

Critical Discourse Analysis of Megawati Soekarno Putri's Amicus Curiae Letter for MK trial of Presidential Election Disputes

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis surat Amicus Curiae Megawati dengan menggunakan analisis wacana, dengan fokus pada konstruksi kelompok dalam dan kelompok luar, representasi aktor sosial, dan strategi diskursif. Metode analisis data melibatkan Analisis Wacana Kritis (CDA), dengan fokus pada bagaimana surat Megawati membangun identitas dalam kelompok dan luar kelompok, mewakili aktor sosial secara positif atau negatif, dan menggunakan strategi diskursif untuk melegitimasi tindakan dalam kelompok sambil mengkritik kelompok luar. Pendekatan ini menggunakan kerangka kerja dari Van Dijk, Van Leeuwen, dan Wodak untuk mengeksplorasi perangkat linguistik yang membentuk persepsi audiens. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa surat tersebut membangun kelompok dalam sebagai lebih unggul secara moral dan selaras dengan keadilan, sementara kelompok luar tersirat bertanggung jawab untuk merusak demokrasi. Strategi diskursif, seperti seruan moral, referensi sejarah, dan kalimat pasif, digunakan untuk melegitimasi tindakan dalam kelompok dan secara halus mengkritik kelompok luar. Selain itu, motif Megawati disorot sebagai upaya untuk menegaskan identitas politiknya, memposisikan dirinya sebagai pembela nilai-nilai demokrasi, dan meningkatkan pengaruhnya dalam lanskap politik yang kompetitif.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to seek the hidden motives of Megawati's Amicus Curiae letter using discourse analysis, focusing on the construction of in-groups and out-groups, representation of social actors, and discursive strategies. The data analysis method involves Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), focusing on how Megawati's letter constructs in-group and out-group identities, represents social actors positively or negatively, and employs discursive strategies to legitimize in-group actions while criticizing the out-group. This approach utilizes frameworks from Van Dijk, Van Leeuwen, and Wodak to explore linguistic devices that shape audience perceptions. The findings revealed that the letter constructs the in-group as morally superior and aligned with justice, while the out-group is implied to be responsible for undermining democracy. Discursive strategies, such as moral appeals, historical references, and passive voice, are employed to legitimize in-group actions and subtly criticize the out-group. Additionally, Megawati's motives are highlighted as an effort to assert her political identity, position herself as a defender of democratic values, and enhance her influence in a competitive political landscape.

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1. INTRODUCTION

On February 14th 2024, Indonesia had run a presidential election in which it won Prabowo Subiyanto, who is now the Indonesian Minister of Defense, be the next Indonesian President. Prabowo and his running mate, Gibran Rakabuming Raka won almost 60 % of ballot [1] defeating their rivals Anies-Amin (24.9%) and Ganjar-Mahfud (16.5%). This however, raised a debate among Prabowo-Gibran rivals as the election was likely full of disputes. Anis-Amin and Ganjar-Mahfud accused Prabowo-Gibran for the tendency of political endorsement by President Jokowi Dodo as Gibran's father to win them. The political endorsement were, for instance, the change of presidential election law on the minimum age of vice president candidate and the distribution of social assistance (Bansos) [2]. At the very beginning of the election, Prabowo rivals claimed that they 'sniffed' the odds. Due to the law of minimum age of vice president was chaged into Indonesian who is 40 years old or the one who has run or is running certain govermental positions such as city meyer, member of the house of representative, regent and etc who was elected from both general and regional elections [3]. They also claimed that President Jokowi massively distributed bansos (social assistance) to people a month before the election to win people's heart [4]. These two cases were the root of lawsuit of presidential election disputes in MK (Constitutional Court).

Megawati Soekarno Putri, the chairman of The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), who was also Ganjar-Mahfud supporter offered herself as *Amicus Curiae*. *Amicus Curiae* is defined as the third party who is willingly giving his/her opinion of a case in a court. However, instead of imposing power to force or fighting againts the court, the third party's right is only to give his or her opion to jugdes about a case [5]. Megawati, through her letter, asked the MK to let her be *Amicus Curiae* to fight againts the stipulation of Prabowo-Gibran as the next president and vice president of Indonesia.

As different works of literature demonstrate, political discourse has been the topic of considerable and diverse research. The most crucial part in political discourse is a boundary and dichotomizing members and outgroups. This creates a sense of belonging by excluding others, leading to increase self-esteem and internal conflict. It then creates solidarity [6]. However, what makes political discourse more interesting is what William Clay, the executive chair of Ford Motor Company, say in ForbesQuotes that there is no permanent enemies and friendship in politics, but permanent interests [7]. Megawati was once President Jokowi's ally; she, as PDI-P chairman, won Jokowi for two periods of election. Surprisingly, Jokowi maneuver to support Prabowo to run for presidential election had dissappointed everyone, including Megawati. The two stateman figures who were friends are now rivals in politics [2]. Megawati seemed like to hold up Ganjar-Mahfud by being *Amicus Curiae*. In fact, to be an *Amicus Curiae*, one should have no interest and linkages to the dispute parties [8]. In this case, there is seemingly an imposed-power.

Therefore, to seek the motives of Megawati to write the request of being *Amicus Curiae* underlies this study. Critical Discourse Analysis theory by Woodak [9] with focusing on taxonomy of social actor representation by Van Leeuwen (2008) is made use to reveal how language use in the studied political discourse reflects the agenda and ideology of Megawati's motive in writing her *Amicus Curie* letter. According to Wodak [9], CDA critically explores social injustice as it is communicated and legitimized through language use. This study aims to investigate (1) the way the language use in Megawati's letter of Amicus Curiae is structured in and out of group, (2) the way language use in Megawati's letter of Amicus Curiae describe social actors positively or negatively, (3) the discursive methods utilized in the letter to validate the in-group's conduct while criticizing the out-group's.

Previous studies on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of political discourse, such as Alamsyah et al. [10], have examined Megawati's response to oil scarcity using Norman Fairclough's CDA framework. They focused on linguistic elements, text production and consumption, and socio-cultural conditions. Findings highlighted discourse cohesion and coherence but also noted controversial statements that upset certain groups. The study revealed that socio-cultural factors influenced the discourse.

A second study by Sandi et al. [11] analyzes statement of Megawati entitled ““Pak Jokowi Kalau nggak Ada PDI Perjuangan duh Kasihan dah” through textual, discourse practices, and socio-cultural perspectives. It examines language use, media production, and audience interaction on YouTube. The study also notes that, despite Megawati's celebratory speech for PDIP's 50th anniversary, the party's vote share declined in the 2024 elections.

Basri [12] examines media portrayals of Indonesian millennials during the 2019 presidential election. Using qualitative analysis and the CDA frameworks of Van Dijk (2011) and Fairclough (2005), the study focuses on a Jakarta Post article titled "Millennials could be key to the election if they vote." The analysis reveals that millennials are often viewed as mere objects in the media, with their potential to enhance political life underexplored. Their primary value is seen in their contribution to the political process itself.

The research gap lies in the intersection of political discourse and social power dynamics. While existing studies have explored various aspects of CDA, including media representation and ideological tensions [13] [14], there is limited focus on how political figures utilize discourse to navigate legal and electoral contexts.

2. METHOD

The researcher combined Theo Van Leewen's systematic-functional model of social actor representation with Ruth Wodak's DHA to conduct CDA. Since they seem most suited to evaluate Megawati's speech in my opinion. This study's analytical component functions within (In-depth Analysis). The strategy is as the following.

a) In-depth Analysis

Table 1. Description of Discursive Strategy by Woodak (2001) in Khaled (2014)

Strategy	Aims
Nomination	In groups and out groups construction
Prediction	Labeling social actors more or less positively or negatively.
Argumentation	Justification of positive or negative attributions.
Intensification, mitigation	Modifying the epistemic status

of a proposition.

b) Social Actors Representation

According to Van Leewen (2008) in Khaled (2014), the representations of social actors in my work will be based on linguistics and the ways in which language and grammar shape the roles that players play in society. One of the primary criteria for the examination of Van Leeuwen's (2008) method is the following: inclusion/exclusion, suppression, role allocation, functionalization, and impersonalization.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, discursive techniques, or strategies of self- and other presentations, are used to emphasize the linguistic and political goal that lies inside Megawati's Amicus Curiae Letter.

Nomination: The process of creating in-groups and out-groups is called nomination. Here are the example of Megawati' Amicus Curiae Speech:

Saya, Megawati Soekarnoputri, lahir pada tanggal 23 Januari 1947 dan bertempat tinggal di jalan Teuku Umar No. 27, Menteng, Jakarta Pusat, mengajukan diri sebagai Sahabat Pengadilan. Saya adalah seorang warga negara Indonesia yang memiliki keprihatinan terhadap berlangsungnya proses demokrasi di negeri tempat saya lahir, tumbuh dan berkembang ini. Saya adalah seorang warga negara Indonesia yang juga menaruh perhatian khusus pada Mahkamah Konstitusi (MK), sang anak kandung reformasi.

Saya telah mencurahkan seumur hidup saya untuk menjaga demokrasi di Indonesia. Karenanya, ketika ada upaya nyata yang dilakukan untuk merusak demokrasi di dalam pemilihan umum tahun 2024—dan bahkan kerusakannya sudah terasa—saya tidak bisa berdiam diri.

(I, Megawati Soekarnoputri, was born on January 23, 1947 and resides on Jalan Teuku Umar No. 27, Menteng, Central Jakarta, volunteering as a Friend of the Court. I am an Indonesian citizen who has concerns about the democratic process in the country where I was born, grew up and developed. I am an Indonesian citizen who also pays special attention to the Constitutional Court (MK), the biological son of reform. I have devoted my life to maintaining democracy in Indonesia. Therefore, when there are real attempts to undermine democracy in the 2024 general election—and even the damage is already felt—I cannot remain silent)

In this speech by Megawati Soekarnoputri, the in-group and out-group are distinguished through her language and alignment with certain values. The in-group includes herself and Indonesian citizens who share her concern for the country's democratic future. Megawati positions herself as someone deeply invested in democracy, emphasizing her lifelong commitment to safeguarding it. By referring to herself as a citizen who has a strong connection to the nation and its democratic processes, she aligns herself with others who also care about the state of democracy in Indonesia. Furthermore, she expresses particular support for the Constitutional Court (MK), which she calls the "anak kandung reformasi," symbolizing her connection to those who value reform and the democratic institutions born out of Indonesia's reform era.

On the other hand, the out-group consists of those who she believes are actively undermining democracy, specifically referring to the forces attempting to disrupt the 2024 elections. Megawati suggests that there are concrete efforts to damage the democratic process,

and these individuals or groups represent a threat to the values she holds dear. By stating that the damage to democracy is already being felt, she distances herself from these actors and identifies them as part of the out-group. In this way, the speech draws a sharp contrast between those who are working to uphold democracy and those who are perceived as undermining it, positioning the speaker and like-minded citizens in direct opposition to those attempting to harm the electoral process.

Prediction: prediction is the labeling of social actors more or less positively or negatively. Here is the example from the speech:

Dengan mencermati kuatnya pengaruh politik kekuasaan yang saat ini mencoba menyentuh independensi MK, saya berharap agar MK mampu menghadapi dua ujian besar. Pertama, ujian untuk mengembalikan kepercayaan publik yang sirna akibat dibacakannya Putusan Nomor 90/PUU-XXI/2023. Kedua, ujian untuk memeriksa sengketa pemilihan umum presiden dan wakil presiden (pilpres) dalam jangka waktu yang singkat namun mampu menampilkan keadilan yang hakiki sesuai dengan sikap kenegarawanan para hakim MK, mengingat Pemilu memiliki dengan dampak yang sangat luas bagi kehidupan bangsa dan negara.

Ketiga hal di atas saya sampaikan sebagai pencinta pengadilan. Para hakim MK melalui ketiga pertimbangan yang saya sampaikan di atas seharusnya tidak mengabdikan kepada kekuasaan, namun mengabdikan kepada rakyat Indonesia yang mempunyai HAK KEDAULATAN RAKYAT. Dengan menempatkan hak kedaulatan rakyat tersebut, maka hakim MK juga mengabdikan kepada KEADILAN YANG HAKIKI.

Karenanya, saya menuliskan Pendapat Sahabat Pengadilan ini dengan topik "Kenegarawanan Hakim Mahkamah Konstitusi", sebagai sebuah usulan dan bahan renungan bagi hakim Mahkamah Konstitusi.

(By observing the strong influence of power politics that is currently trying to touch the independence of the Constitutional Court, I hope that the Constitutional Court will be able to face two major tests. First, the test is to restore public trust that has disappeared due to the reading of Decision Number 90/PUU-XXI/2023. Second, the exam to examine disputes over the presidential and vice presidential elections in a short period of time but is able to display essential justice in accordance with the statesmanship of the Constitutional Court judges, considering that the election has a very wide impact on the life of the nation and state. I convey the three things above as a lover of the court. The Constitutional Court judges through the three considerations that I conveyed above should not serve power, but serve the people of Indonesia who have the PEOPLE'S SOVEREIGN RIGHTS. By placing the people's sovereign rights, Constitutional Court judges also serve the ESSENTIAL JUSTICE. Therefore, I write this Opinion of the Friends of the Court with the topic "Statesmanship of Judges of the Constitutional Court", as a proposal and subject to reflection for judges of the Constitutional Court)

In this speech, the prediction, or labeling of social actors either positively or negatively, is clearly constructed around the actors involved in the Constitutional Court (MK) and the broader political landscape.

The judges of the Constitutional Court (MK) are given a generally **positive prediction**, though with caveats. Megawati expresses hope that the MK can restore public trust and fulfill its duty to deliver true justice. By referring to the judges as having "sikap kenegarawanan"

(statesmanship), she frames them as capable of acting with integrity, wisdom, and in the best interests of the people. However, this positive labeling is conditional, as she also warns them against serving political power, implying that their independence may be under threat. Her expectation that they will "mengabdikan kepada rakyat Indonesia" (serve the people of Indonesia) and uphold "keadilan yang hakiki" (true justice) further underscores the potential for positive behavior if they act in line with the principles she emphasizes.

On the other hand, the **political actors attempting to influence the MK** are labeled negatively. The phrase "kuatnya pengaruh politik kekuasaan" (the strong influence of political power) suggests a threat to the MK's independence, which is framed in a negative light. These political forces are implicitly criticized for trying to undermine the judiciary's impartiality, positioning them as antagonistic to democratic principles and the people's sovereignty.

Thus, while the judges of the MK are positively portrayed as potential upholders of justice and statesmanship, political actors who try to interfere with the court's independence are depicted negatively as forces undermining democratic integrity.

Dalam tanggung jawab presiden itu, maka persoalan berkaitan dengan keselamatan seluruh bangsa dan negara berada di pundak presiden. Presiden berdiri untuk semua. Segala kesan yang menunjukkan bahwa presiden memperjuangkan kepentingan sendiri atau keluarganya adalah fatal. Sebab presiden adalah milik semua rakyat Indonesia.

Apa yang disampaikan Franz Magnis-Suseno menjadi landasan etis bagi hakim Mahkamah Konstitusi untuk mengurai seluruh akar persoalan pilpres yang berangkat dari nepotisme dan dugaan penyalahgunaan kekuasaan yang dilakukan Presiden.

(In the responsibility of the president, the issue related to the safety of the entire nation and state is on the president's shoulders. The President stands for all. Any impression that shows that the president is fighting for his own interests or his family is fatal. Because the president belongs to all the people of Indonesia. What Franz Magnis-Suseno conveyed became an ethical basis for the Constitutional Court judges to unravel all the root causes of the presidential election which departed from nepotism and alleged abuse of power carried out by the President.)

Franz Magnis-Suseno's comments about the presence of "unsur-unsur yang merupakan pelanggaran etika serius" (elements of serious ethical violations) imply a negative prediction for certain actions or behaviors observed in the 2024 presidential election. The warning that ignoring legal and ethical standards is akin to ethical violations suggests that current or potential lapses in behavior may damage the integrity of the office and the democratic process. The president is implicitly criticized if he or she fails to uphold these standards, especially if there is any indication of pursuing personal or familial interests over the national interest. Such actions would be labeled negatively, as they threaten the ethical foundation expected of a leader.

Intensification/Mitigation: the strategies where incidents are either amplified or reduced.

Keputusan hakim Mahkamah Konstitusi akan menjadi indikator terpenting, apakah demokrasi yang berkedaulatan rakyat tetap eksis atau justru perlombaan penyalahgunaan kekuasaan akan menjadi model kecurangan dan bisa direplikasi dalam pemilihan kepala daerah serentak hingga pemilihan umum yang akan datang.

(The decision of the Constitutional Court judge will be the most important indicator, whether democracy with people's sovereignty will continue to exist or in fact the race for abuse

of power will become a model of fraud and can be replicated in the simultaneous regional head elections until the upcoming general elections.)

In this speech, intensification is used to amplify the threat to democracy. The speaker stresses that the Constitutional Court's decision is critical for the survival of democracy, describing unchecked electoral fraud as something that could "mematikan demokrasi" (kill democracy). Terms like "perlombaan penyalahgunaan kekuasaan" (race to abuse power) and "evolusi kecurangan" (evolution of fraud) intensify the severity of the issue, portraying it as a growing danger that could impact future elections.

Argumentation: Topoi, or reasons or positive or negative attributions, can be used to explain the strategy of various sorts of political inclusion or exclusion.

From the speech in the appendix 2. There are some topoi of argumentative by Woodak (2009). They are as follows:

1. Topos of History: The speaker references historical events, such as the 1971 elections and the geopolitical interests in elections from 1999 to 2024, to argue that electoral fraud and abuse of power have evolved over time. By invoking past elections, the argument suggests that this is a historical pattern that continues into the present.

2. Topos of Threat/Danger: The warning about nepotism and the misuse of power in the 2024 presidential election as part of an "evolution of fraud" is a clear use of this topos. It frames the election as a critical point where corruption has reached its peak, posing a serious threat to democracy.

3. Topos of Responsibility: The speaker emphasizes that it is not the legal system but the leaders' misuse of law that is at fault, placing the responsibility for ethical governance squarely on the shoulders of political leaders, particularly the president and judiciary.

4. Topos of Authority: The reference to the Watergate scandal and Richard Nixon's resignation in the United States invokes an authoritative example from history, suggesting that real consequences for misuse of power can, and should, be applied in Indonesia.

5. Topos of Justice: The expectation that the Constitutional Court (MK) should restore ethics and morality in legal practice indicates an argument based on fairness and justice, particularly in their role in handling electoral disputes.

Social Actors

We'll speculate on a few language issues raised by Van Leewen (2008). The primary inquiry is: In what ways may text strategy elicit empathy for members of the in-group or heighten animosity towards members of the out-group?. The explanation is as follows:

In this speech, several terms and strategies are evident based on Van Leeuwen's framework:

Omission through passive voice: The speaker avoids directly naming the specific individuals or groups responsible for the controversial decision ("putusan Nomor 90/PUU-XI/2023"), using passive constructions like "putusan ... yang sangat kontroversial" (the very controversial decision). This minimizes the responsibility of the out-group and diffuses blame, reducing direct hostility towards any particular actor.

Role allocation: The speech portrays the judges of the Constitutional Court as holding dual roles. On one hand, they are cast as potential saviors of justice (e.g., "fajar keadilan bagi rakyat dan negara," meaning the dawn of justice for the people and the country), which would evoke sympathy and support for these judges if they make the right decision. On the other hand,

if they fail, they risk becoming actors of wrongdoing, choosing "kegelapan demokrasi" (the darkness of democracy). The in-group (those committed to justice) is portrayed as passive but morally upright, while the out-group (those risking the manipulation of democracy) is implicitly active in wrongdoing.

Impersonalization-functionalism: The reference to the "Sembilan Dewa di Mahkamah Konstitusi" (Nine Gods of the Constitutional Court) is an abstraction that depersonalizes the judges, elevating them to a higher, almost mystical role, distancing them from their human flaws. This abstraction frames them as figures who embody justice and authority, not merely individuals with personal interests. It objectifies their role as divine arbiters of justice, making their personal motives less relevant while emphasizing their functional role in preserving democracy.

These strategies work together to intensify the importance of the judges' role while also mitigating direct accusations toward individuals, appealing to a higher sense of justice and morality.

In her Amicus Curiae letter, Megawati's motives are multifaceted. She seeks to position herself as a champion of democracy and justice, appealing to disillusioned voters who may be critical of the current administration. By doing so, she aims to enhance her support base and reinforce her party's legitimacy.

Furthermore, Megawati intends to influence the decisions of the Constitutional Court, asserting her party's role in shaping Indonesia's political landscape. This strategic move allows her to critique the current president, subtly undermining his credibility while presenting herself as a viable alternative.

Additionally, by invoking historical figures and moral values, she portrays herself as a guardian of Indonesia's democratic heritage, legitimizing her critique of the prevailing political climate. Overall, her motives reflect a blend of political rivalry and moral positioning, aimed at reshaping the discourse to align with her future ambitions.

4. CONCLUSION

From the findings and discussion there are some conclusions that can be drawn. First in term of in-group and out-group structuring. Similar to the way Van Dijk (2006) argues that political discourse often distinguishes between "Us" (the in-group) as positive and "Them" (the out-group) as negative, Megawati's letter creates a moral dichotomy. Like previous studies, it uses vague references to the out-group, allowing space for ambiguity, which Van Dijk claims is a common strategy to maintain plausible deniability while fostering hostility or suspicion towards the out-group. This fits with the idea that ideological discourse often serves to reinforce social group hierarchies.

Second, relates to positive and negative descriptions of social actors. Studies by Van Leeuwen (2008) suggest that social actors are often represented in ways that either emphasize agency for negative actions (making them responsible for societal harm) or reduce agency for positive actions (portraying them as passive recipients of virtue). Megawati's letter aligns with these findings, as it uses role allocation to depict the in-group (including herself and sympathetic actors like judges) as aligned with righteousness, while the out-group, linked to electoral fraud and corruption, is subtly cast as perpetrators of wrongdoing. This echoes

Wodak's (2009) approach to analyzing how historical narratives are constructed to create legitimacy for the in-group and discredit the out-group.

Third is related to discursive methods for validation and criticism. In line with Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), Megawati's letter relies heavily on historical references (such as past electoral fraud and Indonesia's democratic history) and moral discourses (justice, ethics, and even religious authority). Like Wodak's studies on the discursive construction of national identity, Megawati's letter uses moral values like justice and truth to position the in-group (judges and herself) as the true defenders of democracy. At the same time, the out-group is criticized through abstract, indirect references to negative actions, consistent with Wodak's (2009) claim that discursive strategies often work to legitimize in-group behavior while criticizing the out-group without direct confrontation.

Van Dijk (2006) and Van Leeuwen (2008) show that the positive in-group/negative out-group dichotomy is a common political discourse strategy, which is reflected in Megawati's letter through moral elevation of the in-group and implied critique of the out-group. Wodak (2009) highlights how historical and moral discourse is used to legitimize in-group actions and critique out-groups, a tactic used extensively in Megawati's references to past leaders, historical events, and religious ideals. The overall construction of the in-group as guardians of democratic values, while the out-group is implicated in corruption and fraud, fits well with the existing body of research on discursive strategies used in political texts to polarize audiences and guide public opinion.

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