



News images and ideology: Investigating visual representation in news on selected Malaysian television stations

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the ideology shaping Malaysian television media during Malaysia's 2022 transition to its Unity Government. Focusing on *Astro Awani* and *Berita RTM*, a content analysis of visual news elements reveals a clear ideological bias that privileges the ruling coalition. Both networks predominantly featured visuals from government press conferences, serving to disseminate state-sanctioned narratives. *Berita RTM* in particular, amplified Anwar Ibrahim's persona and reinforced a state-centric discourse that sidelines opposition voices. Although *Astro Awani* is privately owned and presents a broader range of perspectives through interviews and curated visuals, its overall framing still upheld a favourable portrayal of the new administration. The study demonstrates how visual framing operates as an ideological apparatus, reinforcing entrenched power structures and legitimising the prevailing political order. Despite the political transition, the framing strategies mirror those of previous regimes, raising concerns about media pluralism and the systematic marginalisation of dissenting views. These findings highlight the persistence of ideological influences in media practices, suggesting that changes in government do not necessarily lead to a more balanced or democratic media landscape as ownership dynamics and legislative pressures continue to marginalise dissenting voices.

Keywords: **Visual framing, ideology, political news, unity government, television news**

INTRODUCTION

News visuals play a crucial role in shaping public beliefs and opinions, serving as powerful representations of news events that influence societal perceptions and ideological frameworks. Thus, news organisations' strategic selection of visuals is not merely a reflection of reality but a construction that reinforces or challenges dominant ideologies. Through careful curation, media outlets shape public discourse by highlighting specific aspects of events, thereby directing attention, framing narratives, and influencing how audiences engage with political and social issues. The presentation of news visuals can legitimise or contest prevailing power structures, reinforcing hegemonic ideologies or offering counter-narratives that challenge the status quo.

Given their immediate and compelling emotional impact, visuals effectively communicate complex political and ideological issues, making them robust for influencing public perception and belief systems. This study examined political news visuals in Malaysian television broadcasts, focusing on two key media outlets: *Berita RTM*, a government-owned station, and *Astro Awani*, a privately-owned network. The research aims to analyse the ideological representation of political news visuals within the context of Malaysia's new Unity Government, which came into power nine days after Anwar Ibrahim assumed office. The underlying assumption is that this political transition may have influenced the selection and construction of news content on local television, thereby shaping how political ideologies are communicated to the public. Accordingly, this study seeks to explore how news visuals are used to frame political news and to assess their role in shaping public perceptions of political issues and ideological discourse in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Visual representation, framing, and ideology

Visuals are pivotal in shaping news narratives, influencing public perception, and reinforcing ideological standpoints (Ash et al., 2021). Unlike textual reporting, visuals instantaneously communicate complex ideas and emotions, making them powerful tools for ideological reinforcement. Visual images often reinforce a particular message and perspective and summarise the story (Abdul Latif & Oh Ying, 2020). Huddy and Gunnthorsdottir (2000) argued that visuals are persuasive, often conveying implicit messages that subconsciously shape audience perceptions (Sonnett et al., 2015). McQuail (2010) further emphasised that images evoke strong emotional responses and are more memorable than words, entrenching existing beliefs or reshaping perspectives.

The power of visuals extends beyond inclusion to omission. What is left out of the frame is just as significant as what is included. The framing theory suggests that the selection and presentation of visuals direct the audience's attention towards specific aspects of an event, shaping their understanding and interpretation (Entman, 1993). Hall (1997) asserted that images not only reflect societal ideologies but also possess the potential to challenge or transform them. Similarly, Rose (2001) highlighted how visuals serve as cultural expressions reinforcing dominant societal narratives.

Framing strategies shape ideological perspectives through visual cues such as backdrop imagery, selective shot compositions, and emphatic patterns, which subtly indicate political leanings and influence public attitudes (Dan & Arendt, 2020; Lin &

Haputmann, 2009). Further, Touri and Koteyko (2014) noted that news frames are not neutral; they reflect the ideological orientations of media actors and institutions. Emotional responses triggered by images, particularly outrage or sympathy, can drive individuals toward specific ideological positions (Chan, 2016). For example, conflict framing in news coverage amplifies the perceived severity of an issue, shaping both emotional and cognitive responses while directing focus toward particular narratives (Shaid et al., 2023).

Furthermore, visual representation is essential in constructing social realities and shaping ideology. Visual symbols and iconic signifiers often create stereotypical or normative depictions, influencing public perception across different contexts (Mortensen et al., 2019). Visual representations also regulate, construct, and sometimes subvert ideologies, impacting cultural narratives and international relations (Danish & Riaz, 2022). Aiello and Thurlow (2006) contended that specific visual elements are deliberately chosen to naturalise cultural meanings, reinforcing dominant ideologies. Overall, visuals are supplementary to news narratives and integral to framing and ideological positioning. Their selection, presentation, and omission shape public discourse, influence emotions, and reinforce or challenge societal beliefs. Understanding media representation thus requires recognising the deliberate construction of meaning through visual imagery.

Television news and ideological framing

Television remains one of the most influential news sources, primarily due to its reputation for delivering reliable content, in contrast to the proliferation of misinformation on social media. However, television news often frames visual content in ways that align with the state's ideology, shaping public perception through selective representation. Research indicates that visual representations in news media reinforce entrenched ideological positions by portraying specific narratives that support dominant political views while marginalising alternative perspectives (Mortensen et al., 2019).

The reinforcement of state ideology through television is a multidimensional phenomenon that reflects how media can serve as an instrument of political control and ideological propagation. State-controlled television often aligns its programming with government narratives, utilising various strategies to promote specific ideologies. Such practices are evident in countries where government influence shapes public broadcasting systems, constructing a shared national identity and reinforcing loyalty to the state. One example is the role of Turkey's public broadcasting service (TRT), which has been instrumental in disseminating a conservative, neo-Ottomanist agenda under the current government's direction. The Turkish government has leveraged state media to propagate ideologies that support its political objectives, ensuring that state-sanctioned narratives dominate while sidelining dissenting views and alternative perspectives (Algan & Kaptan, 2023).

Similarly, in Spain, public broadcasters have been perceived as politically aligned, with audiences more likely to consume state-owned media if their views align with the ruling party (Doménech-Beltrán, 2024). This reflects how television can function as a tool for ideological reinforcement, influencing public trust and engagement with media outlets. Humanes and Valera-Ordaz (2023) further highlighted how media consumption patterns contribute to political polarisation, fostering ideological echo chambers that sustain dominant state narratives. Historically, television has played a crucial role in ideological reinforcement. In socialist regimes, state-controlled media crafted consistent

narratives aligned with party ideologies, demonstrating how television can be instrumental in shaping political consciousness (Hai, 2012). This historical precedent continues to resonate in contemporary media practices, where selective framing of historical events and cultural symbols contributes to national identity formation (Blanes, 2016).

Beyond shaping current events, television plays a crucial role in constructing collective memory. By selectively framing historical events, television embeds ideological narratives into national consciousness. Phelps and Hamilton (2021) argued that television news normalises particular ideologies by carefully selecting images, editing techniques, and framing strategies, directly influencing public perception and political discourse. This reinforces dominant narrative structures favouring specific political agendas while diminishing alternative viewpoints. Television remains critical for examining how media shapes ideological constructs and sustains societal power dynamics. From depicting cultural values to partisan news framing, television is a potent tool for ideological dissemination, influencing how citizens engage with political realities.

Role of Malaysian mainstream media in reinforcing state ideology

Malaysian mainstream media reinforces state ideology through framing, narrative construction, and content focus. The media landscape in Malaysia is heavily influenced by government policies and ownership structures, which play a critical role in shaping public perceptions and reinforcing the ruling party's narratives. The Malaysian government has curtailed media freedom under the pretext of safeguarding national security and ensuring political stability. This control and the influence exerted over media corporations linked to the government uphold the ruling party's dominance and political authority (Mohd Sani, 2005). Historically, mainstream Malaysian media has clearly preferred the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government, particularly during election campaigns (Anuar, 2000), thereby marginalising dissent and critical voices. Moreover, ownership and legislative frameworks empower political elites to steer media narratives, resulting in a media landscape that consistently mirrors government perspectives (Yang, 2003). Recent studies, such as that by Ahmad Sabri and Abdullah (2022), have corroborated this view by highlighting how legislative measures and corporate influences further entrench media narratives that align with state interests.

Malaysian mainstream media often operates under ownership structures that align closely with political interests. For instance, although *Astro Awani* is a private entity, it is frequently critiqued for reflecting governmental ideologies, especially during politically sensitive periods. Strict broadcasting regulations in Malaysia influence political coverage, reinforcing narratives that favour the ruling party (Latif et al., 2013). Its editorial lines may lean towards positive portrayals of governmental actions to ensure ongoing viability in a competitive yet regulated market. Findings by Mohd Sofian and Azmawati (2021) also highlight that journalists in Malaysian mainstream media practice self-censorship to comply with media laws, resulting in less critical coverage of government policies. This tendency skews reporting toward affirming state ideologies rather than presenting balanced viewpoints that challenge the government narrative. Ch'Ng (2016) further demonstrated how Malaysian newspapers and television broadcasts align their editorial stance with government policies, particularly in foreign affairs. Television news employs selective framing to highlight state achievements while downplaying dissenting perspectives,

constructing a uniform political narrative that bolsters the ruling administration's legitimacy.

Framing of news stories is another mechanism through which state ideology is reinforced. For example, Abdul Wahab et al. (2024) discussed how *Astro Awani's* coverage during the political transitions in Malaysia has often aligned closely with government communication strategies. The media tends to frame events in ways that legitimise governmental actions or policies, thus reinforcing a narrative of stability and effectiveness. This approach shapes public opinion and influences political discourse by prioritising certain narratives while marginalising others. Moreover, Briandana (2019) explained how Malaysian broadcasting policies emphasise national identity and cultural unity in media content. Television programs are strategically designed to promote a sense of belonging and nationalistic feelings, which align with the government's agenda to portray a unified national identity. Such programming can reinforce state-held ideologies by framing cultural narratives highlighting the government's role in maintaining these identities, thereby legitimising its governance.

Malaysia's current political landscape and legislative control

Before 2018, Malaysia was effectively a one-party state. The erstwhile Barisan Nasional (BN) ruled Malaysia continuously since the country's independence in 1957. The then BN government allowed political opposition, but the playing field was uneven, favouring the ruling government. The BN government enforced numerous draconian laws to stifle freedom of speech and dissent, namely the Internal Security Act, Sedition Act, Official Secrets Act, Printing Presses and Publications Act, and Anti-Fake News Act. Close policing of the media landscape was the norm during this time. Mainstream media served as the government's organ to showcase its policies and demonise opposition. Pockets of resistance existed, mainly in print and online news such as *Malaysiakini*, *Aliran Monthly*, and *Harakah*. Still, a few were constantly subjected to scrutiny and harassment by the authorities.

The 2018 general election saw the collapse of the long-entrenched BN regime and ushered in the Pakatan Harapan (PH) to form a new government. Institutional reforms were part of the PH government agenda, which included opening the media landscape to allow for more freedom and diversity of political views. In 2019, the Parliament voted to abolish the Anti-Fake News Act. There were also serious discussions to revamp the Communication and Multimedia Act sections as well as the Printing Presses and Publication Act. The reform efforts were short-lived when the PH government's tenure ended abruptly in February 2020 after merely 22 months in power. Several PH MPs defected in an event dubbed the "Sheraton Move", causing the government to lose its majority in the Parliament. Then, Perikatan Nasional (PN) formed a new government, and political fragmentation and instability ensued.

The PN government came to power without a public mandate as it was not through the general election. The lack of a public mandate became a significant source of political discontent, compounded by the challenges posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The PN government could not put its stamp of authority as many sections of the society questioned its legitimacy (Tayeb, 2021). The media landscape remained open and democratic, buoyed by the reform inertia from the previous PH government. The PN government lost in the general elections in November 2022 and was subsequently

replaced by the current government formed through an alliance between PH, BN, and Borneo political coalitions. Dubbed the “Unity Government,” it is still searching for the elusive political stability as it is built upon the rickety foundation of strange bedfellows and faces constant machinations from PN, which refuses to accept its electoral defeat fully. The effect of this political divisiveness is such that the media landscape remains vibrant and free.

Media ownership

Astro Awani

The All-Asia Television and Radio Company (ASTRO) was conceived within Malaysia’s Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) initiative, a vision spearheaded by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. As part of this initiative, the MSC project was exclusively serviced by the Measat Satellite System (Kim, 2001). Until 2017, ASTRO maintained a monopoly as Malaysia’s sole pay television provider, a position that attracted criticism for its monopolistic market control. By 2022, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission had issued Content Applications Service Provider (CASP) licenses to 35 media companies, of which only four were authorised to broadcast content via satellite television (Bernama, 2018). *Awani 7:45*, a prime-time news program broadcast on *Astro Awani*, is produced by Astro Awani Network Sdn Bhd. In 2022, *Astro Awani* collaborated with *Sinar Harian* to enhance media representation of public discourse, aiming to provide more extensive and in-depth coverage at the local and national levels (Yong, 2022). This partnership led to the introduction of a new prime-time segment, *AWANI 7:45 | Sinar Awani* (Yong, 2022).

RTM

Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) is a government-owned broadcasting entity initially established as *Radio Malaya* in Singapore on April 1, 1946. Following the formation of Malaysia on September 16, 1963, *Radio Malaya* was rebranded as *Radio Malaysia*. That same year, Malaysia introduced its television broadcasting service under *Televisyen Malaysia*. On October 6, 1969, with the inauguration of Angkasapuri, *Radio Malaysia* and *Televisyen Malaysia* were consolidated under the administration of the Ministry of Information (Latif et al., 2013). Subsequently, on November 17, 1969, a second television channel was launched as part of *Rangkaian Satu*’s expansion and maintained a monopoly over free-to-air television broadcasting until 1984, when the emergence of private television stations, such as TV3, introduced competition in the sector. In response to the rise of digital media, RTM launched web-based streaming services for television and radio in 1996 (RTM, 2021). As of 2021, RTM operates six television channels (*TV1*, *TV2*, *TV Okey*, *RTM News*, *RTM Sports*, and *TV6*), with 34 radio stations (RTM, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

The study’s methodology involved analysing the content of news broadcasts from *Astro Awani* and *Berita RTM*. While *Berita RTM* is a free-to-air government-owned channel, *Astro Awani* was chosen because it came first on brand trust scores (Newman, 2022). The prime-time news from *Astro Awani* and *Berita RTM* served as the study’s samples.

The selected news program aired from November 24, 2022, until December 7, 2022. The period was chosen since it is the transitional stage of the Unity Government, following the formation of a coalition of parties comprising of major and minor blocs. After no single bloc gained a sufficient majority to form a government in the previous election, it is fascinating to study how the news broadcasts handled their reporting in the wake of the recent change in power.

To provide additional context, past government transitions in Malaysia have also seen shifts in media coverage. For example, the transition following the 2018 general election, which brought PH into power, was marked by narratives of reform and governance scrutiny. Similarly, the 2020 transition under PN reflected crisis-oriented coverage, particularly concerning political stability. While this study does not directly compare those transitions, acknowledging these shifts provides a broader understanding of how Malaysian mainstream news media visually portrays and represents political parties after the change of government. By situating the analysis within the context of evolving political dynamics, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the media's role in shaping public perceptions of political legitimacy, power transitions, and party positioning within the broader governance narrative.

The news videos were gathered based on the predetermined dates using the keywords “(LANGSUNG) AWANI 7:45 (pre-determined date)” for *Astro Awani* and “(pre-determined date)-BERITA PERDANA PENUH” for *Berita RTM*. A total of 28 news videos from both *Astro Awani* and *Berita RTM* repository channels were obtained and examined. This study employed content analysis, which was divided into two parts. The first phase comprised a quantitative analysis of the frequency, news themes, and visual categories to identify recurring patterns within the data. Themes were categorised based on these patterns using an inductive approach, where they were defined post-data collection. The second phase involved a qualitative analysis of the visual elements in the news coverage. To ensure methodological rigour, a systematic coding procedure was implemented. A coding manual was developed to establish clear definitions for news themes and visual elements, providing a structured analytical framework. The thematic categories were refined iteratively based on emergent patterns in the data. To enhance reliability and mitigate bias, the researcher conducted repeated coding at different intervals and cross-validated the results with another researcher to ensure consistency and accuracy in categorisation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

News visuals

Astro Awani and *Berita RTM* presented six categories of visuals during the 14-day study period, including live interviews and press conferences, B-rolls, pictures, media statements, social media posts, and infographics.

Astro Awani portrayed 217 visuals for the coverage of its political news, of which 36% of its visuals, the majority featuring a press conference with government officials and a live interview with the public. Moreover, *Awani* also included a press conference with politicians from the opposing parties and live interviews with academicians. To contextualise and bolster the narrative of its news, *Awani* presented 30% of the B-rolls and 19% of the pictures. Moreover, 6% of *Awani*'s visuals were excerpts of media statements,

most from the opposing party, followed by the royals and NGOs. About 6% of *Awani*'s visuals also included social media post excerpts, mostly from government officials' accounts. On top of that, *Awani* featured an infographic from a survey that illustrates the public sentiment towards the appointment of a court cluster's minister in the cabinet and on Anwar Ibrahim's career and political background, amounting to 3% of the visuals.

Meanwhile, for its political news coverage, *Berita RTM* portrayed 254 visuals, with 38% of its visuals being from a press conference or live interviews. Many of its interviews featured a press conference with government officials, followed by live interviews with academicians and the public. Compared to *Astro Awani*, *Berita RTM* used a lot of B-rolls and pictures to contextualise its news narrative, amounting to 29% and 25%. Meanwhile, 5% of *Berita RTM*'s visuals were excerpts of media statements, mostly featuring the royals, followed by world leaders. Only one excerpt of the media statement from the opposing party was featured by *Berita RTM*, and none are from the press conference or live interviews. Moreover, *Berita RTM* included excerpts from social media posts, mainly from Anwar Ibrahim's official Twitter account. During the appointment of Anwar Ibrahim as prime minister, *Berita RTM* also presented an infographic on Anwar Ibrahim's career and political background, amounting to 1% of the visuals.

Table 1. Frequency of visual categories for *Astro Awani* and *Berita RTM*

Visual Categories	Awani		RTM	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Live interview/Press conference	78	36	97	38
B-roll	64	30	73	29
Picture	42	19	63	25
Media statement	12	6	13	5
Social media post	12	6	6	2
Infographic	7	3	2	1
Total	217	100	254	100

Astro Awani's coverage prioritised the Unity Government while still acknowledging opposition perspectives, subtly shaping public perception through balanced framing. In contrast, *Berita RTM* reinforced pro-government narratives with minimal opposition coverage, revealing an ideological alignment with state interests and contributing to a media landscape that legitimises dominant political discourses while marginalising alternative viewpoints.

Visual analysis of Astro Awani and Berita RTM

A visual analysis of 28 news videos from *Astro Awani* and *Berita RTM* over 14 days identified five key thematic categories: (1) Anwar Ibrahim's appointment, (2) Unity Government, (3) Opposition, (4) Royals, and (5) Economy. The selection of the Royals and Economy categories was justified by their direct relevance to the political news, particularly concerning coverage of the newly appointed Prime Minister.

*Astro Awani***1. Anwar Ibrahim's appointment***Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was sworn in as the 10th Prime Minister*

The visual shows live footage of Anwar being sworn in as Malaysia's Prime Minister and pledging his oath in front of Agong and The Queen. Shown alongside is a still photo of Anwar reading his oath. Next is a B-roll of Anwar receiving his book of pledges and bowing respectfully to Agong and the Queen.

November 24, 2022, *Awani*

Analysis:

The visual of Anwar's swearing-in ceremony demonstrates that the Agong was confident in the former being chosen as Prime Minister. This ended the debate about who would succeed as Malaysia's 10th prime minister. Anwar demonstrated respect and deference to the nation's highest authority by bowing down in front of the Agong. This act symbolises loyalty to the Malaysian monarchy and constitution.

2. Unity Government*DAP apologises to the government, the people of Sarawak— Anthony Loke*

The visual shows an excerpt from Anthony Loke's Facebook post, entitled "DAP apologises to the government, the people of Sarawak". Shown alongside is a B-roll of Abang Johari at the GPS press conference. Abang Johari states that "GPS accepts DAP's apology".

November 24, 2022, *Awani*

Analysis:

The visual shows that the two political parties set aside their long-term political feuds to form a unity government. This signals the parties' stable cooperation and priority to serve the public rather than prolonging a feud.

3. Opposition*Muhyiddin challenges Anwar to show a proof letter of support*

The visuals feature still images of Muhyiddin and Anwar speaking, shown side by side, alongside a live clip of Muhyiddin at a press conference. He urges Anwar to provide proof of support and declines to join the unity government, stating, "Thank you – PN wants to be the opposition." A media statement from PN is shown, followed by a still of Muhyiddin and Hadi Awang, with PAS later confirming it will not join the unity government.

November 24, 2022, *Awani*

Analysis:

The image suggests that Muhyiddin doubts Anwar's legitimacy as a Prime Minister with enough support from parliament members. Muhyiddin's firm choice to refrain from the unity administration, supported by the PAS leader, communicates that the goals and governance of the unity government do not align with the ideological convictions and objectives of the Perikatan Nasional party.

4. Royals*Sultan of Johor accepts Prime Minister's visit*

The visual shows a picture of Anwar bowing down whilst shaking hands with the

Sultan of Johor. The HRH Crown Prince of Johor's Facebook account shared the images. A picture of Sultan Johor speaking and pointing his index finger to Anwar. A picture of Anwar saluting the Sultan of Johor while leaning in his direction. A picture of Anwar listening carefully to the Sultan of Johor while clasping his hands together. November 27, 2022, *Awani*

Analysis:

The visual portrayal of the strong connection between Anwar and Sultan Ibrahim signifies an enhanced relationship between the federal and state governments. The images shared on HRH Sultan Ismail's Facebook illustrate Sultan Ibrahim's authority concerning the Prime Minister, highlighting the deep respect and deference shown by the Prime Minister towards Sultan Ibrahim. This demonstrates Anwar's personality, which is marked by profound respect and adherence to the royal institution.

5. Economy

a) *The ringgit's value increased by 1.93 per cent against the USD.*

The visual shows a chart from the Bursa exchange, showing the ringgit strengthening by 1.93 per cent against the USD. Shown alongside a B-roll of Malaysian banknotes counted by the machine. November 24, 2022, *Awani*

Analysis:

Following the announcement of the new Prime Minister of Malaysia during the 15th General Election (GE15) by Istana Negara, there was an increase in the value of the ringgit. This indicates that establishing a new government instils confidence, particularly when the new administration is viewed as capable of providing effective governance and stability. The image of the charts serves as supporting evidence for this statement.

b) *The PM wants targeted subsidies, so it will take two weeks to prepare the paperwork.*

The visual shows a live interview of Anwar speaking at his press conference, pledging that his government will complete the targeted subsidy paperwork within two weeks. November 27, 2022, *Awani*

Analysis:

The press conference emphasised the new government's serious commitment to the people, seeking to demonstrate their dedication to boosting public confidence and gathering increased support. It highlights the government's proactive efforts to address subsidy issues by providing targeted assistance to specific demographics.

Berita RTM

1. **Anwar Ibrahim's appointment**

The formation of a new government. Datuk Seri Anwar was appointed the 10th prime minister

The visuals featured B-rolls of Anwar reciting the pledge of allegiance, delivering a speech in Perak, and receiving continuous applause. Additional footage shows him

stepping off a jet, greeting Sultan Nazrin Shah, interacting with Chinese and Malay elders, and joining a spontaneous community feast after Friday prayers, highlighting his public engagements and connection with diverse communities.

November 24, 2022, *Berita RTM*

Analysis:

The visual of Anwar taking the oath as Malaysia's prime minister exudes power and demonstrates that the Agung has formally chosen him. Anwar's haste to greet his supporters in Perak after his appointment was evident in the footage of him stepping off his private jet. This suggests that he did not overlook the constituents he was representing. Anwar's visit with the Sultan of Perak demonstrates his respect for the monarchy and indicates that the Sultan acknowledges Anwar. Anwar is perceived as favourable and welcomed by the people of Perak, regardless of race and age demographics.

2. Unity Government

Melaka congratulates the appointment of PM. Ready to cooperate with the new government.

The visual shows a live interview with Sulaiman Mat Ali, The Chief Minister of Melaka. He was seen smiling and said that the state government congratulated Anwar Ibrahim on his appointment as Prime Minister and that the state government was ready to cooperate with his government. Shown alongside is a B-roll of civil servants gathering in front of Perdana Putra.

November 24, 2022, *Berita RTM*

Analysis:

The visuals show the Melaka Chief Minister endorsing Anwar, reflecting strong support from a coalition-aligned state. However, opposition-led states like Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu were absent from interviews or visuals. In a B-roll, Anwar stressed that civil servants must serve the current government, regardless of their political leanings, reinforcing the message of administrative neutrality.

3. Opposition

Pas did not join the unity government. Play the role of constructive opposition.

The visual shows a picture of PAS Secretary General Takiyudin Hassan. An excerpt from the PAS media statement, titled "PAS did not join the unity government. Play the role of constructive opposition", is shown alongside. Next, a B-roll of the public casting their votes during the 15th general election, followed by a B-roll of a press conference by Takiyudin Hassan.

November 26, 2022, *Berita RTM*

Analysis:

RTM selectively featured statements from the opposition, choosing to interview Takiyudin Hassan due to his higher position in PAS. Interestingly, another opposition party member was absent from the news coverage. This could suggest that their perspectives and opinions were either deemed unimportant or deliberately omitted to silence the opposition's voice.

4. Royals

The authority of YDP Agong's wisdom. Successfully redacted the warmth of the political landscape.

The visual shows Agong looking at Anwar, and both are smiling. The B-rolls of the politicians going in and out of Istana during the GE15 are shown alongside. Next is an excerpt of a media statement from the Palace confirming the appointment of Anwar as the Prime Minister of Malaysia. Shown alongside is a B-roll of Sultan cars moving out of the palace. Lastly, a broadcast journalist does a stand-upper in front of the Palace, highlighting Agung's authority in resolving the current political situation while describing the timeline for choosing the PM. The journalist noted, "The wisdom of the Agong once again succeeded in easing the heat of the country's political landscape".
November 24, 2022, *Berita RTM*

Analysis:

The Agong is an essential figure since his blessing makes the people adhere to his command that the government is legitimate. Since the people are questioning the functions of a king as the protector of the people, Agong needs to set an example that he is a unity figure across political parties, races, and religions. The selection of the Prime Minister follows a systematic process involving careful consideration of the perspectives of all relevant parties following the country's constitution. The special meeting convened by His Majesty highlights his genuine commitment to collectively resolving the issue.

5. Economy

PM appointment. Give a positive impact on the national economy

The visual shows a picture of Malaysian Ringgit banknotes, followed by a live interview with economic analyst, Associate Professor Dr. Ahmed Razman Abdul Latiff, who believes that the appointment of the PM has a positive effect on the country's economy and suggests that the formation of the new cabinet should concentrate on strategies for planning economic growth, including people's issues, such as the high cost of living and the rise in the price of goods.

November 25, 2022, *Berita RTM*

Analysis:

An interview featuring Associate Professor Dr. Ahmed Razman, an authoritative figure in economics, was used to support the assertion that Anwar possesses the capability and charisma to lead the country and stimulate the economy. The announcement of the appointment of the 10th Prime Minister had a positive impact on the national economy, leading to the strengthening of the national currency.

In this context, visuals are not merely neutral representations; they are strategically framed to emphasise specific narratives while marginalising others. This study reinforces that visuals are powerful ideological tools in shaping public perception and political discourse. Visuals guide how audiences interpret news and align with media organisations' institutional positions. The analysis reveals that *Berita RTM* uses more visuals than *Astro Awani*, primarily sourced from press conferences featuring government officials,

academicians, and the public. These visuals consistently construct a positive image of the Unity Government, reflecting *Berita RTM's* ideological alignment with state interests. *Berita RTM* draws heavily from Anwar Ibrahim's social media, reinforcing a personalised and favourable portrayal of the Prime Minister while excluding visual interviews with opposition figures.

Among all visual types, it is evident that the usage of media statements is the least common for both television stations. A close comparison reveals that *Astro Awani* tends to employ more excerpts from media statements, which predominantly highlight comments and concerns from the opposition party. Additionally, it was found that *Astro Awani* presents a comparatively pluralistic visual strategy. It is also apparent that in reporting political news, *RTM* attempts to downplay the perspective of the opposition party. These newsroom practices highlight how visual framing maintains or challenges dominant ideologies within Malaysia's media structures. Thus, the study demonstrates that visual choices are deeply embedded within institutional ideologies, contributing to the construction of selective political realities for the public.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that visuals in television news are not merely supplementary content, but function as core instruments of ideological framing. Drawing on the theoretical framework of media framing, particularly the notion that framing is inherently ideological, the findings show how visual elements shape political narratives by selecting and emphasising particular viewpoints while omitting others. While this is not new, it is worth noting that considering the current government was once in the opposition, the same dynamics seemed to apply to PN. To a certain degree, this revelation is not entirely unexpected. It highlights the common practice within media organisations of prioritising content based on ownership interests. *RTM* is a state-owned broadcaster, and *Astro Awani* operates under stringent regulatory oversight. The structural limitations imposed by media ownership and governmental regulatory control shape newsroom practices, ultimately determining the boundaries of the political discourse and reinforcing the centrality of institutional control in shaping news narratives. These limitations are firm and must be followed by all media organisations.

In covering Anwar Ibrahim's appointment as Prime Minister, various visual media, including photographs, infographics, and videos, reinforced his legitimacy and popularity. The videos primarily highlighted the swearing-in ceremony, with congratulatory messages from state leaders. Interviews featured individuals with similar political views to showcase broad support, while infographics detailed Anwar Ibrahim's background and achievements to elevate his public image. His political allies also received favourable coverage, with visuals used to demonstrate their loyalty and support. These elements collectively aimed to project Anwar Ibrahim as a capable and respected leader. Maintaining a strong profile is crucial for his political stability and success. While the coverage largely favoured Anwar Ibrahim and his coalition, *Astro Awani* included minimal opposition representation. Visuals from press conferences with Muhyiddin Yassin and Tun Mahathir reflected their scepticism and disapproval, subtly questioning the legitimacy of Anwar Ibrahim's appointment and offering a limited counter-narrative.

In line with earlier findings, this study reveals an overwhelming abundance of coverage and visuals that predominantly favour the government, particularly in the case of *Berita RTM*. Malaysia's political news landscape continues to exhibit patterns of media bias shaped by ownership interests and regulatory frameworks. Despite changes in political leadership, visual framing remains a tool for political legitimisation and ideological reinforcement, raising concerns about the state's role in shaping media narratives and limiting plurality in news coverage. Malaysia's news coverage continues to exhibit a persistent lack of balance, with little evidence of meaningful progress toward more diverse and impartial reporting. Rather than advancing towards greater media independence, Malaysian television news has regressed to familiar patterns of ideological alignment and selective framing, reinforcing existing power structures. These newsroom practices reflect how visuals guide public perception and reinforce dominant ideologies. Visuals from press events, interviews, and statements subtly instruct audiences on how to interpret political developments, constructing a sense of consensus while marginalising conflict. This aligns with the theoretical claim that media framing is not neutral; it reflects and reproduces institutional ideologies.

Given these findings, future reforms should focus on enhancing media independence and pluralism in Malaysia through greater editorial or newsroom autonomy, transparent regulation and ethical journalism practices. The rise of alternative and digital media offers a potential counterbalance to mainstream narratives by diversifying perspectives and fostering political accountability. However, alternative media alone is insufficient to dismantle entrenched ideological biases, particularly when regulatory structures and political influence over media ownership remain unchanged. Future research could explore how digital and alternative media platforms counterbalance mainstream ideological framing and the evolving role of visuals in shaping public trust and political engagement. Additionally, exploring the intersection between media regulation, ownership, and visual framing strategies would provide a deeper understanding of how news organisations navigate political pressures while striving to maintain credibility in a rapidly evolving digital media landscape.

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