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Framing Megawati: a framing analysis of Megawati Sukarnoputri in the Western news media, 1998-1999

Jo M. Coghlan
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**Framing Megawati:
A framing analysis of Megawati Sukarnoputri
in the Western news media, 1998-1999**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree**

DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

**JO MAREE COGLAN
B. A. (Hons) University of Wollongong**

**HISTORY AND POLITICS PROGRAM
2010**

DECLARATION

I, Jo Maree Coghlan, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The documents had not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

.....

Jo Maree Coghlan

9 March 2010

What difference does it make to the dead
the orphans, and the homeless
Whether the mad destruction is wrought
under the name of totalitarianism
or the holy name of liberty and democracy?

Mahatma Gandhi

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	American Broadcasting Company
ABRI	Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia
BAKOR	Bandung Student Coordinating Body
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CNRT	National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction
DPR	People's Representative Council
FAMI	Indonesian Student Action Front
FKMY	Yogyakarta Student Communication Forum
FKMS	Surabaya Student Communication Forum
FRETILIN	Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor
GNP	Gross National Product
HMI	Islamic Student Association
ICMI	Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INTERFET	The International Force for East Timor
ITB	The Bandung Institute of Technology
KAMI	Indonesian University Students Action Front
KAMMI	Indonesian Islamic Student Action Group
KNI	Komite Nasional Indonesia
KOSGORO	Multi-Purpose Cooperation Organisation
KORPRI	Civil Service Corps
KPU	Indonesian General Election Commission
MPR	People's Consultative Assembly
NBC	National Broadcasting Company
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NU	Nahdatual Ulama
PAN	National Mandate Party
PBB	Crescent Star Party
PDI	Indonesian Democratic Party
PDI-P	Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle
PK	Justice Party
PKB	National Awakening Party
PMKRI	Indonesian Catholic Student Association
PMII	Indonesian Muslim Student Movement
PNI	Indonesian Nationalist Party
PPP	United Development Party
PRD	Democratic People's Party
SMID	Indonesian Student Solidarity for Democracy
SOKSI	Central Organisation for Independent Employees
UN	United Nations
UNTAET	The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor

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ABSTRACT

In the tradition of Robert Entman, this framing analysis seeks to evaluate the arbitrary and subjective power of the news media in shaping public knowledge about political leadership. It does so by assessing how the Western news media framed reporting of Indonesian political leader, Megawati Sukarnoputri between 1998 and 1999: a period encompassing the end of the Suharto New Order and the election of the Wahid-Sukarnoputri government. Public knowledge is conceptualised as the way audiences broadly think about and structure their ideas, feelings, fears, and beliefs about political actors. The objective is to demonstrate that framing is universal and inescapable, and often to the determinant of the public sphere.

This thesis argues that the Western news media broadly framed Indonesia in the late stages of the 1990s as in ‘crisis’, in itself this is perhaps surprising. The Western media has a propensity to report the Third world as in perpetual political crisis, bordering at times on anarchy. In this case, it is argued that by framing Indonesia in crisis a ‘social reality’ emerged that ‘named’ certain ‘truths’ about Indonesian politics and its leaders. It hypothesises that embedded in this social reality, the New Order (Suharto and later Habibie) were framed as responsible for the state of economic and political crises and were judged as morally and politically unable to solve the problems being experienced in Indonesia. Captured within this ‘reality’ was a set of privileged meanings that imagined a Megawati presidency as the remedy and solution. Whether a future Megawati presidency was an advantage or disadvantage to Indonesia is not the scope of this study, rather it demonstrates how framing functioned to assemble emotional and political meaning about Megawati and her values, character and motivations during 1998-1999.

In examining how episodic, crisis and issue framing shaped social realities about Indonesia and its political leadership, this study also argues that frames reflected Western assumptions about Indonesia but more so about gendered post-colonial leadership. As a result, the frames produced in this period were stereotypical, oversimplified, decontextualised, reliant on the juxtapositioning of actors in binaries of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ and reflective of mediatised rituals of drama, tragedy and emotion. This resulted in the production of public knowledge about Indonesia generally, and Megawati specifically, that was discursive.