘malu fī tawṣīli aṭ-ṭa‘ām ba‘da an dasat-hū markabah mudaḥṣa‘ah lil-shurṭah, mā fajjar ghaḍaban sha‘biyyā wāsi‘an.

“A food delivery motorcyclist was killed after being run over by an armored police vehicle, sparking widespread public outrage.”

Rather than creating this tragedy to fuel public emotion, Okaz did not do so as a structural criticism of the government.

At the end of the article, the security response was the main focus:

استخدمت قوات الأمن الغاز المسيل للدموع وخراطيم المياه لتفريق المحتجين، وسط استمرار أعمال العنف
istakhdamat quwwātu al-amn al-ghāza al-musīla lil-dumū‘ wa kharāṭīma al-miyāh litafriqi al-muḥtajjīn, wasaṭa istimrāri a‘māli al-‘unf.

“Security forces used tear gas and water cannons to disperse demonstrators amid ongoing violence.”

As a legitimate response to أعمال العنف, the use of state authority is commonplace.

Upon further examination, it appears that the article in Okaz is quite similar to the one in Asharq al-Awsaat. Pragmatic signals that foster moral harmony between readers and state authorities are provided through the repeated use of security terminology and the absence of the demonstrators' voices, especially in Okaz. Similar discursive tendencies can also be seen in Asharq al-Awsaat media.

B. Discursive Practice Analysis

Discourse practice is concerned with how texts are produced and consumed through institutional media mechanisms including editorial policies, journalistic practices, and source selection (Taufikurrohman et al., 2022). This study views these professional activities as institutionally anchored and ideologically saturated, rather than neutral, influencing the selective construction and normalization of social reality.

A type of intertextual diversity that functions inside rather than outside of current journalistic restrictions and geopolitical considerations is reflected in Al Jazeera Arabic's reporting, which incorporates official state sources, citizen testimonials, and visual allusions from social media. The frequent presence of different viewpoints and global framing methods allow for a discursive positioning that performs a critical media identity, even though editorial and regional constraints preclude overt critique of state authority (Figenschou & Ihlebaek, 2019). This analytical approach identifies ideological positioning as the constant direction, function, and impacts of journalistic routines in legitimizing or delegitimizing specific social actors and behaviors across texts rather than as an explicit divergence from these routines.

On the other hand, official sources and institutional narratives are heavily relied upon in Asharq Al-Awsat's activities. The voices of demonstrators appear muted and framed in comparison to the many quotes from government officials and security personnel that dominate the text output. This type of journalism, which seeks stability and elite consensus, is consistent with vertical intertextuality, which further reinforces the state as the primary marker.

Okaz's reporting is an example of the most normative and repressive discursive practices. Discourse formation is highly biased, relying heavily on official sources while ignoring the voices of protesters. Overall, the way these three media organizations use discourse reveals how ideological selection, intertextuality, and framing influence their coverage of demonstrations. In addition to covering demonstrations in Indonesia, Arab media use these channels to shape public perceptions of the legality of movements and the limits of government power.

C. Socio-Cultural Analysis

The Arab media coverage of protests in Indonesia reveals greater power dynamics and ideological agendas at the level of social practice. Mass gatherings are portrayed as potential threats to national security in the context of securitization rhetoric. When social demands are reduced to issues of law and order, this framework provides greater legitimacy to the state and makes it difficult to view protests as democratic manifestations (Balzacq et al., 2016).

When considering Arab media, it is important to note that different outlets reflect different social practices through their ideological perspectives. While careful not to explicitly challenge the government's legitimacy, Al Jazeera Arabic often depicts protests as a reaction to economic and social inequality in a fairly critical global media context. On the other hand, according to Hallin and Mancini (2017), Okaz and Asharq Al-Awsat both maintain a rhetoric that prioritizes elite consensus and stability, portraying demonstrators as disruptive forces that require security measures and administrative control.

CONCLUSION

This analysis shows how each outlet's reporting techniques and ideological stances are reflected in its coverage of Indonesian protests in Arabic. The results demonstrate how language not only conveys events but also influences opinions about the validity of protests and the power of the state, according to Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. Significant differences can be seen in the portrayal of social actors, evaluative language, and terminology at the textual level.

Al Jazeera creates a somewhat balanced position by presenting a variety of viewpoints and placing protests within the framework of socioeconomic problems. Asharq Al-Awsat reinforces the state as the main legitimate actor by framing protests in terms of institutional stability and legal order. Okaz uses language that is more normative and security-focused, delegitimizing protests with violent imagery and limiting the space available for opposing viewpoints. These divergent framings have broader implications for transnational audiences, as they intersect with geopolitical narratives about governance, stability, and protest in the Global South, shaping how Indonesian political dissent is understood beyond its national context.

Such contrasting media framing patterns have significant implications for how the transnational audience perceives political protest in Indonesia. For Arabophone audiences, these representations are likely to influence interpretations of protest legitimacy and governance, as well as perceptions of state authority - whether or not the protests can be seen as indicative of socio-political grievance or threat stability and order. In addition, these representations coincide with wider geopolitical stories in which 'protests' within the Global South are often narrativised according to binary concepts of order versus chaos and governance versus protest. With its preoccupation with security, legality or chaos, Arab media discourse can potentially support dominant global narratives that valorise state

‘security’ at the expense of civic contestation and certain forms of protest – depending upon wider ideological and geo-political leanings.

The consistency and evaluative patterning of linguistic and discursive choices across texts were used to separate differences in discursive practice from ideological positioning. When official sources or security-focused framing were used without deliberate evaluative loading, it was considered a standard journalistic approach. However, these techniques were perceived as forms of ideological delegitimization when they were frequently paired with negatively charged linguistic choices, threat-based framing, modalities expressing need or inevitability, and the marginalization of protest actors. As a result, Okaz's depiction of protests as a danger to national stability was found to be ideological not only because of the choice of sources but also because these sources were ingrained in recurrent evaluative patterns that normalized state control while viewing collective action as intrinsically disruptive.

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