

# Government loudspeakers

## How Indonesian media amplifies the state's narrative towards the Free West Papua movement

**Abstract:** In early 2021, the Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security, Mahfud M D, made a statement that all armed actions in West Papua carried out by individuals or groups with the aim of liberating themselves are 'acts of terrorism'. This was the moment when the Indonesian government formally labelled the Free West Papua Movement as 'terrorist suspects' and 'terrorist organisations'. Indonesian online media responded by providing extensive coverage of Mahfud MD's statement and the excesses after this statement. Indonesian online media tend to use the term 'terrorist' in their reporting to label 'separatist' West Papua movements, those seeking independence or self-determination. The term 'terrorist' replaces Armed Criminal Group—*Kelompok Kriminal Bersenjata* (KKB). This study shows how six Indonesian mass media organisations frame cases of labelling terrorists against West Papuan pro-independence groups. This study, using quantitative framing analysis, examines framing conducted by six national online media which are dominant in Indonesia and have the most audience share: *Okezone*, *Detik*, *Kompas.com*, *Tribunnews*, *CNN Indonesia* and *Tirto*. This study also elaborates the experiences and perceptions of journalists who write on the issue of West Papua, particularly in terms of labelling West Papuan 'separatist' groups as 'terrorists' by the government and how the media frames West Papua. The findings of this study show that the media tend to only be a 'loudspeaker' for the government, use all discourses issued by the government, and even participate in using the term terrorist to replace the KKB.

**Keywords:** balance, digital media, discourse analysis, fairness, frame analysis, Free Papua Movement, independence, Indonesia, labelling, separatist, terrorist, terrorism, West Papua

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### Introduction

ON 29 April 2021, the Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security, Mahfud MD, made a statement that all armed actions in West Papua carried out by individuals or groups with the aim of liberating themselves are acts of terrorism. This was the moment when the Indonesian

government formally labelled the armed Free West Papua movement as ‘terrorist suspects’ and ‘terrorist organisations’. Indonesian media, especially online media, responded by providing extensive coverage of Mahfud MD’s statement and the excesses that occurred after this statement. However, as was the case with previous issues regarding West Papua, Indonesian media tends not to side with the West Papuan community, even reinforcing the colonial practices that occurred in West Papua and deepening the wounds for the West Papuan people (Tapsell, 2015; Anderson, 2015; Supriatma, 2013). The Indonesian media does not use a balanced frame, for example, in terms of explaining why and how acts of violence are the chosen path to fight for West Papuan independence. A genealogical explanation of the crisis in West Papua is almost absent in the majority of reports regarding the terrorist labelling of the Free West Papua Movement group (Adiprasetyo, 2020; Firman, 2019; Remotivi.id, 2014)

After being labelled as ‘terrorist’ by the Indonesian government, most Indonesian online media tend to use this term in their reporting to label West Papuan ‘separatist’ movements. The term terrorist replaces the term Armed Criminal Group—*Kelompok Kriminal Bersenjata* (KKB), which the government and the media routinely used. Previously, Setara Institute for Peace and Democracy chairperson Hendaridi (Indonesians often have a single name) has criticised the Indonesian government’s move against the KKB because he argues it would spark even greater human rights violations in the future. ‘Terrorists’ and the KKB build a pejorative tension, not only to the movement of the West Papuan people trying to fight for their independence, but also on Papuan society as a whole.

The West Papua movement is not a monolithic movement, but diversified and involves many wing organisations. The paths taken by the West Papua movement spanned from armed movements to diplomacy. In the *Mubes* and Papuan Congress in 2000, it was decided the Papuan People’s Assembly (*Majelis Rakyat Papua*—MRP) would be formed. This was a form of accommodation provided by the Indonesian government for the West Papuan people. In addition, another institution formed was the Presidium of the Papuan Council (*Presidium Dewan Papua*—PDP). This momentum then changed the resistance strategy, endorsing non-violent movements which use political lobbying, a more recognised and tolerant approach. The United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) was also established abroad. This momentum also provided more space for the communities, especially for West Papuan leaders, to be actively involved in the struggle for West Papuan independence through foreign channels (Pamungkas & Rusdiarti, 2017). After 2000, several large organisations emerged, and they declared themselves as the political wing of Free Papua Movement (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka*—OPM). In addition to the Free West Papua Movement, there are the National Committee for West Papua (*Komite Nasional Papua Barat*—KNPB), West Papua National Liberation (*Pembebasan Nasional Papua Barat*

—PNPB), the Federal Republic of West Papua (*Negara Republik Federal Papua Barat*—NRFPPB), and West Papua National Coalition for Liberation (WPNCL) (Ondawame & King, 2002).

The Indonesian media, which uses government statements as the primary reference in their reporting, reinforces the government's message to confront efforts to find a way for independence for the West Papuan community. Indonesian media participates and plays an active role in voicing a 'war on terror' against the West Papuan 'separatist' movement, and tends to ignore the context and the long struggle of the West Papuan community.<sup>1</sup>

The term KKB is not the first to be used by the Indonesian government to describe separatist groups. It is noted that KKB is a term that emerged in 2014, but only a few media outlets use that term. Meanwhile, the forerunner to the term KKB came from one of the separatist movements in Indonesia, namely the OPM (Irawan, 2019). The government at that time classified OPM based on their acts into KKB and KKSJ (Armed Separatist Criminal Group—*Kelompok Kriminal Seperatis Bersenjata*) (Alfianto, 2019). KKB is more commonly used by the police, while KKSJ is more commonly used by the Indonesian National Army—*Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI). However, these two classifications are now more commonly known as KKB. They identified groups that were active in the 'separatist' movement, especially from media coverage of crises or conflicts in the West Papua region.

The government's move to label the West Papuan separatist movement has received a response from many parties. Amnesty International, National Human Rights Committee—*Komite Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia* (Komnas HAM), many NGOs and academics state that labelling West Papuan separatist groups as terrorists will not only not solve the problem, but that it also has the potential to prolong the human rights violations that have been taking place in West Papua (Chaterine, 2021a; 2021b; Yahya, 2021; Robie, 2021)

The history of Indonesia itself has recorded acts of labelling terrorists against the independence movement, in the case of the Free Aceh Movement—*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM) under the government of Megawati Soekarnoputri. At that time, the government, through the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, stated that GAM was a terrorist group that needed to be fought through military means (Ronnie, 2016). Later, there was a soft diplomacy or non-military approach that accompanied the military approach. There were indications of serious human rights violations after the military pressure that was carried out during that period. President Jokowi admitted severe human rights violations on 11 January 2023 (Setneg, 2023).

The careless labelling of terrorists has significant implications, as happened when the United States raised the 'war on terror' flag after the 9/11 attacks and was later followed by other countries in the world, sparking negative sentiment

towards Islamic groups as a whole (Appleby, 2010). An imaginary relationship is created between a specific entity and terrorists, which has implications for alienating groups from the majority.

### **Indonesian media and West Papua: Under the shadow of the state**

Previous studies have revealed how Indonesian media are very unequal in representing West Papua and the West Papuan community. An incident occurred on 16 August 2019 in Surabaya, when the Islamic Defender Fronts (FPI), Communication Forum for Retired Children of the Indonesian Military/Police (FKP-PI) and Pancasila Youth (PP) attacked the West Papuan student dormitory in Surabaya, and resulted in days of demonstrations. The Indonesian media failed to give a proportional voice for the victims, and the West Papuan community (Adiprasetyo, 2020). What happened in 2019 is a casuistic example of how Indonesian media rely on the primary source of information for their news from the government, its apparatus, and the police.

The imbalance of representation that occurs in relation to reporting on West Papua cannot be separated from Indonesia's treatment of ethnic groups and the region of West Papua. Many scholars have shown how Indonesia has implemented various approaches that require violence in overcoming the various resistance of the West Papuan community, including the intention to hold a referendum on their independence (Brundige, et al., 2004; Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2013). Examples of genocidal acts are listed: killings, causing serious bodily and mental harm, the deliberate infliction of conditions of life calculated to cause the destruction of a group, and the forcible removal of children to another group. Whereas previous examinations of the issue have failed to prove intent on the part of the Indonesian government—a necessary prerequisite under the Convention—this article finds that such intent exists. The authors show that West Papua has suffered a military occupation since 1962–63 under which the West Papuan people have been treated as the enemy by the Indonesian armed forces. Explicit and implicit government policy has been consistently directed towards countering and eliminating Papuan attempts to create an independent state for their nation or enjoy political freedom on a par with other Indonesians. In this tightly controlled situation genocidal acts have been undertaken as government policy, effectively thwarting the Papuan nationalists in the era when information was emerging from the provinces (King, 2004; Kirsch, 2010; Lawson, 2017). The approach taken to succeed in exploiting natural resources and implementing the Indonesian 'developmental' project in Papua with a centralised economic vision is to support the economy of Java (Macleod, 2016; Supriatma, 2013; Robie, 2012).

To hide its militaristic approach, the Indonesian government imposes strict restrictions on Indonesian and international journalists covering West Papua (Leadbeater, 2008). Journalists are not given access to cover crises, especially

those related to separatist movements and local politics (Perrottet & Robie, 2011). Perrottet and Robie (2011) highlighted in their notes from a decade ago that reporting in West Papua was extremely dangerous. This was reaffirmed by Robie (2017) in a report from the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day conference in Jakarta. West Papua is a media ‘blind spot’ mostly because international journalists have extremely restricted access to the region (Perrottet & Robie, 2011; Leadbeater, 2008; Robie, 2014, 2017, 2020).

As a result, news that stigmatises and frames the West Papuan community is unconsciously ingrained in public thinking. This news changed the readers’ mindset, and they thought that West Papua was a region full of problems (Chao, 2021). This kind of reporting creates a lot of stereotypes and framing without raising the actual issue of West Papua. This labelling is increasingly ingrained along with the official statement by the Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security, Mahfud MD, regarding the designation of the KKB as a terrorist group or organisation (Anakotta, 2021).

### **Frames and media issues**

Until now, studies on West Papua, especially how the Indonesian media covered the West Papua crisis, have never been a study that is considered important by Indonesian communication scholars (Adiprasetyo, 2022b). It was recorded that there were only two Indonesian-language articles in Indonesian-based communication scientific journals that discussed West Papuan media (Adiprasetyo, 2022a).

Unlike the previous study conducted by Adiprasetyo (2020), this study elaborates on the experiences and perceptions of journalists who write on the issue of West Papua, particularly in terms of labelling West Papuan separatist groups as terrorists by the government and how the media frames West Papua. It is hoped that in-depth insight into the experiences and perceptions of journalists in writing about West Papua issues can answer why Indonesian media tend to report on the issue of West Papua unequally. This study also examines how much influence the government’s point of view has had on media reporting after the Indonesian state-labelled West Papua "separatist" groups as terrorist organisations.

Frame analysis is commonly used in conflict and racism analysis (Adiprasetyo, 2020; Ben-Porath & Shaker, 2010; Poindexter et al., 2003). However, the initial studies and explorations of framing analysis were focused on politics, such as those carried out by Iyengar (1991; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) and Entman (Entman, 1993). However, the study of framing analysis has been elaborated by many social, communication and media scholars in various fields, such as terrorism (Norris et al., 2003; Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2008), disasters (Merry, 2015; Haider-Markel et al., 2007; Entman, 1991) and public health (Adiprasetyo & Larasati, 2020). Framing analysis can also show the sentiment towards the government in crises (Adiprasetyo & Larasati, 2020).

This study uses quantitative frame analysis. Quantitative frame analysis is divided into holistic and device-oriented techniques (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2016). Device-oriented techniques rely on indicators based on frame elements containing certain words (Entman, 1991) or structured arguments (McComas & Shanahan, 1999). This study extends the investigation of the previous crisis framing on depictions of the West Papua issue in Indonesian media (Adiprasetyo, 2020). It is intended that by continuing to use the analytical tools from research conducted within the area of West Papua, the findings of this study could be compared with previous studies that demonstrate how the Indonesian media portrays the West Papua problem in terms of its dynamics.

There are limitations in this study, mainly because it does not adopt a qualitative approach in framing analysis. Qualitative framing analysis with systematic techniques (Dijk, 2011; Pan & Kosicki, 1993) can capture the details of the framing process in syntactical, thematic, rhetorical and script structures dimensions. Meanwhile, the hermeneutic-qualitative procedure analysis provides more space for interpretation in frame analysis. However, this study did not adopt qualitative analysis due to its limitations in dealing with large amounts of data. In addition, qualitative frame analysis cannot capture the big pattern of an event's number of frames in a certain period.

By analysing the news regarding the labelling of terrorists against the West Papuan separatist group and a series of events within one week after the statement, we can see how the Indonesian media choose what they show and what they remove from the story, as well as whom they use as sources in their news, and who or what they do not show (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

Using quantitative framing analysis, this study will examine framing conducted by six national online media which are dominant in Indonesia and have the most audience: *Okezone*, *Detik*, *Kompas.com*, *Tribunnews*, *CNN Indonesia* and *Tirto*. The selection of these six media was also based on previous studies (Adiprasetyo, 2020) so that the dynamics of each media in framing the West Papua crisis were obtained.

## **Methodology**

This study uses quantitative framing analysis with in-depth interviews with six informants and Indonesian journalists who have regularly written about West Papua issues in the last five years in Indonesia. The selection of informants was not only based on the quantity of news reports on the West Papua issue. It was also considered based on their understanding of the West Papua issue and how the media reported it. The identity of the informants is made anonymous in this article because some of their statements will be sensitive and will put them at risk in covering West Papua onwards. Interviews were conducted in the 2021-2022 period:

- A. Indonesian online media journalist
- B. Indonesian online media journalist
- C. Indonesian online media journalist
- D. Indonesian online media journalist
- E. West Papuan local media journalist
- F. West Papua correspondent

This study uses quantitative framing analysis with the combination of holistic and device-oriented techniques, with the following variables:

#### *News sources*

Framing is the consequence of how news sources frame an issue, with journalists and news organisations adapting to the frame, renegotiating it, or reframing it depending on logic and the content that will be shown (De Vreese, 2004). In this study, the percentage of news coverage originating from news items relating to West Papua issues that appeared in six Indonesian online media, seven days after the moment that the Indonesian government formally labelled the armed Free West Papua Movement as terrorist suspects and terrorist organisations.

#### *Point of view: Indonesian government and West Papuan community*

Several studies show that in any conflict-related news reporting, there will be a dominant tone, depending on the choice of media, habits and the influence of the media system in the production of the news text (Pfau et al., 2015; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; Dunaway, 2013; positive, or neutral tone in campaign news coverage. Much of the extant literature suggests, to some extent, the negativity bias often seen in political news stems from profit making objectives. This article asserts that news outlet ownership structures and economic incentives, coupled with political context, influence the likelihood of positive, neutral, or negative tone in campaign news. The findings presented herein suggest that corporate, chain, and nonlocal ownership all have consequences for campaign news tone. (Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007). In this study, the news will be examined on how the point of view of the government or the West Papuan community has been adopted in Indonesian online media coverage after the statement by the Indonesian government labelling West Papuan separatist group terrorists.

The scale of 1 (Indonesian government's point of view), 0 (neutral), -1 (West Papuan community's point of view)

#### *Topic clusters*

Topic clusters are used to find specific discussion groups thematically. The frame of topic clusters is determined based on the words (Entman, 1991) and the structure of the arguments (McComas & Shanahan, 1999) in the news. The codification process is carried out inductively.

### *Crisis frame*

An and Gower (2009) demonstrate what frames are included in the news and used by newspapers in the news from national media on crisis communication throughout 2006. Previously, several sources have examined the prevalent news frames. Neuman, Just and Crigler (1992) explore many sorts of frames primarily used in American newspaper news: conflict, economic implications, human effect, and death. The study of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) found five main news frames: attribution of guilt, conflict, economic implications, and human interest in five kinds of national newspapers and television news during the 1997 Dutch presidency of the European Council. Meanwhile, An and Gower (2009) accepted five frames that Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) had previously discovered.

This study used the typology frameworks that An and Gower (2009) developed to analyse crises and has also been used by Adiprasetyo (2020) to research the issue of West Papua in media.

### **Frame of human interest**

This frame focuses on the emotional responses of individuals to an event, topic, or problem (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). This frame explores the psychological effect on individuals in a crisis scenario, prompting the reader or audience to demonstrate a variety of wrong actions (Padin, 2005). Cho and Gower (2006) demonstrate that this framing affects the reader's emotional reaction, affecting the reader's determination of guilt and responsibility in a crisis scenario.

### **Frame of conflict**

This frame depicts disputes and conflicts between people, groups, or organisations. According to Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992), the US news media often employs conflict. According to Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), this frame is the second most often employed in the news.

### **Frame of morality**

This frame situates events, situations, or challenges within moral, social, and religious teachings. Neuman, Just and Crigler (1992) demonstrate that moral frameworks are typically employed indirectly by journalists via quotes or inferences rather than directly due to the varied objectivities associated with journalistic activities.

### **Frame of economy**

This frame describes an occurrence, crisis, or issue that has economic ramifications for a person, group, organisation, or nation. Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992) define it as a broad framework in the news. The enormous effect of an event is a significant news value, and economic ramifications are often regarded as significant (Graber & Dunaway, 2018).



### **Frame of attribution of responsibility**

This frame is defined as connecting responsibility for finding solutions or solving problems by the government and individuals or groups (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). According to Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), this frame is the most prevalent among serious publications.

### **The existence of each frame in the news will be measured on a nominal**

The scale of 1 (any) or 0 (none).

### **Population: Corpus of news**

This study's population comprises 273 news items relating to West Papua issues that appeared in six Indonesian online media seven days after the moment when the Indonesian government formally labelled the armed Free West Papua Movement as terrorist suspects and terrorist organisations.

### **Coding practices**

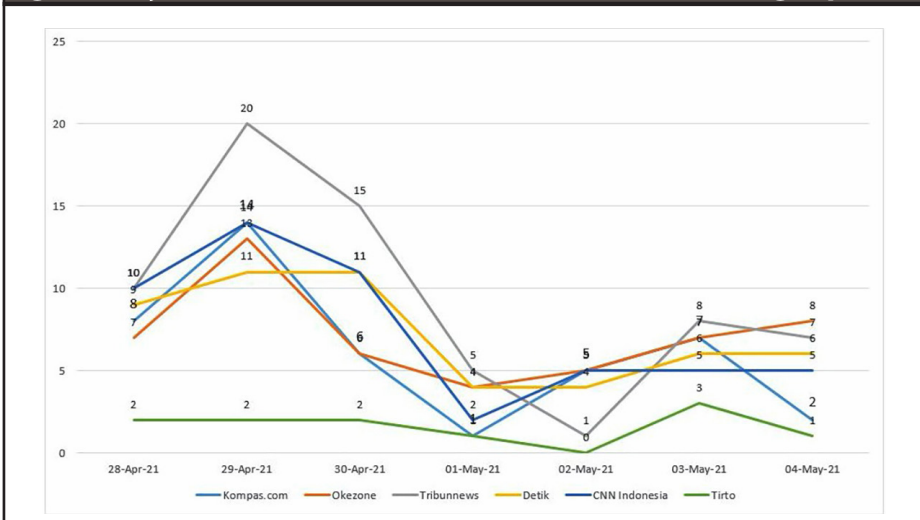
This study used two coders to conduct a reliability test (with the person who did the coding to determine the reliability of the test results). Each coder separately coded every article.

Due to its greater adaptability, the Krippendorff alpha (Krippendorff, 2011) procedure was used to check the reliability of the content analysis. Krippendorff's alpha (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007) can account for chance agreement, various coding levels (nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio), numerous coding categories, varying sample sizes, and missing data (Krippendorff, 2005). In order for Krippendorff's alpha to be considered trustworthy,  $q = 0.0125$  and the alpha must be greater than 0.7000 (Krippendorff, 2011; Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). The calculation for the frames variables' dependability using version 25 of the SPSS application software reveals an alpha of 0.8255. Based on the findings of the reliability test, it is possible to infer that the study's coding procedure is trustworthy. Every coding difference is discussed to get a definitive decision.

### **Discussion**

*Tribunnews* has reported the most on the West Papuan independence movement, a week after the statement by the Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security, Mahfud MD. *Tribunnews* published 66 news, followed by *CNN Indonesia* with 52, *Detik* with 51, *Okezone* with 50, *Kompas.com* with 43, and *Tirto* with only 11 (Figure 1).

Based on previous studies, *Tribunnews* is the most excessive media in Indonesia in providing events or incidents about West Papua (Adiprasetyo, 2020). *Tribunnews* itself has a track record of producing an excessive number of reports on issues, presenting shallow reports, and even trivialising their news (Adiprasetyo & Wibowo, 2019). So it can be understood that Mahfud MD's statement and the

**Figure 1: Dynamics of number of WPM terrorist labelling reports**

excesses given after the statement were used as much as possible by *Tribunnews* to gain publication. Conventional online media in Indonesia, including *Detik* as its pioneer, generally have publication characteristics that rely on quantity. So even though, in general, the number of reports is slightly behind compared to *Tribunnews*, it can be seen that the quantity of news related to the labelling of West Papuan separatist movements as terrorists is relatively high.

Online media in Indonesia are very thirsty for publication, the majority of them, especially media such as *Tribunnews*, *Okezone* and *Detik*, are really after quantity. It is very understandable that the news is quite massively reproduced on the issue of the Menkopolkam (Mahfud MD) statement. However, we can see how the quality of the news. The majority only rely on official government statements, they are very one-sided, and many journalists do not even really understand the situation in Papua, but they still write the news. (A, interview)

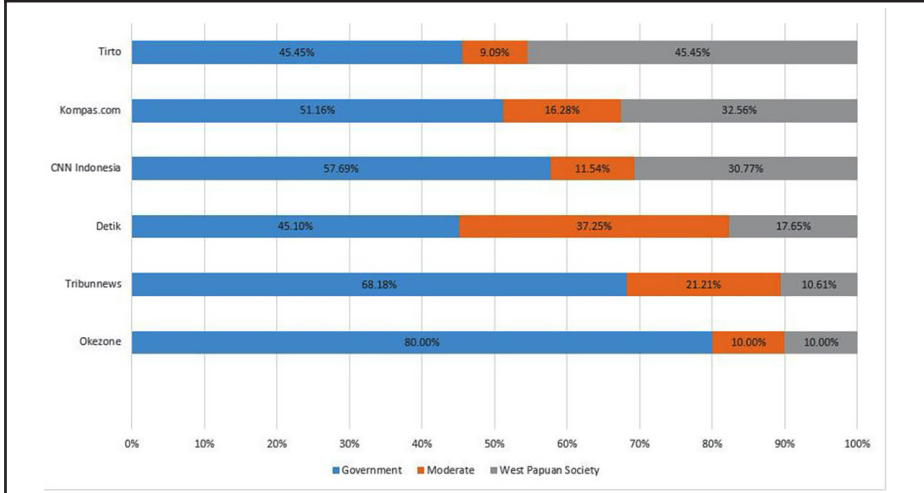
In general, including in other reports, media editorial has a certain hierarchy in prioritising sources. Many media, especially those pursuing quantity and relying on fast journalism, prioritise sources from the government and ministries. So when there is news such as the Papua issue and Mahfud MD's statement, they tend to abuse the minister's name as a title. In the end, they also tend to ignore other sources. (B, interview)

Unlike other media, *Tirto* still relies on editorial characteristics that they echo, relying on 'precision journalism'. The implication is that the articles produced by *Tirto* tend to be longer than other media news publications related to the West Papuan separatist movement. However, the reports produced by *Tirto* are far behind in quantity compared to other media.

There are several media, including *Tirto*, which provide space for reporting on Papua, although this can only be done with limited resources. We can also understand this, considering the limited amount of funds, access and quality correspondence in the field. Covering the Papua issue is expensive. Not only that, not many journalists know and understand the issue of Papua well. (E, interview)

### The media point of view

**Figure 2: The media point of view on WPM 'terrorist' label**



Based on the six media analysed in this study, in proportion, *Okezone* (80.00 percent) reports most on the issue of labelling a terrorist from the government's point of view. In second place are *Tribunnews* (57.69 percent) and *CNN Indonesia* (both 57.69 percent). While the media that reported the most with a moderate point of view is *Detik* (37.25 percent) (Figure 2).

Despite having the least coverage, *Tirto* gives the most significant proportion of the West Papuan community's point of view compared to other media. *Tirto's* reporting, which took the West Papuan community's point of view (45.45 percent), had the same percentage as *Tirto's* reporting, which took the Indonesian government's point of view (45.45 percent). *Tirto* is the most balanced media.

*Tirto* has a pretty good track record in reporting on Papua issues. There used to be people like Zen RS, Fahri Salam, and Dieqy. Even though they have moved from *Tirto*, their legacy to the journalists in *Tirto* is still felt in the editorial room. They also have access to quality journalists in Papua with good standards. What other media and journalists do not have . . . *Tirto* also has a track record of being very critical of the government, especially in guarding human rights issues. (A, interview)

*Kompas.com* ranks second as the media that reports the most terrorist labelling of the West Papuan separatist movement from the point of view of the West Papuan community (32.56 percent). The gap between the reporting and the point of view of the West Papuan community owned by *Kompas.com* and *Tirto* is quite wide for nearly 13 percent of the total coverage. *Kompas.com* provides space for the government's point of view in more than half of its total coverage (51.16 percent).

*Kompas* as a group company was able to survive for decades in the landscape of the Indonesian media industry, passing through various regimes and even surviving the very repressive New Order era, one of which was due to a compromising strategy. Indeed, if we look at the analysis conducted, the focus is on *Kompas.com*, a different media than its parent, *Kompas* daily or *Kompas.id*. However, we can see that the compromises still exist. They do not want to be too vis a vis the government on a sensitive issue like Papua. (C, interview)

*CNN Indonesia* is in third place, under *Tirto* and *Kompas*, with 30.77 percent of all news being from the point of view from the West Papuan community. Compared to *Tirto* and *Kompas.com*, *CNN Indonesia* provides the most space for reporting from the government's point of view (57.69 percent).

Three media at least provide space for the West Papuan community's point of view in their reporting, namely *Detik* (17.65 percent), *Tribunnews* (10.61 percent) and *Okezone* (10.00 percent). *Okezone*, which provides the least space for the West Papuan community's point of view, provides a huge space for the government's point of view, which is as much as 80.00 percent of the total coverage. While *Tribunnews* provides space for the government's point of view as much as 68.18 percent.

Media such as *Tribunnews* and *Okezone* are very unreliable. In fact, they can produce news from only one source. Regarding the issue of Mahfud MD's statement, it is not much different. They only re-narrated the minister's statement. Just pointing at the recorder, transcripts are cut into pieces and made into the news. So there is a lot of news with the same viewpoint as the government. Their journalism standards are shallow. (D, interview)

The media is not critical, normalising Indonesian society to call the struggle for Free Papua terrorists. Some of them decided to do aggressive physical attacks (rather than diplomacy), but we can see minimal effort from these media to carry out the real problem with the big picture. So that people also do not understand what the dynamics are like. (E, interview)

Even though *Detik* provides little space for reporting from the point of view of the West Papuan community, the space he gives for reporting from the government's point of view is not as much as *CNN Indonesia* and *Kompas.com*. *Detik* gives 45.10

percent of its total coverage space for reporting from the government's point of view, the lowest percentage compared to the other five media. *Detik* provides quite a lot of space for reporting with a moderate and neutral point of view between the two parties, namely as much as 37.25 percent of the total news. The percentage of reports with a moderate point of view from *Detik* far exceeds the number of moderate and neutral reports from other media.

### Distinction between frames: Topic clusters

**Table 1: Topic clusters of the news of WPM terrorist labelling**

Media	State sovereignty and Indonesian nationalism	West Papua condition	Terrorism and KKB threat	Human rights and democracy	Autonomy legislation	Verification of disinformation	Others
Kompas.com	9.30%	20.93%	27.91%	23.26%	11.63%	4.65%	2.33%
Okezone	4.00%	16.00%	70,00%	4.00%	0.00%	4.00%	2.00%
Tribunnews	6.06%	19.70%	42.42%	25.76%	0,00%	0,00%	6.06%
Detik	19.61%	17.65%	25.49%	25.49%	0,00%	3.92%	7.84%
CNN Indonesia	13.46%	26.92%	48.08%	9.62%	0,00%	0,00%	1.92%
Tirto	0,00%	0,00%	54.55%	45.45%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%

It is straightforward to understand that *Okezone*, which provides the most space for the government's point of view, is very focused on the topic of 'terrorism' and the threat of the KKB against Indonesia in 70 percent of its coverage. In general, the other five media also raised the topic of 'terrorism' and the KKB's threat to Indonesia as their dominant topic in their reporting. Successively *Tirto* (54.55 percent), *CNN Indonesia* (48.08 percent), *Tribunnews* (42.42 percent), *Kompas.com* (27.91 percent) and *Detik* (25.49 percent) provide space for topics related to terrorism and the KKB threat.

*Tirto*, even though it has significant coverage on the topic of 'terrorism' and the threat of the KKB, it provides ample space for the topic of human rights and democracy, namely as much as 45.45 percent of the total coverage. This number places *Tirto* as the media that pays the most attention to human rights and democracy compared to the other five media. Although it certainly has to be considered, *Tirto* itself only has a limited coverage compared to other media.

*Tirto*'s great attention to the West Papua issue in this study resonates with the findings of Remotivi's study, which ranks *Tirto* as the most inclusive media in 2020 (Remotivi, 2021). *Tirto* is recognised as media advocating for the rights of marginalised groups in Indonesia (Adiprasetyo & Larasati, 2018).

Despite having a good track record, *Tirto* itself has recently experienced a decline in the quality of its publications. This is evidenced by the fact that

*Tirto* did not discuss the questions of sovereignty or the underlying causes of conflict and violence in West Papua in the issue of ‘labeling terrorism’ by the Indonesian government. Hypothetically, this is caused by several things, namely changes in media ownership and management, which result in changes in the editorial vision; progressive and experienced journalists such as Zen RS, Fahri Salam, Dieqy Hasbi Widhana, Mawa Kresna have moved to other media such as Project Multatuli, *Narasi* and *Detik*; also limited resources, especially for coverage outside Java.

Five media apart from *Tirto* also provide space for the topic of human rights and democracy, but with less significant percentages. *Tribunnews* with 25.76 percent of the total news, *Detik* 25.49 percent, *Kompas.com* 23.26 percent, *CNN Indonesia* 9.62 percent, and the least is *Okezone* with only 4.00 percent. The topic of human rights and democracy in the West Papua issue is a sensitive matter considering repeated human rights violations. In Catahu Pusaka’s 2021 final records, there were 30 cases of human rights violations in the Land of West Papua (Catahu, 2022). One example that has caught the public’s attention is the torture case of Steven Yadohamang. This 24-year-old disabled youth was yelled at and his head was stomped on by two members of the Air Force (Pomau) military police in Merauke Regency, West Papua, on 26 July 2021. Another case also happened to environmental defenders and indigenous people’s rights. This was experienced by Markus Baba Wehu (31 years) with his brother Finsensius Katamote Wehu (24 years) in Jair District, Boven Digoel Regency, West Papua, on 25 January 2021 (Laia, 2022). Violence and human rights violations occurred in line with the presence and expansion of investment and the project’s economic and industrial development dominated by corporations and capital owners. These activities directly affect the living space of indigenous and local communities (Catahu, 2022).

*CNN Indonesia* raised the main topic of the West Papua conditions are more dominant compared to other media. A proportion of 26.92 percent of *CNN Indonesia*’s coverage regarding the labelling of West Papuan terrorists raised the topic of West Papua conditions. Only *Tirto* did not raise the topic of West Papua conditions on the news of their labelling West Papuan terrorists. After *CNN Indonesia*, *Kompas.com* (20.93 percent), *Tribunnews* (19.70 percent), *Detik* (17.65 percent) and *Okezone* (16.00 percent) raised the topic of the West Papua conditions in their reporting.

*Detik* (19.61 percent) and *CNN Indonesia* (13.46 percent) are two media that provide space for reporting on the labelling of West Papuan terrorists on the topic of state sovereignty and Indonesian nationalism, which is more than 10 percent. Only *Tirto* did not raise the topic of state sovereignty and Indonesian nationalism in their news of labelling West Papuan terrorists, while other media only gave minimal space or just under 10 percent.

*Kompas.com* is the only media that provides space for the topic of the regional autonomy legislation process in reporting on the labelling of West Papuan terrorists. Meanwhile, three media provide space for news containing verification of disinformation spreading on social media related to the labelling of West Papuan terrorists by the government, namely *Kompas.com* (4.65 percent), *Okezone* (4.00 percent) and *Detik* (3.92 percent). Other topics colour the reporting on the labelling of West Papuan terrorists. However, they are not too significant and are partial information, not integrated into other discourses produced by the media coverage.

Soeharto's regime ended in 1998 and in 2001 the Indonesian government granted exceptional autonomy to a number of provinces, including Papua and West Papua. Since 2002, the special autonomy funding for West Papua has increased by a factor of five, from IDR 1.38 trillion (US\$95.5 million) to IDR 8.3 trillion (Malik, 2019). However, the discourse of the correlation between autonomy and conflict has never been a mainstream topic in news coverage about West Papua, including the path of violence taken by several organisations demanding West Papua independence and the labelling of terrorists by the Indonesian government.

The most fundamental problem with the poor media reporting on the issue of Papua is that there are not many, or even no, journalists dedicated to covering the issue of Papua. Understanding of the issues and conflicts that occur in Papua is very low. The thing that makes them greatly simplify issues and conflicts and is very much reflected in how their news is written. (F, interview)

The allocation of funds, time and energy to understand the Papua issue is quite high. They need to read a lot of literature. This is because the issue of Papua is not transparent, so they have to access information and study the conflict carefully. This is difficult because the Indonesian media tend not to be able to provide that space and time for journalists. So even if there are journalists who dedicate themselves to the issue of Papua, it usually comes from their personal encouragement. (D, interview)

### **Crisis frame**

The most dominant crisis frame in the news regarding the labelling of West Papuan terrorists is the conflict frame (Table 2) All of *Tirto's* news has a conflict frame in its reporting. Consecutively the most significant percentage after *Tirto* in the conflict frame are *Detik* (96.08 percent), *CNN Indonesia* (94.23 percent), *Tribunnews* (90.91 percent), *Kompas.com* (90.70 percent) and *Okezone* (86 percent).

Attribution of Responsibility is the second most dominant frame, where *Tirto* is also the most dominant media in percentage (90.91 percent) compared to other media. However, this was greatly influenced by the amount of *Tirto's* coverage, which was very limited. Consecutive the largest percentage after *Tirto*

**Table 2: Crisis frames in the news of WPM terrorist labelling**

Media	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economic	Attribution of Responsibility
Kompas.com	37.21%	90.70%	74.42%	6.98%	69.77%
Okezone	24.00%	86.00%	54.00%	4.00%	50.00%
Tribunnews	33.33%	90.91%	68.18%	12.12%	74.24%
Detik	29.41%	96.08%	54.90%	3.92%	70.59%
CNN Indonesia	9.62%	94.23%	36.54%	3.85%	73.08%
Tirto	18.18%	100.00%	63.64%	9.09%	90.91%

in the Attribution of Responsibility frame are *Tribunnews* (74.24 percent), *CNN Indonesia* (73.08 percent), *Detik* (70.59 percent), *Kompas.com* (69.77 percent) and *Okezone* (50.00 percent).

*Kompas.com* reporting has a large morality frame when compared to other media, with 74.42 percent, successively after *Kompas.com*, *Tribunnews* (68.18 percent), *Tirto* (63.64 percent), *Detik* (54.90 percent), *Okezone* (54.00 percent) and *CNN Indonesia* (36.54 percent). *Kompas.com* also provides ample space for Human Interest frames when compared to other media, with 37.21 percent, successively after *Kompas.com*, *Tribunnews* (33.33 percent), *Detik* (29.41 percent), *Okezone* (24.00 percent), *Tirto* (18.18 percent) and *CNN Indonesia* are the only media that have a human interest frame in reporting related to the labelling of West Papuan terrorists below 10 percent (9.62 percent).

The lack of a Human Interest frame shows that not many perspectives are used in framing that accommodates the local West Papuan community. The perspective tends to use the helicopter view in reviewing the conflicts and violence in West Papua. There is no adequate explanation from the point of view of the local community regarding the long history of the independence struggle of the West Papuan separatist movement.

Only *Tribunnews* provides space for an economic framework above 10 percent of the total news relating to the labelling of West Papuan terrorists, with 12.12 percent. Successively after *Tribunnews*, namely *Tirto* (9.09 percent), *Kompas.com* (6.98 percent), *Okezone* (4.00 percent), *Detik* (3.92 percent) and *CNN Indonesia* (3.85 percent).

Based on economic statistical data, in the big picture West Papua is enjoying significant economic development. Statistics indicate that the yearly economic growth of the then two provinces<sup>2</sup> in West Papua is greater than the national average of 5.27 percent in the third quarter of 2018. Papua Province increased by 6.76 percent during that time span, and West Papua Province by 6.89 percent. Even so,



in Papua Province, 27.62 percent of the population, or around 917,681 individuals, are poor. Currently, 25 percent of the population of West Papua Province, or around 214,000 people, are poor. This figure is quite manageable, considering that from 2012 to 2017, the government lowered the poverty rate in Papua Province by 3.4 percent and West Papua Province by 1.94 percent. The national poverty rate increased by 1.84 percent during the same time frame. The perspective that tends not to be elaborated by the media on the economic aspects of West Papua limits public understanding of the conflicts that occur in West Papua. Many parties tend to blame economic disparities as the starting point of the conflict (Malik, 2019). However, the problems that seem real are not only related to this but mainly to the haunting track record of violence and militarism, ethnicity and racism, and other horizontal issues. Issues that are also not well elaborated by the media.

### Conclusion

The labelling of West Papuan groups as ‘terrorists’ fighting for their independence by the government certainly has severe implications for the current and future situation and conflict in West Papua. However, the findings of this study show that the media tend only to be a loudspeaker for the government, use dominant discourses issued by the government, and even participate in using the term terrorist to replace the KKB, which is no less problematic, shows how the media in Indonesia is under the shadow of the state.

We can see exceptional cases where media like *Tirto* try to elaborate and problematise Mahfud MD’s statement by explaining the context of the conflict in West Papua. However, *Tirto*’s coverage is not the most dominant. Reporting on West Papua after Mahmud MD’s general statement is dominated by reports with partial facts, without explanation with sufficient context.

Looking at the hierarchy of influence theory described by Shoemaker & Reese (2014), various variables can influence how an event is framed in the news (Adiprasetyo, 2015). Apart from individual journalist factors, there are other layers, namely media routines, patterns of media organisation, and other social institutions linked to the media and our social system, that influence why the media has certain patterns in producing content.

The Indonesian media are very concerned about the number of reader clicks, which makes them very focused on the quantity of news (Adiprasetyo & Wibowo, 2020), which can be seen in this case in media such as *Tribunnews* and *Okezone*. These media simply quoted statements from government sources without questioning them and naively made them a major part of the story.

This is exacerbated by media editorial in Indonesia tending to place high priority on statements from government officials. Things that are part of their unwritten editorial policy. They often ignore or do not provide proper space for other sources, especially the voices of the West Papuan community.

The concentration of reporters in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, also leads to reporting from reporters not located in or never having visited West Papua, potentially reducing empathy and understanding of human rights or economic aspects in their reporting. The quality and ethics of journalists are an issue in reporting on West Papua, considering that journalists do not tend to cover the issue of labelling a ‘terrorist’ comprehensively. Elements that form the background of violence in Papua, such as militarism, racism and other horizontal issues, are not properly discussed in the news.

The government also severely restricts media access in West Papua, outside of the position of the national media, which is highly concentrated in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. Hence, the media and journalists must take significant risks while expending considerable resources to cover West Papua.

It is necessary to develop a more systematic and consolidated strategy for the national media to cover West Papua better. Continuing the banality of journalism in reporting on West Papua will only worsen the condition of democracy and deepen the wounds of the people of West Papua.

### Notes

1. The term ‘separatist’ is contested in a Pacific context because many researchers and journalists argue that Indigenous Melanesian people cannot be ‘separated’ from the Land of Papua. They prefer to use the term ‘pro-independence’ (See for example: Cass, 2023; Robie, 2014, 2021; O’Sullivan, 2021). O’Sullivan stresses the right to self-determination was reaffirmed on 13 September 2007 ‘when the UN adopted the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, confirming the human rights affirmed in all previous international declarations, covenants and agreements belonged to Indigenous peoples as much as anybody else. It confirmed the right to self-determination belongs to everybody . . . At the time, 143 UN member states voted for the declaration, including the major European colonial powers of Britain, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands [and including Indonesia]. There were 11 abstentions, but four states voted against—Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. They were especially concerned about the scope of Article 28(2) which deals with compensation for confiscated or other dishonestly acquired land:

Unless otherwise freely agreed upon by the peoples concerned, compensation shall take the form of lands, territories and resources equal in quality, size and legal status or of monetary compensation or other appropriate redress.

‘New Zealand was worried this article would justify returning much more Māori land than was already occurring under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840 Treaty of Waitangi) settlements.’

2. On 25 July 2022, three laws regarding the establishment of new provinces in Papua were enacted. These laws are *Law Number 14 of 2022*, concerning the Formation of South Papua Province, *Law Number 15 of 2022*, concerning the Formation of Central Papua Province, and *Law Number 16 of 2022*, concerning the Formation of Papua Pegunungan Province. With the enactment of these three laws, Papua now consists of five provinces, namely Papua Province, with its capital in Jayapura, West Papua

Province, with its capital in Manokwari, South Papua Province, with its capital in Merauke; Central Papua Province, with its capital in Nabire, and Papua Pegunungan Province with its capital in Jayawijaya.

The Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR) and the Indonesian government argue that there are several urgencies in the establishment of these three new provinces in Papua, including providing alternative accelerated services to the communities in each prospective province, enabling more focused development with closer control, efforts to create effective and efficient governance, strengthening the existence and role of indigenous and cultural areas as social capital, considering the land area of each prospective province in relation to the suboptimal level of services, resulting in development disparities and inequalities, and the presence of new autonomous regions to address development challenges and improve the welfare of the people (Setkab, 2022).

However, many parties, including civil society organisations (CSOs) and academics, argue that the division of Papua's territory did not involve the participation of Papua's societies. They argue that the decision was solely based on Jakarta's point of view and interests (Iswinaro, 2022). Protests against the division of Papua took place in various cities, including Jayapura, Wamena, Yogyakarta, and Denpasar, and were met with excessive use of force by the police. There were even some protesters who were injured due to the use of water cannons. Seven activists were also arrested and taken to the Jayapura Regional Police Office for interrogation (Amnesty International, 2023).

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