

Framing Analysis of Ferry Irwandi's YouTube Content on the Mastermind of the Riots and the Discourse of Martial Law

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Abstract

At the end of August 2025, there was a large mass demonstration due to public dissatisfaction with the House of Representatives. This prompted a number of content creators and influencers to create content related to this issue, one of whom was Ferry Irwandi. This study aims to analyze how framing is constructed through Ferry Irwandi's YouTube account in relation to the August 2025 riots and the discourse on the implementation of emergency law in Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative approach with Robert N. Entman's framing analysis model, which emphasizes four main elements: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and recommendations for action. Data was obtained from transcripts of video content uploaded to Ferry Irwandi's YouTube channel during the period of August–September 2025, which were then analyzed in depth to reveal the construction of meaning. The findings show that the framing constructed by Ferry Irwandi tends to highlight certain political actors as the masterminds behind the riots, portrays the riots as a threat to state stability, and directs public opinion to support the implementation of emergency law by the TNI. These findings suggest that the content serves not only as a channel of information but also as a tool for shaping public opinion. This study is expected to contribute to the field of political communication studies, particularly in understanding the role of media framing in shaping public opinion on political issues that arise in the public sphere.

Keywords: *Framing Analysis, YouTube Content, Political Issues, Riots, Martial Law*

INTRODUCTION

Media changes, often referred to as digital transformation, have significantly altered the landscape of political communication in Indonesia (Dharta et al., 2025; Hafel, 2023). This change has fundamentally revolutionized communication methods across various sectors, including politics. Before the massive digital revolution that offered new spaces where opinions were

made more open and participatory, political discourse was controlled by mainstream media outlets such as television, newspapers, and radio. This phenomenon, however, is not unique to Indonesia but also occurs in other parts of the world. For example, the 2016 and 2020 US presidential elections demonstrated the significant role of social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter. These platforms shaped public perception and significantly influenced

election outcomes (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Beyond the US, a similar trend has also occurred in India, where political campaigns have shifted to digital platforms, with YouTube becoming the primary medium for reaching the wider public (Rangaswamy & Arora, 2016).

In this context, Indonesia is experiencing a similar wave. With the number of internet users reaching more than 210 million people in 2024 reported by *Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia*. The shift towards digital politics is becoming increasingly inevitable, especially on social media such as YouTube. Video-based social media platforms like YouTube are a strategic medium for influencers (Amalia & Satvikadewi, 2020; Pramana & Triantoro, 2025) and political content creators to discuss current political issues, create podcasts with guest stars, or perform monologues. Chadwick (2017) notes that the social media ecosystem allows anyone to become an actor without a traditional mainstream media upbringing. With large following, their statements become matters of public concern. This also occurs in Indonesia, where such figures increase online political content consumption and contribute to the formation of public opinion (Nugroho et al., 2012).

One issue attracting public attention is the outbreak of riots in August 2025, followed by talk of martial law. The riots that erupted in late August 2025 became one of the most dramatic moments in post-Reformasi political history. These demonstrations were

sparked by public dissatisfaction with the increase in allowances for members of the House of Representatives (DPR) and the unreasonable tax increases that burdened the public. The demonstrations began on August 25, 2025, and proceeded peacefully. Unfortunately, the unrest continued to spread. It culminated in an unavoidable incident on August 28 in Jakarta when crowds filled the capital's main streets. An online motorcycle taxi driver, Affan Kurniawan, was killed after being run over by a Brimob (Mobile Brigade Corps) tactical vehicle. The resulting public outrage spread to other cities across Indonesia, described as a show of solidarity with the late Affan.

The incident did not end there. Over the next few days, a series of clashes broke out in various regions, including the burning of parliament buildings in West Java, Central Java, and West Nusa Tenggara (Sulaiman, 2025). Based on the results of the researcher's investigation, at least ten people died (Amri et al., 2025), more than 500 were injured, and around 2,000 people were arrested (Irfani, 2025), with nearly a thousand of them named as suspects (Puteranegara, 2025). In addition to material losses, this action left a deep trauma that reopened the public's memory of the May 1998 riots. Amid the increasingly heated situation, the issue of martial law emerged, spreading on news channels and social media. This topic even entered the ranks of "trending topics" X or Twitter on August 30-31, 2025. However, the Deputy Commander of the Indonesian National

Armed Forces (TNI) emphasized that there would be no military emergency, and the TNI would not take overpower (Rosana, 2025). Starting from that, this discourse not only caused uncomfortable feelings because it became a massive discussion and appeared in mainstream media, including YouTube.

This precedent attracted widespread attention, with community alliances urging the perpetrators to be brought to justice and the police to find the masterminds. There was also talk about martial law. Mass and digital media actively discussed this, including Ferry Irwandi's YouTube channel, which prominently highlighted the riots from August 25th to early September. He often loudly points to certain political actors as masterminds and mentions the possibility of martial law.

This study examines how Ferry Irwandi's content frames political issues, potentially shaping public opinion toward martial law. Studies on framing political content on YouTube in Indonesia have primarily focused on political campaigns (Lim, 2017; Tapsell, 2015), while content arising from social crises and militarization discourse is rarely studied. This gap is critical because crisis framing draws public attention and can influence opinions during times of uncertainty and social anxiety (McGregor, 2019; Von Sikorski & Knoll, 2019)

Previous studies have shown that traditional media often frame political and militarization issues (Eriyanto, 2011; Esu & Maddanu, 2025), whereas alternative media

rarely cover these topics. Tufekci (2017) suggests digital media can be more incisive and persuasive due to fewer restrictions and greater audience closeness. Several previous studies provide the foundation for this framing analysis. First, Setyawan et al. analyzed how national online media outlets framed the military barracks program initiated by West Java Governor Dedi Mulyadi. Their findings revealed that most outlets framed the program positively, emphasizing values of character development and discipline, while presenting military intervention as a legitimate response to juvenile delinquency (Setyawan et al., 2025). Second, Cobis and Cangara (2023) examined how digital platforms have evolved into political spaces in the digital age. They argue that public opinion, shaped by political parties, campaign organizations, and citizens, is constructed through interactions that produce new frames of situations. Finally, Boberg et al. demonstrated that social media functions as an alternative arena for framing major issues, as illustrated during the COVID-19 crisis (Boberg et al., 2020).

Therefore, this study examines the framing of two controversial issues: the alleged mastermind of the riots and the option of martial law.

Such content draws significant public attention, as shown by the high viewership of Ferry Irwandi's YouTube channel. This 9-minute video has received 2.7 million views in two weeks. Besides offering information, it also provides opinions, constructing

meanings that can influence perceptions of political actors, the legitimacy of power, the martial law option, and policy choices.

This study uses a qualitative method and approach. According to Sugiyono (2017), qualitative research is inductive, utilizes descriptive data, and focuses on the process rather than the results. Robert N. Entman's (Entman, 1993) framing analysis involves selecting and highlighting specific issues, which are then examined by defining the problem, interpreting causes, evaluating morally, and recommending solutions.

The researchers aim for this study to influence media studies on political issue framing, especially in alternative media and its impact on public opinion. They also hope that the findings will help the public, journalists, and policymakers critically evaluate political narratives from influencers or content creators, while promoting public media literacy on controversial political issues.

This study aims to analyze how Ferry Irwandi frames YouTube content related to the instigators of the riots and the discourse on martial law. Its objective is to identify the framing constructed by Ferry Irwandi in such content.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method using Robert N. Entman's framing model analysis. Qualitative research is characterized by its fluidity, focus, and depth analysis (Sugiyono, 2017). The

qualitative approach was selected to explore the underlying meanings within media texts, rather than to measure frequency or correlation through quantitative means (Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, 2018).

Robert N. Entman's framing model serves as the analytical framework for examining how Ferry Irwandi constructs framing in his YouTube content related to the riots that occurred between August 25 and early September 2025, as well as the discourse surrounding martial law. Entman's model comprises four analytical tools that are essential for deconstructing media meaning: (1) problem definition, (2) causal interpretation, (3) moral evaluation, and (4) treatment recommendation. These components enable researchers to assess how Ferry Irwandi's content potentially influences public opinion by identifying key actors behind the riots and shaping narratives around martial law.

The primary data for this study consists of YouTube video content uploaded by Ferry Irwandi on August 31, 2025. The unit of analysis is the full video titled *The Mastermind of the Demonstration and Preventing a Military Emergency*. Secondary data was obtained from academic journals and prior studies. Data collection was conducted through online observation, which involved watching, downloading, and transcribing the video content. Additional sources included documentation and literature review, encompassing scholarly publications, news articles, and official

reports relevant to the topic.

Following Entman's model, data were analysed in several stages: (1) data reduction, focusing on riot instigators and martial law narratives; (2) segmenting content to identify major and minor issues; (3) using Entman's tools to mark text elements defining problems, causes, judgments, and solutions; (4) grouping findings into dominant framing themes; and (5) drawing conclusions on framing's role in digital public opinion.

To ensure data validity, the researcher employed source triangulation by comparing the YouTube content with mainstream media reports published between late August and early September. The analysis is grounded in Framing Theory, a key concept in mass communication studies that posits the media not only reports facts but also selects, emphasizes, and organizes them within a specific frame to construct meaning (Entman, 1993).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study departs from the substantial number of influencers or content creators who produce content on political issues on the YouTube platform. One influencer who frequently discusses political themes is Ferry Irwandi. Ferry Irwandi began engaging in social media in 2012. Before pursuing a career as a digital media activist, Ferry Irwandi served as a civil servant at the Ministry of Finance for approximately 10 years. He then made a career shift to become

an influencer or content creator who actively highlights current political issues.

Currently, Ferry Irwandi's YouTube channel has become one of the major political channels on the Platform, boasting 2 million subscribers. Ferry Irwandi is known as a content creator who dares to raise sensitive political issues. For instance, on August 31, 2025, Ferry Irwandi, through his YouTube channel, discussed the involvement of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) in riots, thereby steering public opinion toward the existence of actors behind the riots and the discourse of martial law. The discussion presented by Ferry Irwandi then sparked debate and raised both pros and cons within society. The TNI even reported Ferry Irwandi for allegedly defaming the military institution. This case grew into a major public controversy, demonstrating the major influence of influencers in shaping public opinion through social media posts. It also created space for discussion on the extent of freedom of expression for civilians and the protection of a state institution's reputation. On the other hand, some law enforcement figures, such as Yusril Ihza Mahendra and Mahfud MD, explained that defamation reports must be filed by the aggrieved individual, not by the institution, in accordance with the Constitutional Court's ruling. Thus, a framing analysis using Robert N. Entman's model will be conducted in the following stages:

Problem Definition

In the video analyzed by the

researcher, Ferry Irwandi defined the problem by constructing a narrative that there was military involvement in the riots from late August to early September. In the video, Ferry Irwandi framed the riots as not standing

alone but instead having state actors (the military) behind them. The framing analysis of Robert N. Entman’s model on the YouTube broadcast is presented in the following table:

Framing Element	Questions	Analysis Results
Define Problems	- What problems are considered important by Ferry? - How does Ferry Irwandi frame the riot events and the narrative of martial law?	- Ferry Irwandi presents the riots as a serious threat to state stability and national security.- He highlights the involvement of military elements (TNI) as intellectual actors behind the riots.- The problem is constructed as a political crisis that could lead to chaos.
Diagnose Causes	- Who is considered the cause of the problem? - How does Ferry Irwandi construct the root of the problem?	- Ferry Irwandi links the riots to the presence of elite political actors as the “masterminds” behind the riots occurring from late August to early September 2025.- To strengthen his claim, Ferry Irwandi uses political rumours and personal opinions based on information gathered from several sources.
Make Moral Judgments	- What values or moral standards does Ferry Irwandi refer to? - Who is depicted as the “right” and “wrong” party?	- Ferry gives a negative assessment of the “masterminds of the riots” as those responsible for casualties and losses suffered by civilians.- He judges the involvement of the TNI in the riots as an act that tarnishes the reputation of a state institution.- Ferry positions himself as an activist who “defends the people” and dares to expose injustices for the public interest.
Suggest Remedies	- What solutions are offered by Ferry Irwandi? - Who should act?	- Ferry Irwandi voices the need for law enforcement against the masterminds of the riots from late August to early September 2025.- He emphasizes the narrative of “martial law” with the statement: “let’s regain our strength first, so this country does not fall into martial law.” The phrase “martial law” illustrates the civil vs. military relationship, in which civilians would be disadvantaged if martial law were imposed. The military has long been sensitive to criticism.- The central government and security apparatus are positioned as the actors who must take firm action against the events.

Based on the researcher’s analysis, Ferry Irwandi addresses his audience with

the greeting “*hai warga sipil*” (hello civilians). This greeting can be interpreted

to mean that the viewers of his YouTube channel are ordinary citizens (not part of the military or state apparatus). Thus, Ferry Irwandi seeks to create a sense of solidarity

with the audience who share an interest in the same issues. The greeting may also imply that the viewers, as civilians, can position themselves as an opposition to militarism or critically confront the structure of state power, namely the armed institution (TNI). This form of address reinforces critical messages, for example, when Ferry Irwandi discusses social issues such as abuse of power, state violence, or violations of civil rights.

In the video entitled “*Dalang Demo dan Mencegah Darurat Militer*” (The Mastermind of the Demonstration and Preventing Martial Law), Ferry Irwandi uses diction such as “the destruction of the state,” “a threat to national stability,” or “a sign of system failure” to describe the riots. This language evokes a sense of chaos and urgency in the minds of the audience. By portraying the situation as inconducive, Ferry Irwandi indirectly states that the riots could spread to other regions, undermine the foundations of the state, or overthrow the existing order. He reminds the public to remain vigilant and united in facing a common enemy, rather than perceiving the riots as a minor conflict.

In his uploads, Ferry Irwandi mentions that the TNI and the police were unresponsive to the riots, which resulted in civilian casualties. This action is interpreted as the TNI and the police being repressive in their management. This generated controversy and created the impression that state institutions are not neutral, potentially shaping negative public opinion toward

them, since as state institutions, the TNI and police are expected to act professionally, remain neutral, and protect the public. In this narrative, it can be interpreted as though the TNI were involved or taking sides, even though no official evidence supports this claim.

As an influencer, Ferry Irwandi has media that can disseminate ideas or opinions capable of reaching a wide audience, with loyal followers who find his opinions trustworthy and easily share them. Through effective and persuasive communication, Ferry Irwandi can shape public perspectives on the issue of the mastermind behind the riots and the narrative of martial law. This phenomenon reflects what framing theory describes as the ability to set discourse frames that dominate public perception, even in the absence of official clarification from the authorities.

On his YouTube channel, Ferry Irwandi criticizes or refers to the TNI/police as state institutions in a negative manner. In Indonesian criminal law, defamation is a criminal offense intended to protect the honour of individuals, not institutions. Therefore, state institutions such as the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) or the police do not possess “personal honour” that can be legally defamed. This was affirmed by several legal experts, such as Yusril Ihza Mahendra and Mahfud MD, who emphasized the principle of positive law that “the only subjects who can be victims of defamation are individuals, not public bodies or state institutions.” This

means that reports filed by state institutions on the grounds of defamation lack a strong legal basis.

In the YouTube content entitled “*Dalang Demo dan Mencegah Darurat Militer*,” Ferry Irwandi does not officially identify the “mastermind” behind the riots that occurred in August–September 2025 but rather speculates and presents his personal assumptions. In his narrative, Ferry frames the riots not merely as ordinary incidents, but as part of a larger scenario involving specific political actors. These include alleged involvement of political elites or oligarchies seeking to create instability to undermine the government’s legitimacy, as well as the suggestion of “shadow actors” exploiting social and economic issues to provoke public anger. The mention of state institutions such as the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and the discourse of martial law ultimately generated controversy, as it implied institutional involvement despite the absence of concrete evidence. While this framing may influence public opinion, it is worth noting that Ferry Irwandi’s statements are personal views rather than the result of legal investigations or official data. To date, no official statement has been issued by the government or law enforcement authorities identifying the mastermind behind the riots.

Based on the above description, it can be understood that Ferry Irwandi’s YouTube framing is not neutral and informative, but rather constructive persuasive. This pattern is consistent with

Robert N. Entman’s (1993) assertion that framing is the process of selecting aspects of reality to highlight problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations, which shape public perception according to the communicator’s construction. These findings also support the study by Scott Althaus and David Tewksbury (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002), which argues that media framing can influence the public’s cognitive agenda more strongly than the mere presentation of facts (agenda-setting).

This framing analysis also shows that the use of symbols, language, and communication style influences narrative construction and becomes an important instrument in its distribution. The choice of diction, such as ‘threat to state stability’ to ‘system collapse’, is in fact not just rhetoric, but a discursive strategy to build opposition between the people and the state. In the context of this study, Ferry not only presents information wrapped in content but also creates a specific social reality in which the military is positioned as a party that must be viewed with suspicion. This is in line with Entman’s view, whereby framing works by selecting certain aspects of reality that are magnified to influence the public in interpreting an issue.

The effect of this framing construction is evident in the public’s response to Ferry’s content in the comments section and discussions circulating on other social media platforms. Many netizens then affirmed the narrative that state institutions

are no longer neutral, while others considered Ferry to be spreading provocation. This kind of polarisation reinforces the arguments of McGregor (2019) and Von Sikorski & Knoll (2019), who state that crisis framing tends to direct public attention to certain issues while increasing feelings of uncertainty and social anxiety. Thus, Ferry's framing is not only a communication phenomenon but also has implications for broader socio-political dynamics.

Another implication that is no less important is Ferry's position as a political influencer with his ability to compete with mainstream media. Chadwick (2017), in his concept of the media system, emphasises that the digital era allows non-media actors to play an important role in the distribution of information and the formation of opinion. In this study, YouTube is in the spotlight, where it is used as a political medium, showing that the line between professional media and individuals is becoming increasingly blurred. This also marks a significant shift in the political communication ecosystem in Indonesia, where credibility is no longer monopolised by large media outlets but also by numerous content creators with loyal audiences (McKay & Tenove, 2021; Tapsell, 2017).

However, it is worth noting that the framing carried out by influencers also poses risks (Devos et al., 2022; Motahar et al., 2024). The absence of information verification standards means that the

narratives presented have the potential to be biased or provocative, ultimately leading to the dissemination of misinformation (Lewandowsky et al., 2012; McKay & Tenove, 2021; Mourão & Robertson, 2019). In the case of the ferry, claims regarding military involvement and the issue of martial law should still be considered speculative as they are not accompanied by extensive legal evidence. Ultimately, when the public accepts such statements without critical thinking, the potential for misinformation and political tension is inevitable. This situation emphasizes the importance of media literacy among the public, enabling them to distinguish between opinion, speculation, and fact (Kellner & Share, 2007).

CONCLUSION

A framing analysis of Ferry Irwandi's video, "The Mastermind of Demonstrations and Preventing Military Emergency," shows that digital content plays a significant role in shaping public opinion. The research findings suggest that public opinion can be reconstructed outside of mainstream media, in this case, YouTube. Through Entman's framing analysis, the video not only provides information related to the demonstrations in August 2025 and the issue of martial law but also guides viewers' perspectives on the crisis. The result is a polarization of public opinion and a strengthening of the country's image, making it appear as if the country is in a precarious situation.

These findings also confirm that influencers with a broad audience base can become new political actors. These political actors can implement agendas, distribute narratives, and influence public perception or public opinion. At this point, YouTube can be considered a medium for political discourse, no longer merely an entertainment medium, capable of even competing with mainstream media. This situation has opened new debates about the boundaries between freedom of expression and the responsibility to maintain the reputation of state institutions. Furthermore, this situation also raises larger questions about the resilience of digital democracy in Indonesia.

The implications of this research are quite broad. For the public, the emphasis is on media literacy, where the importance of media literacy is increasingly evident. The public is required to be more than passive consumers easily swayed by framing, but also to be able to assess the political biases and motives occurring in the digital space. For journalists and mainstream media, this phenomenon certainly presents both a challenge and an opportunity for multiplatform journalism to be more adaptive to the increasingly massive digital environment. For policymakers, the results of this research serve as a reminder of the need for carefully designed regulations for digital space, which do not restrict freedom of expression while still protecting the public from the potential for disinformation

and protracted conflict.

Academically, this research expands the study of political communication in the digital era by highlighting issues of crisis and militarization. However, this study is limited and only looks at YouTube content. This certainly opens space for further research to compare framing across platforms and examine the real impacts that occur in society, not just in digital space. Thus, ultimately, this study not only highlights how Ferry Irwandi's YouTube content shapes framing for public opinion but also underscores the importance of a new understanding of the relationship between digital media, power, and the dynamics of politics and democracy in contemporary Indonesia.

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