

The Conferral of the National Hero Title on Soeharto: A Comparative Framing Analysis of ANTARA and Tempo

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ABSTRACT

The conferral of the National Hero title upon Soeharto has sparked widespread criticism and controversy where the media play a vital role in shaping public perceptions of the government's decision. This study aims to analyze how news media frame the discourse surrounding the conferral of the National Hero title on Soeharto. This research employs a qualitative approach using Robert M. Entman's framing analysis, which comprises four analytical elements: problem definition, causal diagnosis, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. The study examines news coverage published by ANTARA and Tempo. The findings reveal contrasting framing patterns between the two media outlets. ANTARA frames the issue as national recognition of Soeharto's contributions to development and political stability. The controversy is viewed as reflecting different public perspectives. At the same time, the moral evaluation highlights appreciation for historical services, and the treatment recommendation centers on institutional procedures in granting the National Hero title. In contrast, Tempo presents the issue as a controversial political decision amid ongoing debates over human rights violations and corruption. Its coverage underscores the ethical implications of honoring a contested historical figure and argues that the decision is inappropriate given these unresolved controversies. These findings show how different editorial perspectives influence media framing and create competing narratives of historical legitimacy within Indonesia's political memory.

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INTRODUCTION

Every year on November 10, Indonesia commemorates Heroes' Day, which originated from the Battle of Surabaya in 1945, a key moment symbolizing the heroism and sacrifice of Indonesian nationalists in resisting foreign forces (Frederick, 2018; Handojo et al., 2016; Zara, 2024). The commemoration of Heroes' Day has also become an important occasion for conferring the National Hero title in Indonesia. While before 1998 the title could be awarded at any time during the year, since 2000 the conferment has been officially held during the week leading up to November 10 (Fogg, 2019). This tradition reinforces the symbolic link between remembering national struggles and recognizing individuals who have made significant contributions to the nation. Typically, national heroes are associated with individuals who perform extraordinary acts and make personal sacrifices for the benefit of others (Franco et al., 2011). In Indonesia, the criteria for this title are formally stated in

Article 1 of Law Number 20 of 2009, which defines a National Hero as an Indonesian citizen who fought against colonialism in areas now forming the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, who died defending the nation, or who made outstanding contributions and achievements that advanced the development and progress of Indonesia. These definitions emphasize that the designation of a National Hero is closely connected to stories of sacrifice, struggle, and national service.

The conferment of the National Hero title aims to convey messages about the nature of the state, collective history, and the characteristics and contributions valued by the nation. Therefore, the state should exercise caution in presenting its ideal heroes in national life to instill desired values or to construct a national historical narrative (Fogg, 2019). To date, according to Databoks (2025), Indonesia has designated 216 National Heroes. Most recently, on November 10, 2025, President Prabowo Subianto appointed 10 new National Heroes, including Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), Marsinah, Sarwo Edhie Wibowo, Soeharto, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, Rahmah El Yunusiyah, Sultan Muhammad Salahuddin, Syaikhona Muhammad Kholil, Tuan Rondahaim Saragih, and Sultan Zainal Abidin Syah. Among these ten new National Heroes, the designation of Soeharto attracted the most attention.

Soeharto was the second President of the Republic of Indonesia, serving *de facto* from March 11, 1966 (Costa, 2020). He held the presidency for 32 years after being repeatedly elected by the Indonesian Parliament until his resignation on May 21, 1998, following widespread riots and student-led protests that occupied the parliament building (Asmawi & Fulazzaky, 2022). During the New Order era, Indonesia was governed under an authoritarian military regime. While the country experienced rapid economic development and was often called the “Tiger of Southeast Asia,” Soeharto’s economic policies were also criticized for favoring his family and inner circle (Asmawi & Fulazzaky, 2022). His leadership has also been linked to serious human rights violations. Systematic killings targeting members and suspected sympathizers of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) were coordinated by military leaders, with estimated victims ranging from 500,000 to 1,000,000 across Indonesia (Kuntjara & Hoon, 2020; McGregor et al., 2018).

Due to these historical controversies, Soeharto’s eligibility for the National Hero title remains widely debated. Political disputes over the nomination of controversial figures for the title have occurred repeatedly, especially after the deaths of former presidents Soeharto and Abdurrahman Wahid (Riana, 2018). The proposal to designate Soeharto as a National Hero is often linked to political interests, including his familial connection to President Prabowo Subianto. Similar political dynamics have appeared during previous administrations, such as during Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s presidency, when symbolic ceremonies related to national hero recognition were tied to broader political reconciliation (Liauw, 2012). In 2012, an exception occurred when SBY held a special ceremony to confer the National Hero titles on Soekarno and Hatta, who had been designated as National Heroes in 1986 but had not yet received a formal investiture. More generally, the conferment of the National Hero title can serve as a form of political bargaining within Indonesia’s political landscape (Fogg, 2019).

The conferment of the National Hero title on Soeharto is closely connected to the media agenda. The media act as a meaning-making tool through which the public accesses knowledge about events, helping to produce, legitimize, or challenge broader hegemonic attitudes toward issues and social realities such as politics, economics, or crime (Galata Bickell, 2019). In Entman’s (1993) view, the media can intentionally depict certain issues over others, making some issues more prominent to audiences. Framing in the mass media plays a key role in news production, as it enables the media to emphasize certain ideas by focusing on specific issues or information while neglecting others (D’Angelo et al., 2019). Framing gives the media the power to shape how news is presented, highlighting core issues, their causes, the moral values they express, and the solutions they offer. However, the impact of media framing depends on audiences’ internal experiences, knowledge, and

prior understanding, which strongly influence how media frames are interpreted (Alamsyah, 2024).

In the digital age, media not only serve as conveyors of information but also as influential actors in shaping public opinion, especially in political contexts. The growth of digital media has expanded access to news while increasing the potential for framing manipulation (Ardliansyah & Sufyanto, 2024). In this context, the media play a crucial role in shaping audience perceptions and evaluations, including when reporting President Prabowo Subianto's decision to confer the National Hero title upon Soeharto. This study analyzes two online media outlets, ANTARA and Tempo, which represent different institutional orientations. ANTARA, established as a government-owned media organization in May 1962 and later integrated into the Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises in 2007, illustrates the potential influence of media ownership on news production and the possibility of conflicts of interest (Shoemaker, 1996).

Meanwhile, Tempo has long been recognized for its critical stance toward the government. During the New Order era, the magazine was banned in 1982 and again on June 21, 1994, for its critical reporting on government policies and figures such as Soeharto and B.J. Habibie. At that time, the Indonesian press was tightly controlled through licensing systems, including the Publication Permit (Surat Izin Terbit, SIT) issued by the Ministry of Information and the Printing Permit (Surat Izin Cetak, SIC) issued by the military security authorities (McGregor & Setiawan, 2019; Steele, 2012). After the political transition in 1998, press freedom in Indonesia improved significantly, particularly with the enactment of Law Number 40 of 1999 concerning the Press (Nasution, 2019).

Previous studies have extensively examined the role of media framing in shaping public perceptions of political figures and issues. For example, Ardliansyah and Sufyanto (2024) analyzed how Kompas.com framed Ganjar Pranowo in coverage of the U-20 World Cup cancellation, illustrating how negative media framing can influence the political image of public figures. Similarly, Aswad et al. (2025) studied CNN Indonesia's framing of Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa in national economic news and found that media narratives can create technocratic legitimacy by portraying professionalism and rationality. Other research has also looked into how the media frames political actors during elections. Qirom et al. (2024), for instance, analyzed CNN Indonesia's coverage of Gibran Rakabuming Raka's vice-presidential nomination and demonstrated how media narratives help shape public perceptions of political candidates during electoral campaigns. Additionally, Lilo and Zamzamy (2025) examined the framing of Patrick Kluivert's appointment as the Indonesian national football team coach on Tvonenews.com, showing how media narratives blend controversy, expert commentary, and rhetorical devices to influence public opinion.

This study differs from the earlier studies in several ways. First, most research focuses on current political events such as elections, policy debates, or public controversies. At the same time, comparatively little attention has been paid to how media framing operates in disputes over historical legitimacy and national recognition. Second, previous research often treats media framing as a largely uniform process, without thoroughly examining how differences in institutional orientation, such as government-affiliated versus independent media, may lead to competing narratives on politically sensitive issues. As a result, the literature has not fully explained how media framing creates and contests narratives about historical legitimacy in public discourse. This gap is especially important in contexts where historical memory and political legitimacy intersect with current political interests.

This limitation is especially relevant in controversies over recognizing historical figures whose legacies remain debated. In such cases, media stories may not only interpret current political events but also influence public memory and how history is understood. Debates over bestowing national honors on controversial figures often connect with broader discussions about accountability, historical justice, and moral judgment in public discourse. Additionally, the issue has become more significant in the current political context, as the

Indonesian government has consistently highlighted the importance of respecting human rights and fighting corruption as core principles of governance, as reflected in the Asta Cita agenda of the Prabowo–Gibran administration. In this setting, the proposal to award the National Hero title to Soeharto raises key questions about how media stories balance tensions between acknowledging history, political legitimacy, and current moral standards.

Addressing these gaps, this study analyzes how Indonesian media frame the controversy surrounding the proposal to confer the National Hero title upon Soeharto, with particular attention to the differences in framing between government-affiliated and independent media institutions. By examining how these media construct narratives around a historically contested figure within a contemporary political context that emphasizes human rights and anti-corruption values, this study seeks to extend the application of framing theory to the analysis of contested historical narratives and political memory in contemporary media discourse.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using Robert N. Entman's framing analysis method. Framing analysis assumes that the media determine which issues are salient or important to the public and shape how individuals perceive them (Entman, 1993). The researcher selected Entman's framing framework for this study because it can help define the problems related to media coverage of the conferment of the National Hero title upon Soeharto. The objects of this study are news articles from ANTARA and Tempo. These two media outlets were selected because they have different political–economic orientations and long historical trajectories during the New Order period. By choosing two distinct media organizations, this study seeks to explore a range of perspectives on the same topic.

The data were collected using documentation techniques to identify news articles related to the conferment of the National Hero title on Soeharto. The search was conducted through the official websites of ANTARA and Tempo using keywords such as “Soeharto” and “National Hero”. The data collection focuses on news articles published throughout 2025. The debate surrounding Soeharto's eligibility for the National Hero title has existed for many years. After several years of recurring debates and proposals, Soeharto was eventually awarded the title of National Hero by President Prabowo Subianto. This period was selected because public discourse surrounding the conferment of the National Hero title upon Soeharto peaked during this time, culminating in the official award in November 2025. Examining media coverage during this period allows the study to capture how media narratives framed the controversy before and during the official conferment of the National Hero title.

The selection of articles was conducted using purposive sampling. Articles were included if they (1) specifically discussed the proposal or conferment of the National Hero title upon Soeharto, (2) presented arguments, opinions, or narratives related to the controversy surrounding the issue, and (3) were published as news reports or feature articles in ANTARA or Tempo. Articles that only briefly mentioned Soeharto without discussing the issue of the National Hero title were excluded from the dataset. To ensure that the selected articles captured the diversity of perspectives in the public debate, the researcher identified four key actors frequently appearing in media discussions on the issue: humanitarian organizations, the Council for Titles, Decorations, and Honors (Dewan Gelar, Tanda Jasa, dan Tanda Kehormatan—GTK), historians or academics, and the Golkar Party as a political party historically associated with the New Order government. These actors represent important stakeholders in the debate over Soeharto's historical legacy and eligibility for national recognition. Based on these criteria, eight relevant articles were selected for analysis, comprising four from ANTARA and four from Tempo.

Table 1. ANTARA's and Tempo Coverage of the Conferment of the National Hero Title upon Soeharto

News Portal	Coverage Title	Dates
ANTARA	<i>Soeharto Jadi Pahlawan, Komnas HAM: Pelanggaran HAM Berat Terus Diusut (Soeharto Becomes a Hero, National Human Rights Commission: Gross Human Rights Violations Continue to Be Investigated)</i>	11 November 2025
	<i>Fadli Zon: Gelar Pahlawan Soeharto Lalui Proses, Tak Ada Masalah Hukum (Fadli Zon: Soeharto's Hero Title Went Through a Process, There Are No Legal Issues)</i>	10 November 2025
	<i>Sejarawan: Gelar Pahlawan Soeharto Sudah Melalui Berbagai Kajian (Historian: Soeharto's Hero Title Has Undergone Various Assessments)</i>	10 November 2025
	<i>Golkar Sambut Baik Usulan Soeharto Jadi Pahlawan Nasional (Golkar Welcomes the Proposal for Soeharto to Become a National Hero)</i>	21 October 2025
Tempo	<i>Amnesty: Usulan Soeharto Jadi Pahlawan Mencederai Reformasi (Amnesty: The Proposal to Designate Soeharto as a National Hero Undermines Reform)</i>	21 October 2025
	<i>Fadli Zon: Soeharto Penuhi Syarat untuk Gelar Pahlawan Nasional (Fadli Zon: Soeharto Meets the Requirements for the National Hero Title)</i>	5 November 2025
	<i>Sejarawan UGM Soal Soeharto Pahlawan Nasional: Jangan Abaikan Fakta Sejarah (UGM Historian on Soeharto as a National Hero: Do Not Ignore Historical Facts)</i>	21 April 2025
	<i>Alasan Golkar Dukung Pemberian Gelar Pahlawan Soeharto (Golkar's Reasons for Supporting the Awarding of the National Hero Title to Soeharto)</i>	25 April 2025

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Throughout the analysis, Entman's framing categories were applied consistently to all selected articles, with interpretations grounded in the textual evidence presented in the news coverage. The framing model consists of four main devices used to examine how media construct reality. The first is Define Problems, which refers to how an issue is interpreted and presented, including what kind of problem it is. The second is Diagnose Cause, which focuses on identifying the causes of an event or problem, including which actors or institutions are seen as responsible. The third is Make Moral Judgment, which concerns the moral values used to evaluate the issue and the ethical standards used to legitimize or delegitimize certain actions. The fourth is Treatment Recommendation, which addresses proposed solutions or responses to the problem, including actions considered necessary to improve the situation. Together, these four elements explain how media framing shapes public understanding of events and social issues.

The analysis was conducted through several stages. First, each news article was read thoroughly to identify key narratives and themes related to the issue. Second, relevant text segments were categorized according to the four framing elements proposed by Entman. Third, the framing patterns identified in each article were compared to reveal similarities and differences in how the two media outlets constructed the issue. To enhance analytical transparency, the researcher documented the categorization process and maintained consistency in the application of the framing categories across all selected articles. As the analysis involves interpretive judgment, interpretations were grounded in the textual evidence presented in the news articles.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The media play an important role in constructing social issues. The use of media became particularly significant during the New Order period, which was marked by widespread corruption, Collusion, and Nepotism, as well as serious human rights violations. To counter these conditions, throughout the New Order era and into the Reformasi period, many media products emerged that constructed the New Order government as heroic, such as the film

Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI. However, after the fall of the New Order, counter-narratives challenging the state/military version of the mass killings began to emerge and continued to be produced in the Reformasi era (Wieringa & Katjasungkana, 2018; Wieringa, Melvin, & Pohlman, 2019). This development became a hallmark of the post-New Order period, characterized by a more democratic atmosphere and relatively higher levels of freedom in social, cultural, economic, and political spheres. These counter-narratives have taken the form of books, novels, academic articles, works of art, songs, and documentary films. Therefore, this study focuses on how the narratives in the coverage of the ANTARA and Tempo news portals frame the conferment of the title of National Hero on Soeharto.

ANTARA and Tempo's Coverage of Humanitarian Organizations' Opposition to the Conferment of the National Hero Title upon Soeharto

Public opposition to the conferment of the National Hero title upon Soeharto is partly due to his involvement in various human rights violations during the New Order leadership, such as the mass killings in Indonesia (1965–1966), which occurred under the New Order regime in the context of the post-World War II period (Sutopo, 2020). According to McGregor et al. (2018), at the national level, these killings were systematic, led and coordinated by the Indonesian military leadership to destroy the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) and to facilitate the military's rise to power.

Opposition to the conferment of the National Hero title upon Soeharto has emerged from institutions that focus on the enforcement and protection of human rights, such as the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM). Komnas HAM itself was born out of the human rights challenges faced during the Soeharto administration. An important response to increasing international criticism and domestic pressure was the establishment of Komnas HAM (the National Commission on Human Rights) in 1993 (McGregor & Setiawan, 2019). In its early years, Komnas HAM consistently named and shamed human rights perpetrators, particularly those from the military (Setiawan, 2016). In the context of the conferment of the National Hero title upon Soeharto, Komnas HAM has actively opposed the decision and expressed regret, as conveyed directly by Anis Hidayah, the Chair of Komnas HAM.

In addition to Komnas HAM, international movements have also expressed opposition, notably Amnesty International Indonesia. Amnesty International is a global movement committed to protecting and upholding individual human rights. In the context of the conferment of the National Hero title upon Soeharto, Amnesty International Indonesia openly rejected the plan. Together with the Indonesian Alliance for Historical Transparency (AKSI), Amnesty International Indonesia launched a petition of opposition supported by members of the public from all walks of life. Furthermore, the Chair of Amnesty International Indonesia, Usman Hamid, held a press conference expressing opposition at the YLBHI Building on 4 November 2025.

Based on these considerations, the researcher observes that civil society organizations have expressed opposition to the conferment of the National Hero title upon Soeharto, represented by Komnas HAM (a state institution) and Amnesty International Indonesia (civil society). As shown in Table 2, this study further examines how news portals frame oppositional responses articulated by these two institutions through two selected articles: *"Soeharto Jadi Pahlawan, Komnas HAM: Pelanggaran HAM Berat Terus Diusut"*, published by ANTARA, and *"Amnesty: Usulan Soeharto Jadi Pahlawan Mencederai Reformasi"*, published by Tempo.

Table 2. Comparative Framing Analysis of ANTARA and Tempo on Suharto's National Hero Controversy

Framing Dimension	ANTARA	Tempo
Define Problem	The article presents two processes happening at once: Suharto receives the National Hero title, while human rights investigations continue.	The article presents the proposal as a threat to the values of Reformasi, especially human rights and anti-corruption ideals.
Diagnose Causes	The controversy comes from different views of Suharto's legacy. Some remember development achievements, while others focus on alleged human rights abuses.	The controversy is caused by Suharto's record of human rights abuses and corruption during the New Order era.
Make Moral Judgment	Giving the title does not remove the state's responsibility to solve past human rights cases.	Honoring Suharto is seen as morally problematic because it may ignore victims and distort history.
Treatment Recommendation	Human rights investigations should continue, and the title must not create impunity.	The final decision should follow state procedures, with the president holding the final authority.

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Based on Table 2, ANTARA News highlights Komnas HAM's critical stance toward the decision in its coverage of the National Commission on Human Rights' (Komnas HAM) statement regarding the conferment of the National Hero title on Soeharto. Komnas HAM asserts that although Soeharto has been awarded the National Hero title, investigations into various alleged human rights violations during his administration should continue. At the same time, ANTARA also presents the legitimacy of the state's decision by citing a statement from Prabowo Subianto, who stated that the conferment of the National Hero title on ten figures on 10 November 2025, including Soeharto, was based on their significant service to the nation and the state. In this way, ANTARA's coverage reflects an effort to situate criticism from human rights institutions within the framework of the state's institutional processes.

Meanwhile, coverage in Tempo highlights criticism from Usman Hamid, Executive Director of Amnesty International Indonesia. The article highlights that the designation of Soeharto as a National Hero may be at odds with the mandate of the 1998 Reformasi, and it also presents the perspectives of families of victims of various human rights violations under Soeharto's rule. Nevertheless, Tempo also includes the government's perspective through a statement by Prasetyo Hadi, thereby illustrating a contestation of narratives between state legitimacy and civil society's demands for justice.

The differing ways in which the two media outlets represent the issue can be understood through the perspective of framing. ANTARA tends to frame criticism from humanitarian organizations as part of the discursive dynamics accompanying the state's formal process for determining who is deemed worthy of receiving the National Hero title. Within this framing, allegations of human rights violations are presented as one perspective among several in evaluating a historical figure, rather than as the primary factor determining the legitimacy of the award. In contrast, Tempo places criticism from humanitarian organizations at the center of its definition of the controversy. Its coverage emphasizes the historical and moral dimensions of the political legacy of the New Order, as well as the symbolic significance of granting state recognition to a figure with a controversial record.

From the perspective of framing theory, these differences demonstrate how media outlets select and emphasize particular aspects of social reality, thereby shaping how audiences understand a given issue (Entman, 1993; Mezy & Amali, 2025). Media bias may emerge through such selection processes, particularly when media institutions operate within specific political structures that influence the representation of reality in news coverage (Knüpfner & Entman, 2018). Consequently, the differences in framing between

ANTARA and Tempo not only reflect varying perspectives on the figure of Soeharto but also illustrate how the media contribute to shaping narratives concerning historical legitimacy, political memory, and demands for justice within Indonesia’s contemporary public sphere.

ANTARA and Tempo’s Coverage of Fadli Zon’s Statement that Soeharto Deserves to Receive the National Hero Award

The evaluation of National Hero nominees is conducted by the Council for Titles, Decorations, and Honors (Dewan Gelar, Tanda Jasa, dan Tanda Kehormatan—GTK) under the Ministry of Culture, which Fadli Zon currently chairs. GTK is tasked with providing recommendations to the president on the selection of recipients of honorary titles, such as the National Hero, as well as other decorations and honors. In the context of Soeharto’s conferment as a National Hero, Fadli Zon stated that Soeharto’s nomination followed proper procedures and did not face any legal issues. Furthermore, the evaluation process involved various segments of society, including academics and historians.

Before becoming known as a politician, Fadli Zon was a student activist who was also involved in demonstrations to overthrow Soeharto as president. Based on this background, the findings of this study examine how Fadli Zon, in his capacity as Chair of the GTK, articulates statements regarding Soeharto’s National Hero title on the ANTARA and Tempo portals. This is particularly relevant given that during his tenure as Minister of Culture, he proposed reshaping Indonesia’s historical narrative in a more positive light, even though he had previously criticized the New Order government. Table 3 presents an analysis of media coverage of Fadli Zon’s statement based on two selected articles: *“Fadli Zon: Gelar Pahlawan Soeharto Lalui Proses, Tak Ada Masalah Hukum”* published by ANTARA and *“Fadli Zon: Soeharto Penuhi Syarat untuk Gelar Pahlawan Nasional”* published by Tempo.

Table 3. Comparative Framing Analysis of ANTARA and Tempo on Fadli Zon’s Statement about Suharto’s National Hero Title

Framing Dimension	ANTARA	Tempo
Define Problem	The article frames Suharto’s hero title as a legal and administrative matter that has followed proper procedures.	The article frames the issue as whether Suharto meets the formal requirements to receive the National Hero title.
Diagnose Causes	The controversy comes from different public opinions about Suharto, but legally there are no obstacles to granting the title.	The controversy comes from opposing views of Suharto’s legacy. Some value his achievements, while others stress human rights abuses and corruption.
Make Moral Judgment	The article highlights Suharto’s contributions to independence and national development, presenting him as deserving recognition.	The article stresses that a hero must be ethical and selfless. Critics argue Suharto’s record makes him unfit for the title.
Treatment Recommendation	The public should accept the decision as part of a legitimate state process and national history.	The title should be decided through a full review of both achievements and controversies using official procedures.

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Based on Table 3, the coverage on ANTARA highlights support for Fadli Zon’s statement that Soeharto had never been involved in any legal case and therefore met the requirements for the National Hero title. This narrative is reinforced by the emphasis that the evaluation process had undergone a comprehensive assessment, drawing on various historical facts that portray Soeharto as both a figure in the struggle for independence and an important actor in national development. In this regard, ANTARA’s coverage tends to situate the statement within a framework of historical and procedural legitimacy concerning the conferment of the National Hero title.

Meanwhile, Tempo also reported Fadli Zon's statement that Soeharto had fulfilled the formal requirements. However, the article also presents critical perspectives linking the issue to various alleged violations during Soeharto's administration. In this context, Tempo situates Fadli Zon's statement within a broader debate regarding the complexity of Soeharto's historical legacy.

The differing approaches of the two media outlets illustrate how political actors' statements can be constructed through different interpretative frameworks. Based on this analysis, ANTARA tends to emphasize the dimensions of legality and procedural compliance in the awarding of the National Hero title to Soeharto. In contrast, Tempo foregrounds the historical and political dimensions of the controversy. These differences in framing demonstrate that the media do not merely convey factual information but also shape narratives about a public figure's historical legitimacy and the relationship among state recognition, historical interpretation, and political dynamics in Indonesia's contemporary public sphere.

From the perspective of framing theory, the media do not present reality in its entirety but rather construct representations of reality through processes of selection and emphasis on particular aspects of an event (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). These processes influence how audiences understand an issue, including its causes, the moral evaluations attached to it, and the solutions considered relevant. Framing may also be influenced by interactions between political elites and the media, which shape how the public interprets an issue (Entman, 2003; Triana & Amali, 2024). Furthermore, audience interpretations of news are shaped by the social and psychological contexts that underlie the communication process between the media and their readers (Launa, 2020). In this process, media institutions select and highlight particular aspects through choices of terminology, content, and the placement of perspectives within the structure of news coverage (Knüpfer & Entman, 2018).

ANTARA and Tempo's Coverage of Academics' Responses to the Conferment of the National Hero Title upon Soeharto

The debate over Soeharto's suitability for designation as a National Hero is also inseparable from Indonesia's historical record. From a historical perspective, this issue remains contested due to events during the New Order era, particularly the question of whether Soeharto was involved in serious human rights violations and the widespread practice of corruption, collusion, and nepotism. The more challenging issue concerns the need for historical interpretation that not only provides a credible account of the past but also a fair, balanced, and non-misleading representation. Historians frequently debate these matters (Gill et al., 2018). Therefore, as shown in Table 4, this study further explores how historians articulate their perspectives on the proposed designation of Soeharto as a National Hero through two selected articles: "*Sejarawan: Gelar Pahlawan Soeharto Sudah Melalui Berbagai Kajian*", published by ANTARA, and "*Sejarawan UGM Soal Soeharto Pahlawan Nasional: Jangan Abaikan Fakta Sejarah*", published by Tempo.

The article published by ANTARA News demonstrates a tendency to support the government's decision to confer the National Hero title on Soeharto. This narrative is reinforced by the argument that no public figure is entirely free from controversy. ANTARA's coverage situates the issue within a framework of academic and procedural legitimacy, emphasizing that the decision to grant the title has undergone a systematic process of historical evaluation. Meanwhile, the Tempo article takes a more reflective approach. Although the article acknowledges that Soeharto formally meets the criteria, Tempo also emphasizes the importance of not disregarding historical facts. In addition, Tempo includes oppositional perspectives through its reporting on a civil society petition rejecting the decision.

Table 4. Comparative Framing Analysis of ANTARA and Tempo on Historians' Views of Suharto's National Hero Title

Framing Dimension	ANTARA	Tempo
Define Problem	The article frames Suharto's hero title as the result of careful academic study and government evaluation.	The article frames the issue as a matter of historical interpretation that requires careful consideration of both achievements and controversies.
Diagnose Causes	The title is presented as state recognition of Suharto's contributions in leadership, democracy, human rights, and service to the people.	The controversy comes from Suharto's complex legacy. Some praise his contributions, while others focus on human rights abuses, press repression, and corruption.
Make Moral Judgment	The article argues that no historical figure is free from controversy, so judgment should focus on overall contributions.	The article highlights Suharto's important military role in independence and national sovereignty, while acknowledging criticism.
Treatment Recommendation	The public should see the decision through academic study and historical perspective, not only political debate.	The title process should use a more specific and balanced system for controversial figures, without ignoring historical facts.

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Based on Table 4, both media outlets exercise caution when presenting the views of academics and historians with epistemic authority on the issue. Nevertheless, the application of journalistic principles such as objectivity and neutrality is often influenced by the dynamics of the media environment and the broader socio-political context in which it operates (Estupinan, 2017). In an increasingly fragmented communication environment, the public also develops diverse perspectives on a given issue, making framing analysis important for understanding how events are constructed through the media's discursive practices (Knüpfner & Entman, 2018).

Based on this analysis, it is evident that both media outlets utilize academic authority to construct different interpretative frameworks. From the perspective of Robert N. Entman's framing theory, this difference illustrates how media organizations select and emphasize particular aspects of academic statements to construct distinct interpretations of the same issue. ANTARA emphasizes the epistemic legitimacy of the academic review process, whereas Tempo foregrounds the reflective and critical dimensions in evaluating a historical figure. Consequently, the coverage by the two media outlets illustrates how academic authority is employed in media discourse to shape differing interpretations of a public figure's historical legitimacy in the public sphere.

ANTARA and Tempo's Coverage of the Golkar Party's Support for the Conferment of the National Hero Title upon Soeharto

During the New Order period, the selection of legislative candidates from all political parties participating in elections underwent a rigid military screening process, emphasizing loyalty to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. President Soeharto exercised direct control over the House of Representatives (DPR) through the Golkar Party, his main political vehicle. Soeharto deliberately established Golkar ahead of the 1971 general election to secure victory. This electoral success positioned Golkar as a hegemonic force in the DPR. Golkar became the political machine of the Soeharto regime, exerting control over political institutions, especially the legislature (Asrinaldi, Yusoff, M. A., & Karim, 2022).

The legacy of the authoritarian New Order regime continues to signal acceptance and even nostalgia. For example, Golkar, the main political party founded by President Soeharto, continues to play a central role in Indonesia's political system. The party has adapted to an era of competitive elections while retaining key figures from the New Order

and much of its institutional strength, particularly in rural areas (Harjanto, 2023; Kimura et al., 2024). Based on these considerations, the researcher examines how Golkar, as a political party with a long history during the New Order era, articulates its position regarding the conferment of the National Hero title upon Soeharto. In addition, Golkar was a supporting party of the Prabowo–Gibran ticket during the electoral contest and is now also part of the Prabowo–Gibran cabinet. Therefore, as shown in Table 5, this study further explores how Golkar supports the proposed designation of Soeharto as a National Hero through two selected articles: “*Golkar Sambut Baik Usulan Soeharto Jadi Pahlawan Nasional*,” published by ANTARA, and “*Alasan Golkar Dukung Pemberian Gelar Pahlawan Soeharto*,” published by Tempo.

Table 5. Comparative Framing Analysis of ANTARA and Tempo on Golkar’s Support for Suharto’s National Hero Title

Framing Dimension	ANTARA	Tempo
Define Problem	The article frames the proposal as state recognition of Suharto’s contributions to national development. Golkar’s support is presented positively.	The article frames Golkar’s support as part of a political debate over how the New Order legacy should be remembered.
Diagnose Causes	The controversy comes from different views of Suharto’s legacy, but his achievements in development and stability are emphasized.	The controversy comes from Suharto’s record of human rights abuses and tensions between recognition and Reformasi values.
Make Moral Judgment	The article highlights Suharto’s success in food security and economic growth, portraying him as deserving appreciation.	The article presents two sides: Golkar stresses his contributions, while critics warn the title may erase past crimes and confuse future generations.
Treatment Recommendation	Suharto’s role in history should be judged objectively and balanced, not only through controversy.	The article presents Golkar’s position that the proposal deserves support as recognition of Suharto’s historical role.

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Based on Table 5, the ANTARA News article provides support for the government’s decision to confer the National Hero title on Soeharto. The Golkar Party welcomed the decision as recognition of Soeharto’s contributions to the Indonesian nation. Although the conferment of the title has generated public debate, ANTARA’s reporting emphasizes that such controversy should not overshadow Soeharto’s historical contributions to national development. Meanwhile, the Tempo article reports Golkar’s support for the decision and highlights various achievements attributed to Soeharto during his administration. However, Tempo also incorporates critical perspectives by citing views that point to various issues underlying the opposition to the decision.

Both media outlets present similar support from figures associated with the Golkar Party for the decision. Nevertheless, Tempo maintains a more critical stance by presenting alternative perspectives that question the decision’s appropriateness. This difference illustrates that media framing plays an important role in constructing meaning within media products. Entman (1993) explains that media frames events by emphasizing certain attributes over others, thereby influencing how the public understands an issue. In addition, media practices are not independent from the influence of cultural, economic, ideological, and political factors that shape the news production process (Estupinan, 2017).

In this context, debates surrounding the conferment of the National Hero title on Soeharto are also connected to broader political dynamics involving various actors. Political elites often compete to shape public opinion by constructing particular narratives within an increasingly complex public communication environment (Knüpfer & Entman, 2018). From this perspective, framing plays an important role in the exercise of political power because

frames embedded within news texts may reflect the interests of actors seeking to influence public discourse (Entman, 1993).

Based on the analysis of ANTARA and Tempo coverage regarding Golkar's support for the proposal to confer the National Hero title on Soeharto, it is evident that both media outlets frame the issue through different emphases. ANTARA tends to present Golkar's support as recognition of Soeharto's historical contributions. In contrast, Tempo situates this support within the political dynamics of Golkar's historical relationship with Soeharto. These differences in framing demonstrate that media outlets do not merely present political actors' support as a political fact but also construct particular meanings by emphasizing different aspects of reality.

CONCLUSION

Based on a comparative framing analysis of ANTARA News and Tempo using Robert N. Entman's model, both media outlets reported the same issue but constructed different meanings in their coverage. ANTARA consistently framed the issue through an institutional, procedural, and legitimizing perspective. Its reports emphasized that the title had passed formal mechanisms, academic assessments, and government evaluations, while portraying controversy as a normal difference of opinion within a democratic society. ANTARA also highlighted Soeharto's contributions to independence, national development, economic growth, and state stability, thereby positioning the award as a reasonable form of state recognition.

In contrast, Tempo framed the issue as part of a broader historical and political contestation over the legacy of the New Order regime. Rather than focusing mainly on procedure, Tempo emphasized criticism from Amnesty International, the SETARA Institute, historians, victims' groups, and public intellectuals who questioned Soeharto's eligibility on allegations of human rights violations, corruption, authoritarianism, and repression during his rule. Tempo's coverage presented the National Hero title not simply as an administrative decision, but as a symbolic act closely connected to collective memory, justice for past abuses, and the unfinished agenda of Reformasi 1998.

These findings demonstrate that media do not merely transmit facts but actively shape public understanding of controversial historical figures through framing. ANTARA foregrounded procedural legitimacy and positive historical contributions, while Tempo foregrounded moral accountability, historical complexity, and political debate. This study, therefore, contributes to media framing and political communication scholarship by showing how different media institutions construct competing narratives of legitimacy around the same national issue. Future studies may compare a wider range of Indonesian media and examine how audiences interpret these competing frames in debates over history and national memory.

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