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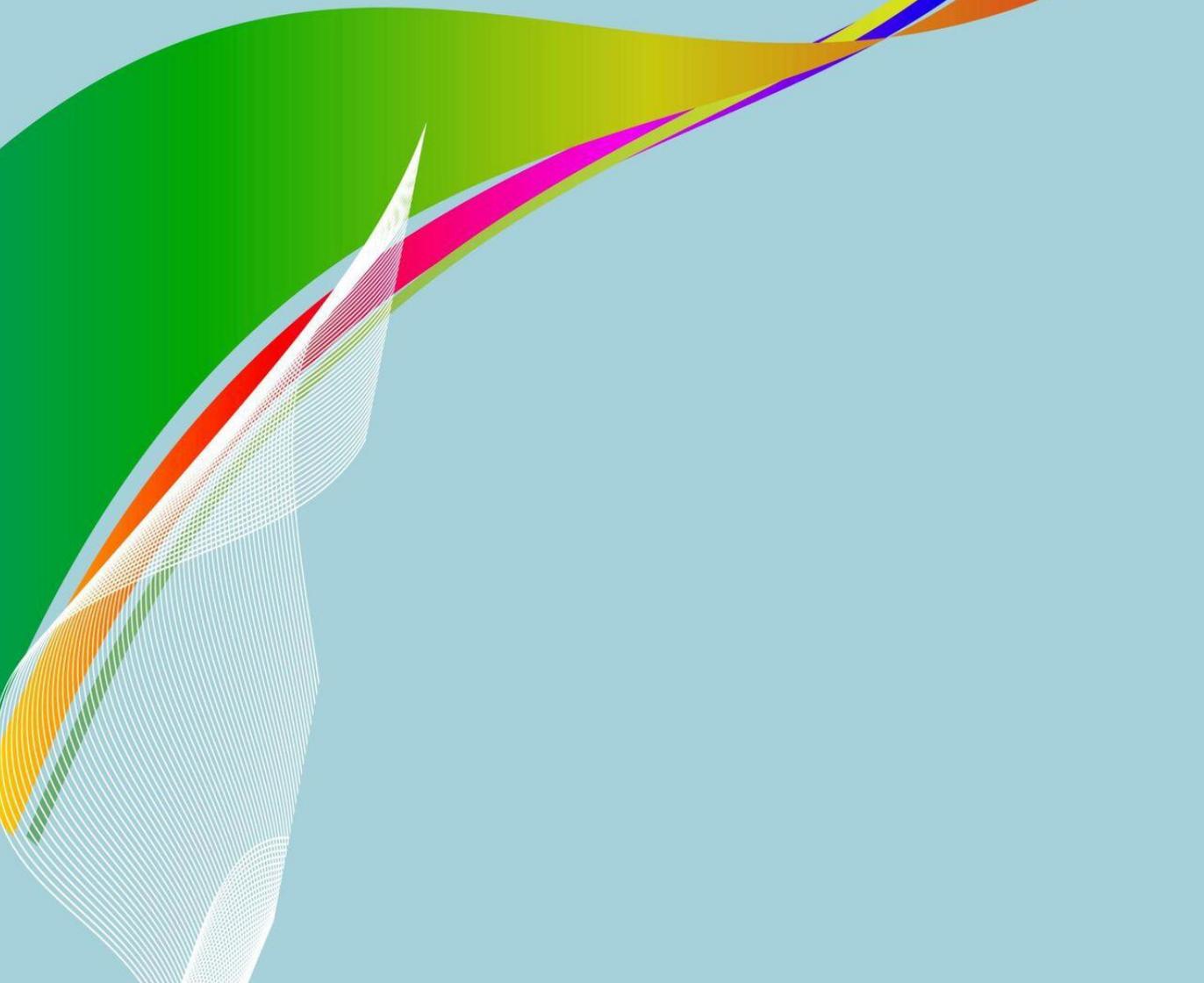
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**An Argumentative Discourse Analysis of the Newspaper Editorial
"The 9/30 Tragedy"**

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AN ARGUMENTATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL “THE 9/30 TRAGEDY”

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Abstract

Academic studies on newspaper discourse have focused primarily on the structure of news items. Research on an argumentative discourse of newspaper editorials is understudied. By using the sociocognitive theory of knowledge and opinion as the theoretical basis, this article aims to analyze the argumentative discourse constructed in “The 9/30 Tragedy” editorial published in The Jakarta Post and to discuss whether the arguments in the text constitute knowledge or solely opinions of the editorial team on the defunct Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The eclectic research method used the pragma-dialectical model of argumentation supported by intertextuality and vocabulary analysis. The findings reveal that the editorial has a standpoint that the tragedy of September 30, 1965, has led the course of Indonesia’s history for the worst tragedy and that the argumentation is manifested in three stages: confrontational stage, argumentation stage, and concluding stage. Acting as the protagonist, the editorial team maneuvers strategically by quoting other voices and using an evaluative lexical repertoire to support their arguments criticizing Soeharto’s leadership legacy. Overall, the editorial seems to reconstruct mental models for the readers by questioning the reliability of the military-dictated textbooks about the 9/30 Tragedy, thereby reshaping the historical knowledge about the calamity, which is justifiable.

Keywords: *Argumentation; Editorial; Mental Model; 9/30 Tragedy.*



A. Introduction

Newspaper discourse generally consists of news, advertising, and entertainment. Central to these parts is an editorial section, which also constitutes a news story usually supplied by the newspaper in relation to news reports. A newspaper presents an editorial piece as a non-signed text that expresses its opinions on social relevance to news pieces of the day. A newspaper editorial is a public genre that may be characterized as a particular type of media discourse belonging to a large class of opinion discourses. The editorial discourse is generally institutional, not personal. Even when written by one editor, editorials are seldom signed because they count as the opinion of the given newspaper (van Dijk, 1998). It means editorials are generally shared among the editorial team and the management. Consequently, they are “fascinating objects of study. They offer reasoned views of the world in slices of no more than 500 words each. Some are also superb pieces of writing” (Le, 2010; Zulkarnain et al., 2022; Zada, 2023). According to Firmstone (2008), four common reasons encourage a newspaper to publish editorials: (1) assessment of news values (topicality); (2) level of editorial importance; (3) impact on readers; and (4) salience in the broader media debate.

A newspaper editorial may contain facts, values, and norms and construct opinions, knowledge, or both about the selected topic. Editorials differ from features and other regular items and express opinions about the news story. Editorials may vary in their presuppositions and knowledge, depending on the type and the position of the newspaper, which claims to present its point of view. Editorials have diverse arguments, goals, beliefs, and perspectives, raising the possibility of value-free content. They may have a political agenda to establish. The editor’s beliefs, goals, and other social representations may influence the opinions on the raised issues, affecting the discourse strategies of the editorial and discourse content. The propositional contents, in general, articulated in the editorials are not always stated explicitly. Only through intensive reading of the discursive strategies such as argument structure, intertextuality, and linguistic trivialities at the various levels in an argumentative editorial can the opaque relationship between discourse,

knowledge, opinions, and other semiotic elements be revealed in text-based critical research (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2011; Fairclough, 2003, 2013).

Compared to the social media argument studies (Fisher, 2009; Muwafiq et al., 2019) and parliamentary argument (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2011; Van Dijk, 2002), editorial argumentative discourse is still understudied. Even if they existed, some previous studies in newspaper discourse have mainly concentrated on discourse patterns of the news story (Bell, 1998; Fowler, 1991; Pollak et al., 2022), except for a few classical academic studies on newspaper editorials (Bolívar, 1994; Katajamäki & Koskela, 2006; Van Dijk, 1998).

Bolívar (1994) shows how British editorials can be analyzed in terms of triads, a minimal unit of interaction composed of three fundamental turns: the "lead," the "follow," and the "valuate." Katajamäki and Koskela (2006) present rhetorical structural differences in the argumentation of Finnish, British, and Swedish business newspaper editorials, whose parts include an introduction section, an intermediate section, and a coda. Of these studies, van Dijk (1998) is multidisciplinary and eclectic, looking at the nature of opinions and how they are expressed in the editorial in the press, which later led him to focus on larger projects on discourse and ideology, and discourse and knowledge (van Dijk, 2014). He claims that editorials contain explicit and implicit content that leads the readers to agree with the recommendation formulated by the newspaper in the conclusion. Meanwhile, Amossy (2009) employed an interdisciplinary analysis of the editorial discourse, including argumentation theory and rhetorical criticism. However, the study aimed to recommend a proposal for using a multidisciplinary approach in argumentative discourse analysis. In addition, Amossy's analysis was exemplified by a much shorter text of the newspaper editorial.

Marques and Mont'Alverne (2021) claim that the more editorial-worthiness criteria an issue satisfies, the more likely it is to be discussed. However, the topic of the argument structure, argument strategies, and the worthiness of newspaper editorials has received scant attention. This article attempts to fill this gap. Built upon the concept of newspaper discourse (Bell,



1998), the idea of opinion vs knowledge and the mental model of sociocognitive discourse analysis (van Dijk, 2014) and supported by the pragma-dialectical model of argumentation (van Eemeren, 2010, 2018), the study of intertextuality (Farrelly, 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2020; Thalal, 2020; Ali & Abo-Elmagd, 2023), and the analysis of linguistic trivialities (Fairclough, 2003), this article aims to explore “The 9/30 Tragedy” argumentative editorial on the defunct Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) published in the *Jakarta Post*. The author raises the following simple research questions to accomplish this research objective.

1. What is the primary standpoint of “The 9/30 Tragedy” editorial argument?
2. How is the argument organized, and what discursive strategies are used?
3. Does the argument produce new knowledge or simply form the editor’s opinions on the issue?

Correspondingly, to provide the theoretical basis for these questions, in what follows, I will elucidate the conceptual framework of newspaper discourse and explain the distinctions between opinion and knowledge as they are conceptualized in social epistemology and employed in this article.

Two main approaches to studying newspaper discourse can be identified in academic literature: discourse analysis and sociology. Some media researchers have primarily focused on discourse analysis (e.g., Bell, 1998; Fowler, 1991). Van Dijk (1998) uses an interdisciplinary approach to newspaper discourse, built upon the sociocognitive side of critical discourse analysis. His central triad is constructed between discourse, cognition, and society. According to van Dijk, a newspaper editorial is organized by relevance or importance concerning its macrostructure. It can be described as a sequence of structural slots, starting with a summary, and then moving to the main argument. This macrostructure reflects and realizes the editor’s and readers’ cognitive schemata for contents, a set of pre-formed expectations about structure and content that

help simplify information processing. Van Dijk (1998) focused on newspaper editorial discourse's opinion and ideological dimensions. The present study focuses more on the opinion and knowledge sides of the newspaper editorial to which I now turn.

Opinion and knowledge constitute essential aspects in the studies of newspaper discourse. The terms are often differentiated as *doxa* (opinion) and *episteme* (knowledge). Although the distinction between these two complicated domains falls within the territory of epistemology, some argumentation analysts (Amossy, 2009; Poutanen, 2019; Smirnova, 2009) and discourse analysts (Bell, 1998; Richardson, 2017; van Dijk, 2014) have paid their attention to these aspects. They argue that opinions and knowledge cannot entirely be separated from discourse because discourse has a particular function in producing opinions and knowledge, especially in reproducing ideologies (Fowler, 1991). It is only through discourse or other semiotic practices that knowledge is constituted (Foucault, 2003; Rahman, 2022). A newspaper editorial as discourse may express opinions or produce knowledge. Therefore, for the current study, the two terms require further clarification.

Opinions are often conceptualized as evaluative beliefs. They are the beliefs that do not pass the test criteria of knowledge (Amossy, 2002; van Dijk, 2014). Opinions presuppose values and involve judgment about somebody or something. For example, 'Smoking is bad for our health' is an opinion because the sentence contains an evaluative word, 'bad,' even though scientific evidence has shown that smoking is bad for our health. Opinions may depend on the values of a group or culture and the grounds or criteria of judgment. The notion of opinion, as used here, refers to those with an evaluative dimension, the beliefs that imply something is good or bad, right, or wrong, which is relative to the person or group of people. In this respect, non-smokers may deny that smoking is bad for our health.

Opinions are in the mind and are subjective. Thus, if someone says that he has an opinion about X, it means that he has some subjective representation of X. Similar to van Dijk (1998), the term mind used here is not



the philosophical distinction between body and mind. The mind is a specific brain property where information processing occurs (van Dijk, 2014). People do cognitive tasks with their minds, such as thinking, perceiving, understanding, and remembering.

Knowledge is often defined as justified true beliefs. We know that P if we believe that P, if we have good reasons, evidence that P is true. In other words, knowledge is based on the statements that generate common beliefs (We all know that ... or Everyone knows that ...). We can justify that something is conceived as knowledge by assigning truth criteria, such as scientific observations, encyclopedias, and inferences (van Dijk, 2014).

It is also claimed that knowledge is a vital feature of the society. It binds individuals and groups of humans into larger groups. Knowledge is also part of what joins people in groups and what divides groups. Knowledge is historically, mentally, and socially determined (Foucault, 2003; van Dijk, 2014). Discourse studies show that knowledge is mental and social in its contemporary directions. This account maintains that people in groups create knowledge; it must have shared truth criteria in society. The sociological features of the group determine the contents of knowledge and probably its forms (Dant, 1991; van Dijk, 2002; Huda & Ispriyarso, 2019). Knowledge is produced as the people who form society work out their lives together. When knowledge is generated, it reflects the values and sociological features of the knowledge producer.

This article argues that the editorial discourse is based on mental models of the editor's sociocognition of the given issue, which is put forward to share with the readers. When writing about the issue, the editor needs previous knowledge of the world; he knows what to include and exclude (van Dijk, 1998). The same procedure applies to the readers, interpreting editorial content means constructing mental models. Like van Dijk (2014), this article sees mental models as knowledge.

Although it is difficult to distinguish between opinion and knowledge, it is agreed that opinions are evaluative beliefs, and knowledge

is justified true beliefs (van Dijk, 2014). Although both opinion and knowledge involve a judgment, they need two different standards: values criteria in opinions and truth criteria in knowledge. Simply put, the sentence 'Jakarta is the capital of Indonesia' is factual. It constitutes knowledge. We can check it on the map or in encyclopedias. But 'Jakarta is a beautiful city' is an opinion. The adjective beautiful is subjective, depending on how people see it.

B. Method

1. Data Selection

The primary data for this article was derived from an editorial selected from the editorial pieces. It was published in The *Jakarta Post* since the start of the reformation era in 1998 when the late former president, Soeharto, was ousted from his protracted power. This article mainly focuses on the editorial published on September 30, 2005, to mark a forty-year-old mysterious event, the "September 30, 1965, Tragedy".

This argumentative editorial was selected because it reflects the orientation of the multidisciplinary analysis that can convey the subtle nuances of language, politics, and history. This editorial seems to have been the most critical one since the fall of Soeharto's regime in 1998. During the New Order era, it was risky for the Indonesian media to critically discuss this tragedy unless their press licenses deserved to be revoked. As can be seen in the appendix, the editorial consists of 14 paragraphs and contains 758 words.

2. Techniques of Data Analysis

This article applies an eclectic analysis method, which includes the pragma-dialectical model of reasoning, which sees argumentation as verbal and rational communication intended to resolve a difference of opinion. According to Van Eemeren & Snoeck Henkemans (2017), four argumentation stages can analytically be distinguished.

- a. Confrontation stage: the difference of opinion is established.
- b. Opening stage: The protagonist and antagonist determine their position to resolve the difference of opinion.



- c. Argumentation stage: the protagonist defends a claim by providing the grounds for the claim.
- d. Concluding stage: the conclusion is drawn based on the available supports and the presumed rebuttals or counterarguments.

In addition to the argumentation stages above, the present work also employs the pragma-dialectical techniques of strategic maneuvering that manifests itself in three ways: topical potential, where the arguer raises the topics that can be quickly resolved; audience demand in which the arguer resolves the difference of opinion in the way that is most agreeable to the audience, and presentational choices where the arguer selects the most effective rhetorical repertoire, including comparison, analogy, implication, and vocabulary. This article emphasizes vocabulary because it is the most straightforward repertoire for producing and circulating knowledge. When put in the proper context, the line of the argument and the lexical choices can generate implicit propositions. In practical argumentation, all types of strategic maneuvering “can always go together and are represented in every argumentative move” (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 94), despite a word or linguistic constituent appearing in the argumentative discourse only once (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2015).

The article also uses intertextuality of critical discourse analysis (Farrelly, 2020) that sees a text as comprising elements of other texts; namely, a set of other relevant texts and other voices are incorporated into, dialogued with, or assumed in various ways in argumentative discourse. The most common form of intertextuality is reported speech (Fairclough, 2003; Smirnova, 2009), which can be used to support a claim of the argument. Technically, simple conventions are adopted in the analysis of the data. For easy reference, I have numbered the paragraphs of the text. Bracketed dots (. . .) indicate omissions. Italics indicate that the actual linguistic constituents are taken directly from the editorial text.



C. Result and Discussion

1. Result

The following subsections are devoted to the description of the main findings of the current study:

a. The Standpoint and Structure of the Argument

The findings show that the primary standpoint of the argument is that the effect of the 9/30 tragedy *has led to another* tragedy. The editorial is generally organized into three parts: summary, evaluative arguments, and conclusion (final judgment).

The macrostructure of "The 9/30 Tragedy" editorial argument can be schematically presented as follows.

Table 1. The macrostructure of the 9/30 tragedy argument

Premise	Proposition
1.	The September 30, 1965, tragedy has led the course of Indonesia's history to the worst tragedies.
(1.1)	(Soeharto's seizure of presidency in 1966 was a tragedy).
(1.1')	(Soeharto's three-decade regime was a tragedy).
(1.1'.1)	(Soeharto's sanctified Pancasila as an apparatus for his repression and brutal policies was a tragedy).
1.2	Indonesians' denial of the 9/30 calamity was the biggest tragedy.

The argument structure above is the coordinative argumentation in which the protagonist advances the main claim and supports it with both explicit premises in 1 & 1.2 and implicit premises in (1.1.), (1.1'), (1.1'.1).

The editorial is further divided into three argumentation stages: the confrontation stage, the argument stage, and the concluding stage. The confrontation stage is located in paragraphs [1]; the argumentation stage is from paragraph [2] to paragraph [12], and the concluding stage is in paragraphs [13] and [14]. The opening stage seems to be implicit—the implicit objective of the editorial is to criticize the late President Soeharto's New Order leadership. Indeed, Soeharto's name appears 10 times in the editorial. The editorial uses discursive strategies, including strategic



maneuvering, intertextuality, negative evaluative vocabulary, and the specific conjunction *but*.

b. The Strategies of the Argument

The protagonist strategically maneuvers by shifting the original topic on the 9/30 Tragedy of the kidnapping and murder of six army generals on the night of September 30, 1965, to a new topic on Soeharto’s seizure of the presidency in the following year. The argument's main propositions can be reconstructed by *modes ponens*—a form of *if . . . then* reasoning scheme (van Eemeren & Snoeck Henkemans, 2017). The scheme would generate the following argument.

Table 2: The argument scheme of the 9/30 tragedy editorial

Premise	Propositions
Premise 1:	If the kidnapping and murder of six army generals on the night of September 30, 1965, was a tragedy, then Soeharto’s seizure of the presidency in the following year was another tragedy.
Premise 2:	The kidnapping and murder of six army generals on the night of September 30, 1965, was a tragedy.
Conclusion:	Therefore, Soeharto’s seizure of the presidency the following year was another tragedy.

Table 2 demonstrates the argument scheme of the modus ponens that Soeharto’s seizure of the presidency in 1966, which lasted for three decades, was another tragedy. The analysis shows that the protagonist appeals to historical evidence, drawing on other texts that give rise to intertextuality through quotations and report thoughts to support the main claim. The protagonist also uses rhetorical repertoire, including word choices, such as evaluative vocabulary, *brutal*, and *ruthless*, to support the argument. All three strategies—topical potential, audience demand, and presentational choices—are mixed in the argumentative “9/30 Tragedy” editorial.



c. The Argument as New Knowledge Production

From all the strategies of reasoning above, the editorial justifies the standpoint that the 9/30 tragedy was *horrible*, which led to another, and another, and another tragedy. Employing these argumentative strategies, the editorial attempts to produce new social knowledge through new mental models as it contends the reliability of the military-dictated history textbooks about the tragedy, particularly by criticizing Soeharto's leadership legacy.

2. Discussion

The 9/30 Tragedy editorial text has a concise title. However, the title is compelling enough to attract the audience's attention to read the whole text. Journalistically, putting the title in such a way represents an intertextuality relation with the 9/11 Tragedy of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001. Before the 1998 reformation era, the 9/30 tragedy was called a movement. But after the reformation era, this shrouded mystery has been called a tragedy, a discorsal change (Fairclough, 2013; Foucault, 2003).

The editorial then starts with summarizing the argument in the confrontation stage [paragraph 1]. The protagonist regards the notorious 9/30 Tragedy as *something horrible* (. . .) *that changed the course of Indonesia's history, unfortunately for the worse*, presupposing that the protagonist will argue on something different.

The argumentation stage moves from paragraph [2] to paragraph [12]. The protagonist argues that there should be some people who were responsible for the kidnapping and killing of the six army generals on the night of September 30, 1965. Although the main topic of the editorial was the 9/30 Tragedy, it then shifts to the seizure of the presidency by Soeharto in 1966 [paragraph 3], which is superficially not coherent. Still, in terms of the mental model, it is coherent. The coherence is established by the mental models of discourse participants (van Dijk, 2014), that is, by introducing a notorious figure, Soeharto, *who ushered in an era of repression* (. . .) *for the next three decades*. The propositions in this part of the argumentation stage



[paragraph 3] are intentionally related in terms of giving examples, in which the protagonist argues that the 9/30 tragedy leads to *another* and *another* tragedy.

In this editorial, all strategic maneuverings are mixed in the argumentation stage by permutation. It makes identifying strategic maneuvering in political argumentation difficult (Zarefsky, 2007). The protagonist maneuvers strategically, from choosing the most agreeable topic to the readers—Soeharto’s records of human rights violations—to giving the instances of brutality [paragraph 4] and sanctification of Pancasila [paragraph 6]. The protagonist uses examples, comparisons, and analogies to support the arguments. Since *The Jakarta Post* is widely consumed by enlightened readers, using comparisons and analogy [paragraphs 9 & 10] to support the protagonist’s primary standpoint is reasonable. The specific examples are offered by or tend to derive from the most agreeable political realities, e.g., the silencing of politicians, clerics, and students [paragraph 4], rather than from personal experiences or common sense of the arguer (Demir, 2016; van Eemeren, 2010; van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2015).

The significant dimension of the discourse meaning in the editorial is controlled by the train of reasoning and the selection of vocabulary. Calling someone a dictator vs a leader is decided in the mental models. Soeharto is compared to a dictator rather than a former president. The political evaluation becomes apparent when the protagonist uses the lexical repertoire *ruthless*, *invasion*, *brutal*, *silencing*, and *murdered* to describe Soeharto [paragraph 4]. The selection of these negative words creates new mental models, which can be presented epistemologically.

We now know that Soeharto was ruthless.

We now know that Soeharto’s policies were brutal.

We now know that Soeharto was a dictator.

The protagonist uses the evaluative word *brutal* in paragraphs [5] and [6] repeatedly, a strategy to manage the minds of the audience through a

manipulation of beliefs that leads to the manufacturing of consent, making the audience keep the same mental model about the ousted president and his legacy. The protagonist also uses other negative lexical repertoires of *atrocities, militarism, intolerance, and violence* [paragraph 5]. At first, it appears that using such evaluative lexical repertoire to describe Soeharto is an opinion. Still, this paragraph generates new knowledge on the regime through old reasoning for new schemata (van Dijk, 2014; Fariana, 2021).

The connector in paragraph [6] emphasizes society's denial of the effect of the 9/30 tragedy, which is the most significant consequence. The connector indicates a contrast and a topic maintenance of paragraph [5]. Both paragraphs are concerned with a similar topic: Soeharto's New Order policies of governing and the Indonesians' denial of them.

A long sentence in which *there was no mention of the ensuing bloodshed in the military-dictated official history books (. . .)* in paragraph [8] was used to describe one of Soeharto's leadership legacies. Indeed, the phrase *military-dictated official history books* in the sentence can be parsed separately, resulting in the following: the history books are military, dictated, and official. What is being reshaped in this long sentence is that the dictated history books are not as reliable as the actual knowledge because they are the products of the New Order military. The military had its system of truth, whose agreement on it was not universal. So, the protagonist's argument constitutes the actual knowledge of the tragedy.

There is a new formation of meaning in this editorial through the reproduction of discursive practices (Fairclough, 2013; Foucault, 2003), in which the meaning that could not be articulated during Soeharto's New Order regime could be after the 1998 reformation era. The protagonist also controls the readers' episodic memory and mental model by placing Soeharto as the topic of the discourse [paragraphs 4 & 5]. The protagonist argues that the brutality of today's political culture is the impact of Soeharto's New Order regime. Logically, if there has been an effect, there must have been a cause. That is, the militaristic characteristic of the current Indonesian society is attributable to the political culture in the past.



As in paragraphs [8], [9], and [10] and the rest, the protagonist does not provide a list of variable expressions of underlying opinions in the editorial but arguments. Arguments are rational discourse; they need data, evidence, or grounds to support the claim (Toulmin, 2003; Sukti et al., 2022; Sonafist & Yuningsih, 2023). The editorial shows that quoting evidence is one way to keep the argument. In this respect, the protagonist relates what happened in the months of the killings of hundreds of thousands of Indonesians to other similar crimes that took place in the same century. Thus, the protagonist refers to the authority to support the argument, for example, in paragraphs [8], [9] and [10]. The quote indicates that when the writing or thought of another protagonist is reported, two different texts, two different voices, are brought into dialogue (Fairclough, 2003; Smirnova, 2009; Sabir & Nazaruddin, 2021; Azeh et al., 2023), and potentially two different perspectives or objectives emerge: the dictated military history books vs *The New York Time* and *The Jakarta Post*.

Intertextuality is established by a reference to the international human rights organizations [paragraph 7] and a comparison with Stalin's Starvation of the Kulaks and Hitler's Jewish Genocide as provided in *The New York Times* by C.L. Sulzberger [paragraphs 9 & 10]. By referring to such authorities, the protagonist proves that the argument is vital because intertextuality and argument by authority constitute the discursive links between the events (Fairclough, 2003; Farrelly, 2020). The quote also reminds the readers of the brutality of Soeharto's regime that Indonesians must not return. In this case, both the mental model and the event model are replenished in the hope that the readers would agree with the protagonist, who is not only expressing an evaluation of the events but also reproducing new schemata for historical knowledge, which the readers may not know or may have forgotten [paragraph 8].

As shown in the argumentation stage from paragraph [2] to paragraph [12], the argument's coherence is achieved through mental models of comparing and contrasting. For instance, in paragraphs [6] and

paragraph [12], the protagonist uses a connector to control the readers' mental model and leads them to new schemata.

Paragraphs [13] and [14] represent the concluding stage of the argument. The protagonist concludes that rewriting the history of the 9/30 Tragedy can uncover the truth of what happened on the night of September 30, 1965. The conjunction in paragraph [14] strengthens the mental episodic memory (van Dijk, 2014) of the readers, which constitutes one of the underlying dialectical characteristics of "The 9/30 Tragedy" argumentative editorial.

D. Conclusion

This article shows that the newspaper editorial "The 9/30 Tragedy" consists of a summary, evaluative arguments, and a conclusion supported by specific arguments. The analysis reveals that three stages of argumentation are identifiable in the editorial: the confrontation stage, the argumentation stage, and the concluding stage. The opening stage seems to be implicit. The editorial constructs the unity of the arguments by relating one event to another, presupposing that the readers of *The Jakarta Post* have the schemata of the tragedy based on their mental model and supports the standpoint by the intertextuality, relating "The 9/30 Tragedy" text to other texts. The editorial is also characterized by strategic maneuvering. The protagonist chooses a topic that is easy to handle and a lexical repertoire that is powerfully effective, from the negative evaluative vocabulary to the connector, resulting in a strong argument.

By linking the editorial with other texts as reported thought, using evaluative words, and denial, the protagonist attempts to resolve the difference of opinions on the 9/30 Tragedy and construct new knowledge on the notorious event. The protagonist intends to reshape the past historical knowledge of the tragedy with a true one, hoping that *The Jakarta Post* readers have a new stock of knowledge about the brutal system of the New Order engineered by Soeharto.

Although this article has relied on a single critical newspaper editorial, its analysis is purposely rigorous. However, its findings are not



generalizable. Therefore, although it is uncommon in argumentative discourse analysis to use multiple texts, further inquiry should explore a large piece of editorials and apply the thematic analysis. For generalizable findings, the study can be based on a computer model.

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Appendix

This is the editorial about the 9/30/Tragedy. The text was written in response to the fortieth memory of the historical PKI's movement on September 30, 1965.

The 9/30 Tragedy

EDITORIAL: (The Jakarta Post)

Jakarta • Friday, September 30, 2005

- [1] Something horrible happened 40 years ago that changed the course of Indonesia's history, unfortunately for the worse. But while the circumstances surrounding the kidnapping and murder of six Army generals on the night of September 30, 1965, remain shrouded in mystery, the effects of this tragic event are unequivocal: it was a case of one tragedy leading to another, and another, and another.
- [2] Whoever was responsible for the kidnappings and killings, and whatever their motives (. . .) unleashed a killing spree that went on for months, with the main targets, though by far not the only targets, being suspected members and supporters of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), which was blamed for the murder of the generals.
- [3] If that was not enough of a tragedy, the nation saw the young Army general Soeharto seize the presidency the following year, ushering in an era of repression, brutality and corruption that would last for the next three decades.
- [4] Soeharto was easily one of the most ruthless rulers of the 20th century, and his human rights record matches those of other dictators of his era: the jailing of tens of thousands of people without trial, the invasion of East Timor and the ensuing brutal rule of the territory, the



- silencing of politicians, clerics and students who disagreed with his policies, his brutal policies in Aceh and Papua, (. . .).
- [5] Soeharto's legacy goes beyond the atrocities he and his regime committed. The militaristic and often brutal nature of our political culture today, from the intolerance to the use of violence to settle differences, is deeply rooted in Soeharto's New Order, and it will likely require one or two generations to undo this unfortunate legacy (. . .).
- [6] But the biggest tragedy for the nation is our own denial that 9/30 was a tragedy of horrific proportions. (. . .).
- [7] Officially, at least during the Soeharto years, the event was marked on October 1, thus confining the tragedy solely to the killing of the six generals and, at least according to military historians, to the abortive coup by the PKI (. . .).
- [8] There was no mention in the military-dictated official history books of the ensuing bloodshed, which according to international human rights organizations left at least half a million people dead. (. . .).
- [9] C. L. Sulzberger, writing in *The New York Times* from Jakarta on April 13, 1966, compared the Indonesian killings with other slaughters of the 20th century, including the Armenian massacres, Stalin's starvation of the Kulaks, Hitler's Jewish genocide, the Muslim-Hindu killings following India's partition and the purges following China's turn to communism.
- [10] "Indonesia's bloody persecution of its communist rivals these terrible events in both scale and savagery," Sulzberger wrote.
- [11] Four decades later the nation has not fully come to terms with the reality of these events. We barely know the truth. We only have the truth Soeharto's military wanted us to have. The worst part is that most of us do not seem to want to know what happened. We would rather bury this ugly past and forget it entirely.
- [12] But here is the bad news: We can never bury the past. This dark page in our history will continue to haunt us for as long as we fail to get to the truth. As they say, only the truth shall set us free.



- [13] More than seven years since Soeharto left the political stage, surely the time has come for the nation to rewrite the history of what happened on the night of September 30, 1965. (. . .). Soeharto was the winner of the power struggle in the mid-1960s, thus he had his day.
- [14] But as his legacy shows, there are no real winners here. The entire nation suffered, and continues to suffer to this day. There are only losers.