

## From Security to Ethics: Evolution of Indonesia's Ideology in Media Discourse

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### Abstract

*This study analyzes the dynamics of Indonesian digital ideology in the national online media discourse throughout 2024–2025, focusing on issues such as the National Data Center (PDN), public data leaks, ransomware attacks, and the repositioning of digital ethics by the state through the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi). The approach used is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), combining the models of Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak, to examine the relationship between text structure, discourse practice, and ideological social practice. Data was obtained from seventeen online news articles from Tempo.co, analyzed based on the structure of the title, lead, and body. The results show that Indonesian digital discourse has undergone an ideological shift from the hegemony of techno-nationalism to public moral resistance, ending in the restoration of digital ethics. State discourse focuses on “security” and “data sovereignty” to legitimize power, while the media and the public construct counter-narratives based on ‘transparency’ and ‘privacy.’ These findings confirm that digital language has become a new political arena where the legitimacy of power and public resistance are negotiated through media discourse. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of digital ethics governance and political communication literacy in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** *Critical Discourse Analysis, Digital ideology, Political communication, National data center, Digital ethics.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation in Indonesia over the past decade has taken place at an unprecedented speed and intensity (Schwab, 2021). The government is working to build digital infrastructure through the National Data Center (PDN) project, the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE) program, and the implementation of the Personal Data Protection Law (PDP Law) (Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika Republik Indonesia, 2022). In official discourse, the PDN project is described as a symbol of national data sovereignty and national progress in the digital age (Abidin, 2021). However, behind this rhetoric of modernity lies a complex power dynamic, in which the state, the media, and the public interact with each other in the ideological construction of “security,” “privacy,” and “digital trust” (Lim, 2025; M et al., 2020).

Since 2020, narratives about PDN have continued to strengthen in speeches by officials, press releases, and media reports. The words security and sovereignty dominate public discourse (Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika Republik Indonesia, 2022; Lim, 2025). However, with the emergence of the leak of 6 million NPWP data in 2023 and the ransomware attack on PDN in June 2024, the state's rhetoric on digital security has become a point of crisis of legitimacy (Tempo.co, 2024). The public has begun to question the government's ability to manage their data securely.

In this context, digital discourse is no longer merely a technical issue, but rather an ideological arena where the struggle for meaning takes place. The state seeks to maintain its hegemony by emphasizing “national security” as the highest moral value, while the media and civil society have begun to frame this issue as a matter of ethics and public accountability (Fuchs, 2021; Véliz, 2020).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) views this phenomenon as a form of language politics in which words, metaphors, and text structures become tools for producing and maintaining power (Gee M., 2023; Van Dijk, 2025; Wodak, 2021). Through discourse analysis, we can see how the legitimacy of digital power is constructed, maintained, and challenged in the arena of public communication.

Meanwhile, the dynamics of digital ideology in Indonesia also reflect global changes towards technological ethics. Examples in the business world, proven research theories that utilise AI tools should be promoted to encourage their implementation in organisations. Research has definitively established that organisations experience growth in sales, efficiency, and profitability when they make substantial investments in human resource management (Soekiman et al., 2023). The discourse on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and international collaboration in data governance has emerged as a narrative of moral recovery after the PDN crisis (Mejias N., 2024; Poell D. B.; Duffy, B. E., 2021). The state is attempting to reposition itself from a “data protector” to a “digital ethics manager,” a discursive shift that is interesting to examine critically. Therefore, this study aims to: (1) analyze the structure of digital discourse in Tempo.co's reporting related to the PDN and digital ethics; (2) identify the ideologies formed by the state, the media, and the public; and (3) explain how the ideological shift from hegemony to resistance to the restoration of digital ethics occurred. This research is expected to contribute to the development of digital political communication studies in Indonesia by positioning language as a political tool, not merely a medium of information. Digital transformation in Indonesia over the past decade has taken place at an unprecedented speed and intensity (Schwab, 2021). The government is working to build digital infrastructure through the National Data Center (PDN) project, the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE) program, and the implementation of the Personal Data Protection Law (PDP Law) (Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika Republik Indonesia, 2022). In official discourse, the PDN project is described as a symbol of national data sovereignty and national progress in the digital age (Abidin, 2021). However, behind this rhetoric of modernity lies a complex power dynamic, in which the state, the media, and the public interact with each other in the ideological construction of “security,” “privacy,” and “digital trust” (Lim, 2025; M et al., 2020).

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Meanwhile, research by Batool et al (2025) explain that the dynamics of digital ideology in Indonesia also reflect global changes towards technological ethics. The discourse on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and international collaboration in data governance has emerged as a narrative of moral recovery after the PDN crisis. The state is attempting to reposition itself from a “data protector” to a “digital ethics manager,” a discursive shift that is interesting to examine critically. Therefore, this study aims to: (1) analyze the structure of digital discourse in Tempo.co's reporting related to the PDN and digital ethics; (2) identify the ideologies formed by the state, the media, and the public; and (3) explain how the ideological shift from hegemony to resistance to the restoration of digital ethics occurred. This research is expected to contribute to the development

of digital political communication studies in Indonesia by positioning language as a political tool, not merely a medium of information

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach with a critical-reflective orientation. CDA views discourse as a social practice that reproduces and challenges power (Gee M., 2023). The analytical model used combines three main approaches: (1) a three-dimensional analysis: text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 1995); (2) analysis of ideology and cognitive control in media representation (Van Dijk, 2025), and (3) historical-discursive approach to linking the context of discourse with social change (Wodak, 2021). The data corpus was taken from 17 online news articles on Tempo.co discussing PDN issues, data leaks, and digital ethics (Tempo.co, 2024). Tempo.co was chosen because it is an independent national media outlet with a strong journalistic reputation on digital policy issues, and has consistently reported on PDN from 2024 to 2025. Each news article was divided into three segments: title, lead, and body. The analysis was conducted in four stages: first, Lexical Analysis (Word Cloud), which identified the dominant keywords in each segment; second, Contextual Analysis, which traced the relationships between discourse and ideological markers (e.g., security, corruption, ethics); third, CDA Power Matrix, which builds a conceptual model of power relations between actors (state, media, public, technology); and fourth, Ideological Interpretation, which interprets discursive dynamics in the context of Indonesian digital politics. Validity is strengthened through source triangulation, researcher reflexivity, and relevance to academic literature.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The transformation of Indonesia's digital discourse over the past two years is closely linked to escalating debates on security, data sovereignty, public accountability, and the articulation of new ethical demands. As state institutions, media organizations, and the public engage in constructing narratives surrounding the National Data Center, data breaches, and digital ethics, language functions as the central arena through which legitimacy and power are produced, contested, and reconfigured. Within this framework, the Results section reports the findings of a Critical Discourse Analysis of Tempo.co news coverage, with particular attention to the structural and ideological development of Indonesia's digital discourse. The analysis demonstrates how lexical selection, framing practices, and narrative organization expose fundamental shifts in power relations, transitioning from technocratic dominance and security-oriented discourse toward public resistance and, subsequently, an ethics-oriented model of digital governance. By examining dominant keywords, semantic clusters, and successive ideological phases, the findings confirm that digital language operates not merely as a channel of information, but as a strategic instrument for challenging authority, shaping public understanding, and redefining the contours of digital citizenship in Indonesia.

### **Initial Mapping: Segment Structure and Digital Ideology**

The analysis begins by dividing the news corpus into three textual segments: headline, lead, and body. This division is not merely a journalistic technique, but represents three levels of meaning production in media discourse. The headline acts as an ideological gateway where values and power structures are legitimized. Meanwhile, the lead serves to set the interpretive agenda, or how the public is directed to understand a particular issue. The body, meanwhile, is an argumentative space where ideology is negotiated, debated, and changed in accordance with the dynamics of the narrative that develops within the text. The word cloud visualization of the



Enhancing digital literacy is crucial. Increasing public understanding of digital rights, privacy risks, and complaint procedures should become a national priority. Incorporating data sovereignty into educational curricula will further empower citizens.

Implementing technology-driven oversight is necessary to detect and address governance risks. AI-based forensic audits can identify leaks, fraud, and corruption patterns within government digital ecosystems. Blockchain technology can be applied to monitor data and transaction records, minimizing the potential for manipulation.

Without these substantive measures, the concept of “ethical digital governance” risks functioning solely as a rhetorical strategy to obscure governance deficiencies and consolidate state dominance in the management of public data. Such pseudo-legitimacy produces cycles of distrust, diminished public participation, and stagnation in national digital innovation.

### Three Phases of Ideological Evolution

When linked to the temporal period of analysis (2024–2025), the lexical changes in this word cloud reveal three main ideological phases:

**Table 1. Three Phases of Ideological Evolution**

Ideological Phase	Dominant Keywords	Main Ideological Meaning
Technocratic Phase	<i>data, nasional, keamanan, PDN, infrastruktur</i>	The state asserts digital hegemony with narratives of sovereignty and data security.
Crisis Phase Accountability	<i>and publik, korupsi, kebocoran, penyidikan, transparansi</i>	The media and the public counter the dominant narrative through criticism of corruption and the cybersecurity crisis.
Ethics and Phase	Collaboratio n <i>AI, etika, kolaborasi, pendidikan, global</i>	The state restructured its legitimacy by adopting the discourse of ethics, education, and public-private partnerships.

This change shows that language in digital discourse is not neutral, but rather a tool for ideological adaptation: those in power adapt to crises by re-semanticizing terms such as ethics, collaboration, and accountability. Actors use terminological diversion by presenting practices of control or exclusion under the guise of ethics, collaboration, and accountability. Policymakers use the label “digital ethics” to justify state surveillance of data as a moral endeavor, even though the underlying policies remain centralized and non-transparent.

The concept of “collaboration” is constructed to simulate public participation in decision-making, while the actual deliberative process remains controlled by elites or technocrats. The concept of “accountability” is reduced to the production of formal reports, without enforceable sanctions or truly independent oversight.

The instrumentalization of discourse occurs when these terms are used as tools to legitimize and strengthen the regime's authority during crises of public trust or after scandals. Narratives centered on ethics, collaboration, and accountability serve rhetorically to justify increased control over data and the centralization of decision-making, thereby encouraging public acceptance of these policies without true transparency.

Dominant groups engage in co-optation by adopting and redefining progressive

terminology to reconstruct their public image after a crisis. This strategy allows them to appear responsive and adaptive, while the original and critical meanings of these terms are weakened to serve as superficial markers of policy.

For example, after the PDNS scandal, authorities cited “accountability” by declaring a commitment to transparency and audits, but restricted access to crucial data and reduced civil society participation. Consultation forums marketed as ‘collaborative’ were procedural rather than truly deliberative. At the same time, “ethics” was used as a moral label for repressive policy actions.

### Semantic Cluster Mapping and Power Relations

Discursively, this word cloud can be grouped into five semantic clusters that represent power relations between state, public, and private actors:

**Table 2. Semantic Cluster Mapping and Power Relations**

Semantic Cluster	Main Keywords	Ideological Meaning
Security & Sovereignty	<i>keamanan, nasional, PDN, data, kedaulatan</i>	The state as protector of digital infrastructure, justification for public data control.
Ethics & Accountability	<i>etika, transparansi, akuntabilitas, governance</i>	The establishment of a new moral order after the crisis, efforts to restore public trust.
Technology & Progress	<i>digital, AI, teknologi, infrastruktur, inovasi</i>	The rhetoric of modernity to strengthen the legitimacy of national digital projects.
Public Resistance	<i>publik, korupsi, penyidikan, kebocoran, Kejaksaan</i>	Discourse on resistance against discourse monopoly and abuse of digital power.
Global Collaboration	<i>kolaborasi, Singtel, global, swasta, Politeknik</i>	Trans-nationalization of digital power through public-private partnerships and regional cooperation.

These clusters illustrate the ideological map of digital power in Indonesia, where control, legitimacy, and resistance are intertwined through language games. State and dominant actors exercise control through the deliberate selection of terminology, framing strategies, and narrative construction. The state deploys expressions such as “data security,” “digital ethics,” and “accountability” to legitimize surveillance, centralization, and regulatory practices, embedding them within a framework perceived as both morally and technocratically justified. By shaping media narratives, the state not only determines the contours of meaning but also constrains opportunities for public deliberation, often portraying dissent or criticism as unethical, unpatriotic, or destabilizing.

Legitimacy is produced by the ongoing naturalization and repetition of pivotal terms within public discourse. Frequent invocation of concepts like “ethics,” “collaboration,” and “accountability” in media reporting and regulatory texts gradually transforms their significance into hegemonic norms that resist critical interrogation. Language becomes a vehicle for rationalizing policy decisions and manufacturing artificial consensus among the populace, even when substantive governance improvements or genuine public engagement are lacking. This

process of legitimation is further strengthened through the appropriation of global discourses, making local narratives appear aligned with international developments in digital ethics, though such alignment often remains superficial.

Resistance materializes in the contestation, reappropriation, and deconstruction of dominant language and narratives. Civil society organizations, scholars, and alternative media actors introduce counter-discourses, advocating for a redefinition of “digital ethics” to include transparency, distributive justice, and the safeguarding of citizens’ digital rights. These interventions not only challenge state rhetoric but also generate alternative, more participatory and critical meanings. Evidence of such resistance emerges through hashtag activism, the circulation of political memes, and the dissemination of independent research, all of which disrupt the state’s or corporate actors’ monopoly over meaning.

The interplay between control, legitimacy, and resistance in Indonesia’s digital media discourse remains fluid and continually negotiated. Each term, narrative, and framing strategy operates simultaneously as a communicative act and as a mechanism of power, constituting a contested space for ideological struggle. Research in this area can systematically map these dynamics by tracing the construction, dissemination, and contestation of key concepts within media discourse and the evolution of national digital policy frameworks.

The findings of this research reveal that digital language in Indonesia has transformed from a mere communication instrument into a strategic arena for the contestation of meaning, legitimacy, and resistance to power. Critical analysis of media discourse, particularly in reporting on PDN issues and digital ethics, shows that terms such as “security,” “sovereignty,” “ethics,” and “transparency” are no longer neutral. Instead, they are deliberately used to shape public perception, define the boundaries of state legitimacy, and respond to public trust crises regarding the management of public data.

The importance of these findings lies in three main dimensions. First, this research affirms that digitalization is not simply a technological project, but an ideological one. The state, media, and society compete and form alliances through word choice and narrative framing when addressing issues of data, security, and ethics. In this context, digital discourse serves as an indicator of the shifting source of political legitimacy, from state domination toward demands for public accountability and participation.

Second, the study’s findings highlight the substantive risks of digital ethics that exist only on a cosmetic level. If structural reform, accountability, and transparency are not realized in practice, “digital ethics” becomes a rhetorical tool that disguises the centralization of power, rather than encouraging authentic public participation. Cycles of distrust and weak national digital innovation will persist if moral narratives are not followed by strengthened governance and protection of citizens’ digital rights.

Third, these findings introduce a new conceptual model, the CDA Power Matrix, which can be used to map the dynamics of actors and power relations in digital political communication. This model emphasizes that discursive power in the digital sphere is circular and interactive, not one-directional or hierarchical. These findings expand on Fairclough’s and van Dijk’s theories on the relationship between language, power, and ideology, and recommend that the state and media should not rely solely on security and ethics narratives but also build legitimacy through collaboration, openness, and public empowerment.

From a practical standpoint, this study underscores the need for regulation, independent oversight, and digital literacy to ensure that digital transformation proceeds ethically and inclusively. The research also recommends that policymakers adopt a collaborative paradigm and encourage the media to maintain its watchdog function over digital power.

Overall, this research demonstrates that the shift in digital discourse in Indonesia reflects a change in the collective consciousness of digital society, from hegemony and control toward participation, reflection, and ethical collaboration. The main significance of these findings is to

prompt a rethinking of national digital governance and to build a more adaptive theoretical and policy foundation in response to the dynamics of both global and local digital ideology.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Indonesian digital discourse in the period 2024–2025 is a dynamic space of interaction between language, power, and ideology. Using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach based on the theories of Fairclough, van Dijk, and Wodak, it was found that Tempo.co not only functions as an information provider, but also acts as an ideological agent that actively shapes, challenges, and negotiates the legitimacy of state power in the digital realm (Fuchs, 2021).

The results of the study show three main phases in the evolution of Indonesia's digital ideology. First, the legitimization phase, in which discourse was dominated by narratives of security and national sovereignty. The state utilized the language of technology and nationalism to build moral hegemony, making data control a symbol of sovereignty. In this context, the term security served as a tool of legitimization, shaping public perception that the management of digital infrastructure was entirely the right of the state.

Second, the resistance phase emerged when the data leak crisis and corruption issues in the National Data Center (PDN) project triggered a change in discourse. The media and the public began to prioritize the values of transparency, accountability, and ethics as criticism of the state's moral dominance in the digital space. This phase marked a process of ideological delegitimization, in which the public sought to regain control over the digital moral narrative.

Third, the restoration phase, when the state attempts to restore its shaken legitimacy by rearticulating the discourse using terms such as AI ethics, global collaboration, and digital accountability. Ethical language serves as a new means of repackaging power domination within a moral framework that appears more inclusive and collaborative. However, this process does not completely erase the old power structures, but rather adapts them into a more subtle form of hegemony.

Overall, these findings show that digital language is not merely a means of communication, but also an instrument of power and resistance laden with ideology. From a CDA perspective, power is exercised not only through policies and institutions, but also through word choice, news framing, and the construction of public narratives (Habermas, 2023). Therefore, Indonesian digital discourse needs to be understood as an ideological arena that is constantly being negotiated, where the state, media, public, and technology shape each other in a complex network of meanings (Gee M., 2023; Poell D. B.; Duffy, B. E., 2021). Through the CDA Power Matrix mapping, this study confirms that power relations are interactive and circular, not hierarchical and one-way.

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce Fairclough's view that language is a hegemonic social practice integrated with power structures, and confirms van Dijk's idea about the role of discourse in shaping public ideological consciousness. In the Indonesian context, these findings broaden the understanding that digital ideology has shifted from a logic of control to a logic of ethics, reflecting a transition from authoritarianism to a more participatory moral consciousness.

Conceptually, this research produced a new analytical model called the CDA Power Matrix, which maps the dynamics of digital political communication. This model shows that digital discourse always moves within four main axes of power: State (legitimacy), Media (resistance), Public (awareness), and Technology (ideological restoration) (Gee M., 2023; Wodak, 2021).

The relationships between actors in these four axes create a circulation of discursive power, in which power control can transform into reflective awareness (Eriyanto, 2022).

Therefore, this model can be used as a new analytical framework in the study of digital political communication, especially in issues such as technology policy, artificial intelligence (AI) ethics, and national data sovereignty.

For policymakers, the results of this study confirm that digital security must be aligned with social legitimacy and public ethics. The state needs to shift its paradigm from control to collaboration, involving the public as active subjects in data governance, rather than merely objects of protection.

Governments also need to develop public communication strategies that are transparent, open, and responsive to crises of trust. The use of terms such as AI ethics and responsible innovation is meaningless without the support of independent oversight mechanisms, data openness, and civil society participation.

Meanwhile, for the media, this research emphasizes the importance of ethical journalism as a means of moral resistance against digital power (Kitchin, 2021). Amid the dominance of algorithms and control by technology corporations, the media needs to maintain its watchdog role in order to preserve a healthy and accountable public sphere.

This study opens up opportunities for further in-depth research on the dynamics of digital ideology in Indonesia. First, the direction of research can be focused on longitudinal analysis to trace how post-2025 digital discourse develops, while assessing whether the narrative of digital ethics is truly realized in social practices and public policy. Second, a multi-model CDA analysis approach needs to be applied to combine textual, visual, and social media interaction dimensions in order to reveal layers of meaning and symbols of digital power that are not always linguistically apparent. Third, regional comparative studies between Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries, such as Singapore and Malaysia, are needed to understand how the concepts of digital sovereignty and technological ideology are politicized according to the cultural and political contexts of each country. Fourth, further research can develop participatory studies involving digital users as active subjects to explore how digital ethical awareness is formed, practiced, and negotiated in everyday life. Thus, further research is expected to enrich theoretical and practical understanding of the transformation of digital ideology in the post-hegemonic era

Indonesia's digital discourse is now moving from technological projects to moral projects. Narratives about security, transparency, and digital ethics indicate that political communication is no longer centered solely on power, but also on building trust. In cyberspace, power becomes fluid shifting from structural domination to an ongoing battle of meaning. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, this study asserts that digital ideology is not merely a reflection of technological policy, but also a mirror of the changing collective consciousness of Indonesia's digital society: from control to awareness, from hegemony to reflection.

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