

Discursive Chaos in Indonesian Facebook Responses to the Iran–Israel Conflict: Media Framing, Affective Polarization, and Epistemic Distrust

Zulfikri Betyar Rasuan¹, Widyasari², M. Afifulloh³, Basri⁴

¹English Education Studi Program, IAIN Syaikh Abdurrahman Siddik Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

²English Literature Department, Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia

³English Literature Department, Universitas Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

⁴Department of Dakwa, IAIN Syekh Abdurrahman Siddik Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how Indonesian Facebook users responded to media posts about the Iran–Israel conflict and how these responses contributed to the emergence of discursive chaos in digital public space. Existing studies on digital political communication have often examined misinformation, polarization, and platform dynamics separately. Less attention has been given to how media framing, emotional antagonism, and distrust toward information interact simultaneously in comment sections, especially in non-Western contexts. To address this gap, this study employed a qualitative digital discourse approach based on publicly accessible Facebook posts and user comments circulated in Indonesian online spaces. The analysis combined thematic reading and discourse-oriented interpretation to examine how users received, contested, redirected, and emotionally amplified media narratives. The findings show that Facebook comment sections did not function merely as spaces for responding to news, but as arenas of discursive struggle. Users reinterpreted conflict updates through ridicule, moralization, symbolic alignment, and contests of credibility. In several cases, the Iran–Israel conflict was also localized into broader political and ideological grievances, including distrust of mainstream media, anti-Western sentiment, and criticism of international power relations. These patterns indicate that discursive chaos emerged not only from false information, but also from the interaction among media framing, affective polarization, epistemic distrust, and antagonistic participation within the platform environment. This study contributes to digital political communication scholarship by showing that Indonesian responses to international conflict are shaped not only by issue salience, but also by emotionally charged reinterpretation and the weakening of shared epistemic ground

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Corresponding Author:

M Afifulloh

English Literature Department, Universitas Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

Email: afifulloh@ubb.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

The recent escalation of the Iran–Israel conflict has not only been significant in geopolitical terms, but has also triggered intense discussion in digital public spaces across different countries, including Indonesia. In the contemporary digital era, people no longer consume global conflicts passively. Users actively interpret, contest, moralize, and emotionally react to them through social media platforms. Among these platforms, Facebook remains one of the most influential arenas where public opinion is constructed, negotiated, and sometimes destabilized.

In classical communication theory, media play an important role in shaping public perception through agenda-setting processes. Media may not directly determine what people think, but it strongly influences what issues people consider important [1]. However, in the current digital environment, this process has become more complex. Media is no longer the only actor that determines the agenda. Platform algorithms, user interactions, comment visibility, and engagement patterns also shape how information circulates and gains public attention.

In the case of the Iran–Israel conflict, news about missile attacks, military retaliation, civilian casualties, diplomacy, and geopolitical alignment entered Indonesian Facebook spaces through media posts. Once these reports appeared on Facebook, people no longer interpreted them only as international news. They became emotionally charged discussions involving religious sentiment, anti-Western narratives, distrust of mainstream media, geopolitical loyalty, and moral judgment. In this sense, the comment section became a site where global conflict was localized into Indonesian digital discourse.

At the same time, political communication on social media is increasingly characterized by affective polarization. Affective polarization refers to a condition in which emotional attachment to one side and hostility toward the perceived opposing side become more dominant than rational deliberation [2], [3]. In Facebook comment sections, this condition appears when users express anger, ridicule, suspicion, hatred, and symbolic support rather than engaging in careful discussion of the conflict itself.

This situation is further intensified by what [4] describes as echo chambers, where individuals are mostly exposed to information that reinforces their existing beliefs. In such environments, users may encounter repeated narratives that strengthen their political, religious, or ideological positions. As a result, international conflict discourse may become increasingly fragmented and antagonistic.

Moreover, the logic of platform capitalism encourages digital platforms to maximize user engagement for economic purposes [5]. This logic indirectly promotes the circulation of sensational, emotional, and divisive content because such content tends to generate more clicks, comments, shares, and reactions. Therefore, public discussion about the Iran–Israel conflict on Facebook cannot be separated from the interaction between media framing, user emotion, and platform-based visibility.

Despite the growing literature on misinformation, polarization, and digital media, few studies have examined how media framing, affective polarization, and epistemic distrust interact simultaneously to produce discursive chaos, especially in the context of Global South societies such as Indonesia. Most existing studies focus on misinformation,

polarization, or algorithmic filtering as separate issues. This study addresses that gap by examining how Indonesian Facebook users responded to media posts about the Iran–Israel conflict and how their responses generated fragmented, emotionally charged, and distrustful public discourse.

This study argues that discursive chaos does not emerge only from false information. Rather, it emerges from the interaction of media narratives, emotional user engagement, credibility contestation, and platform-mediated participation. By examining Facebook comments on the Iran–Israel conflict, this research contributes to the study of digital political communication by showing how global conflict is reinterpreted, localized, and destabilized within Indonesian online public space.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study uses an integrated yet focused theoretical framework comprising three main perspectives: framing theory, affective polarization, and epistemic distrust. These perspectives serve not as isolated theories but as interconnected analytical tools for understanding how conflict-related discourse becomes unstable, antagonistic, and fragmented in Facebook comment sections.

2.1 Framing Theory

Framing theory analyzes how media posts define and present conflict. According to [6], framing involves selecting certain aspects of reality and making them more salient to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, or an implied response. In the context of the Iran–Israel conflict, framing theory helps identify how media pages construct the conflict, which actors are positioned as aggressors or victims, what moral language is foregrounded, and what interpretive horizon is made available to audiences.

Framing matters because user comments do not emerge in an interpretive vacuum. They respond to media texts that already organize the event in particular ways. However, users do not simply receive these frames passively. Users may contest, invert, exaggerate, or redirect them in the comment section.

2.2 Affective Polarization

Affective polarization refers to a condition in which political and social antagonism is driven increasingly by emotion, identity, and hostility toward perceived opponents rather than by substantive policy disagreement alone [7], [8]. In digital communication, this condition becomes evident when users respond not through careful deliberation but through mockery, contempt, moral condemnation, or an emotionally charged alignment with one side of a conflict.

This perspective is useful in the present study because many Facebook comments do not engage with war events analytically. Instead, they perform support, hatred, ridicule, or symbolic militancy. Affective polarization, therefore, helps explain how comment sections shift from spaces of discussion into spaces of emotional antagonism.

2.3 Epistemic Distrust

Beyond emotional hostility, conflict discourse in digital spaces is also shaped by distrust of information sources, media institutions, and truth claims. For this reason, this study uses the concept of epistemic distrust to examine how users question the credibility of media posts, accuse pages of bias or manipulation, and reject shared standards of factual authority.

This perspective matters because digital instability is produced not only by strong emotions, but also by the erosion of common epistemic ground. When users no longer share a minimal trust in the institutions or sources that circulate news, every post becomes vulnerable to reclassification as propaganda, slander, or strategic deception.

2.4 Toward the Concept of Discursive Chaos

Taken together, these perspectives help explain what this study calls discursive chaos. In this article, discursive chaos does not refer simply to misinformation or incivility. It refers to a broader condition in which media narratives are contested through emotionally charged participation, symbolic aggression, and distrust toward public truth claims. As a result, the comment section becomes fragmented, morally overheated, and non-deliberative.

Thus, discursive chaos is treated here not as a standalone classical theory, but as an analytical outcome of the interaction between media framing, affective polarization, and epistemic distrust in platformed public discourse. This formulation is more methodologically defensible than the earlier draft's stronger claim about algorithmic amplification, because the current data allow for close analysis of discourse rather than direct measurement of platform ranking systems.

3. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative digital discourse approach to examine how Indonesian Facebook users responded to media posts about the Iran–Israel conflict. This approach was considered appropriate because the object of the study was not private opinion collected through interviews or surveys, but naturally occurring public discourse that had already appeared in digital space. The study relied on digital trace data, particularly publicly accessible Facebook news posts and user comments. Digital trace data are useful in social media research because they provide observable records of online interaction and allow researchers to examine how users respond to public events without direct researcher intervention [9], [10].

The researchers designed the study as a non-reactive observational study. The researchers did not intervene in the discussion, contact users, or ask participants to answer any questions. Instead, the study observed and analyzed publicly available Facebook posts and comments related to the Iran–Israel conflict. This design allowed the researchers to capture spontaneous user responses as they appeared in the comment sections. In this sense, Facebook comments were treated not merely as casual audience feedback, but as digital traces of public meaning-making, emotional reaction, and political interpretation.

The main data source consisted of public Facebook content posted by Indonesian news media pages. Facebook was selected because it remains an important platform in Indonesia where news circulation and public commentary occur simultaneously. On this platform, users not only consume news; they also react to it, debate it, challenge it, ridicule it, and reinterpret it through comments. Therefore, Facebook provides a relevant site for examining how international conflict is localized and transformed within Indonesian digital public discourse.

The unit of analysis consisted of two levels. The first level was the media post, which was treated as the primary media text through which issue salience and framing were observed. The second level was the user comment, which was treated as a public discursive response through which affective polarization, epistemic distrust, and discursive chaos were identified. This two-level analysis was necessary because the study aimed to examine not only how media pages presented the Iran–Israel conflict, but also how users received, contested, and emotionally amplified those narratives.

The study used purposive sampling. Posts were selected because they explicitly discussed developments in the Iran–Israel conflict and generated visible public responses in the comment section. The selected posts focused on conflict escalation, military action, missile attacks, retaliation, civilian impact, diplomacy, or related geopolitical developments involving Iran and Israel. The comments analyzed were written primarily in Indonesian or mixed Indonesian vernacular that could still be meaningfully interpreted in context. Purposive sampling was suitable because the study aimed to select information-rich cases that could illuminate the dynamics of digital conflict discourse rather than statistically represent all Indonesian Facebook users.

Data collection drew on publicly accessible Facebook pages and public comment sections. The researchers recorded post captions, publication dates, engagement indicators, and relevant user comments. The researchers organized the collected materials into a structured dataset for analysis. Usernames, profile photos, and other direct identifiers were not included in the analytical presentation in order to protect user privacy. Because online content is dynamic and may be edited, deleted, or reordered over time, the researchers documented the collected materials through structured archiving, including post information, retrieval dates, and anonymized comment excerpts.

The analysis followed three connected stages. First, the researchers identified the dominant issue emphasis in the selected media posts. This stage drew on agenda-setting theory, which explains how media influence public attention by making certain issues more salient [11]. In this study, agenda-setting was used to examine which aspects of the Iran–Israel conflict were made visible in Facebook news posts, such as military escalation, missile attacks, civilian impact, retaliation, or diplomatic tension.

Second, the researchers analyzed how the selected posts framed the conflict. Framing theory was used because it explains how media select and emphasize particular aspects of reality in order to promote certain definitions of problems, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and possible responses [12]. In this study, framing analysis examined how media posts represented conflict actors, responsibility, victimhood, threat, and moral positioning before these narratives entered the comment section. This stage mattered

because Facebook users did not respond to events in a neutral vacuum; they responded to conflict narratives already structured through media language.

Third, the researchers conducted thematic and discourse-oriented analysis of user comments. Thematic analysis identified recurring patterns of meaning in the comment data. This method was appropriate because it provides a flexible yet systematic way to identify, organize, and interpret patterns within qualitative data [13]. Through repeated reading of the comments, the researchers identified several recurring response patterns, including credibility questioning, symbolic support, ridicule, hostile expression, moral judgment, and distrust of mainstream media.

After identifying the thematic patterns, the analysis moved into discourse-oriented interpretation. This stage examined not only what users said, but also how they constructed enemies, allies, truth claims, moral legitimacy, and political identity through language. This interpretive step was important because the study focused on discursive chaos, namely a condition in which public discussion becomes fragmented, emotionally overheated, distrustful, and less deliberative. In this stage, user comments were read as public performances through which users expressed suspicion, moral condemnation, symbolic alignment, and antagonistic identity positioning.

The study's theoretical framework guided the coding process. Comments were grouped according to their dominant discursive function. Comments that accused media of spreading false information were categorized as credibility contestation. Comments that celebrated one conflict actor were categorized as symbolic alignment. Comments that mocked destruction, suffering, or military loss were categorized as ridicule. Comments that used aggressive or eliminatory language were categorized as hostile expression. The coding categories were developed through both theoretical guidance and close reading of the data. In content-oriented analysis, clear category definitions strengthen analytical consistency and reduce ambiguity in interpretation [14].

Affective polarization was used to interpret the emotional and antagonistic character of the comments. Affective polarization refers to a condition in which political division is shaped not only by disagreement over issues, but also by hostility, distrust, and negative feelings toward perceived opposing groups [15], [16]. This concept helped analyze comments that expressed hatred, mockery, moral condemnation, or celebratory hostility toward one side of the conflict. In this study, affective polarization helped explain why comment sections often shifted from discussion of the Iran–Israel conflict into emotionally charged performances of alignment and opposition.

The study also considered the role of platform-mediated visibility. Although the research did not directly access Facebook's internal algorithmic system, it interpreted engagement patterns and comment visibility as part of the broader platform environment. Previous research on Facebook shows that friendship networks, user choice, and algorithmic filtering shape exposure to political information [17]. Therefore, this study treated algorithmic curation not as a directly measured variable, but as a contextual condition through which emotionally provocative content may become more visible, repeated, and intensified in public discussion.

The researchers applied ethical caution throughout the research process. Although the data came from publicly accessible Facebook spaces, public availability does not automatically remove ethical responsibility in social media research. Researchers still need to consider privacy expectations, traceability, and potential harm when using online user-generated content [18]. For this reason, the study anonymized user identities, avoided reporting profile information, and focused on discourse patterns rather than individual users. The study used comments only as examples of public discourse and did not treat them as personal data attached to identifiable individuals.

The study acknowledges several limitations. Facebook comments do not represent the entire Indonesian public. They represent only the voices of users who chose to comment on visible public news posts. Therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as a measurement of Indonesian public opinion in general. This limitation is common in digital trace research because online data often reflect participation bias, platform visibility, and unequal engagement patterns [19], [20]. However, this limitation does not weaken the study's purpose, because the aim was not to measure public opinion statistically, but to interpret how discursive chaos emerged in a specific digital public space through the interaction of media framing, affective polarization, epistemic distrust, and antagonistic user participation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

4.1. Kompas.com

The Facebook post published by *Kompas.com* reported an incident in southern Israel after fragments of an Iranian missile, intercepted by Israel's air defense system, struck an industrial facility and caused a fire. The post also mentioned that there were no casualties, that residents near the area were temporarily evacuated, and that another fire occurred in Haifa in the context of the ongoing Israel–Iran conflict.

Based on the comments under this post, several response patterns emerge.

First, some comments questioned the news's credibility. This can be seen in responses such as “Hoaxx itu,” “Kompas ini lho. Fitnah,” and comments suggesting the video is AI-generated. These comments indicate that the news post was not fully accepted as factual by all users.

Second, some comments expressed support for Iran. For example, one user wrote, “Bravo Iran!” This type of comment shows direct approval toward one actor in the conflict.

Third, some comments used ridicule or mockery in responding to the reported destruction. An example is the comment stating that the remains of Israel could be sold as scrap metal and turned into cooking utensils. This kind of response turns the event into an object of humiliation rather than a topic of discussion.

Fourth, there were also comments containing extremely hostile expressions, such as the statement calling for Israel to be flattened entirely. This indicates that the discussion did not remain at the level of disagreement or opinion, but also included very aggressive language.

Overall, this post shows that a single news item can elicit a range of reactions in the comments, including disbelief, support, ridicule, and hostility. At this stage, the finding suggests that the comment space serves not only as a place to respond to information but also as a space where users openly display emotional and oppositional reactions.

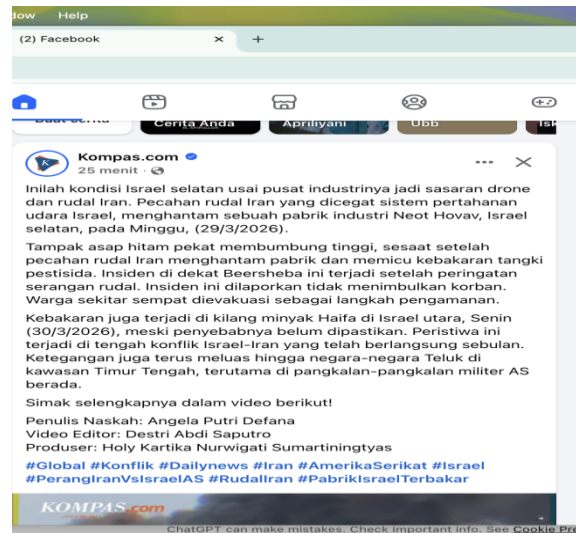


Figure 1. Kompas.com (March 31, 2026)

Table 1. Initial Findings from the Kompas.com Post

Response pattern	Example	Brief description
Credibility questioning	“Hoaxx itu,” “Fitnah,” “video AI”	Users doubted the truthfulness of the news
Support for conflict actor	“Bravoo Iran!”	Users expressed open support for Iran
Ridicule	“dibikin panci lbh manfaat”	Users mocked the reported destruction
Hostile expression	“Ratakan seluruh bumi Israel dengan tanah”	Users used highly aggressive language

4.2. Majelis Humor Indonesia

Another finding can be seen from the Facebook account of Majelis Humor Indonesia, which also uploaded an update related to the Iran–Israel war.

Update News **!!**, IRGC meluncurkan rudal berat 2 Ton ke wilayah Israel Rabu, 1 April 2026 dini hari waktu setempat. Serangan gelombang 88 ini adalah Operasi Janji Sejati 4 dengan kode Ya Fatimah al-Zahra, didedikasikan untuk para martir perlawanan di Hizbullah Lebanon, dan 3 Anggota TNI yang gugur akibat rudal Israel.

Dalam serangan ini, IRGC memanfaatkan rudal berat seperti Emad, Khorramshahr-4, dan Qadr dengan bahan bakar padat dan cair, secara efektif menargetkan lokasi di tengah, selatan, utara, dan jantung wilayah yang diduduki, termasuk tempat pertemuan komandan Front Dalam Negeri Zionis di Bnei Brak, Tel Aviv, Beersheba, Galilee, Negev, Pangkalan Udara Tel Nof, Arad, dan wilayah Laut Mati selatan. (Majelis Humor Indonesia, April 1, 2026)

The post reported that the IRGC launched heavy missiles weighing around two tons toward Israeli territory on Wednesday, April 1, 2026, in the early morning local time. The post explained that this attack was the 88th wave of Operation True Promise 4 under the code Ya Fatimah al-Zahra. It was also described as being dedicated to the martyrs of the resistance in Hezbollah, Lebanon, and three Indonesian military personnel said to have died because of Israeli missiles. The post also mentioned the use of heavy missiles such as Emad, Khorramshahr-4, and Qadr, and listed several targeted areas, including Bnei Brak, Tel Aviv, Beersheba, the Galilee, the Negev, Tel Nof Air Base, Arad, and the southern Dead Sea area.

Based on the content of this post, several important tendencies can be identified. First, the post uses a strong war-oriented narrative. The information is not delivered in a neutral or distant reporting style, but in a dramatic and emphatic tone. The use of words such as “martyrs” and “resistance” and the naming of the military operation, create a heroic, ideological framing of the attack.

Second, the post clearly aligns with Iran and its allies. This is evident in how the attack is represented as meaningful, dedicated, and politically justified. In other words, the post’s language not only provides information but also builds moral sympathy for one side of the conflict.

Third, the post constructs the military action as large, serious, and legitimate by mentioning specific missile types, technical details, and numerous targets. This kind of presentation can strengthen the impression of power, military capability, and strategic control. At the same time, it can also intensify readers’ emotions.

Fourth, the mention of three Indonesian military personnel adds a local emotional connection to an international conflict. This part is important because it can make the issue feel closer to Indonesian audiences and may increase affective engagement in the comment space.

Overall, the Majelis Humor Indonesia post shows that Facebook content about international conflicts is not always presented neutrally. In this case, the post appears to combine information, ideological framing, and emotional cues into a single narrative. This suggests that social media posts do not merely circulate updates about war; they also shape how audiences morally understand and emotionally receive the conflict. In this sense, the post can be seen as part of a broader digital environment in which information, sentiment, and symbolic alignment are closely intertwined.

Based on the comments under this post, several response patterns also emerge. First, some comments did not directly discuss the substance of the conflict but instead shifted the discussion into cynical criticism of the Indonesian government. This can be seen in comments such as “Di Indonesia ada ya MBG” and “Indonesia kabarnya tidak tinggal diam. Melalui juru bicaranya Indonesia akan membalas dengan mengirimkan MBG yg tidak habis dimakan/terbuang senilai triliunan rupiah.” These comments show how users reframed an international conflict into sarcastic commentary on domestic government policy. In this case, the war issue became a trigger for local political dissatisfaction rather than an international concern.

Second, some comments expressed ridicule toward individuals who were seen as denying facts about the conflict. This can be seen in the comment, “Si oten akan bilang hoak. Dia percaya perang Iran vs Israel hanya ada korban pihak Iran. Segitu dongoknya ya sampai percaya perang kok Israel tanpa korban jiwa.” This kind of response indicates that the comment section was also used to attack other people’s views through mockery and insults. The discussion, therefore, moved away from reasoned argument and became more confrontational in tone.

Third, some comments questioned the credibility and validity of the information shared in the post. For example, one user wrote, “Minimal cantumin sumber yang valid. Kalo memang rudal sudah diluncurin, ada ngga bukti kerusakanya? Kebiasaan bgt ni admin nyantumin berita asal asalan tanpa sumber valid cuma buat nyenengin simpatisan Iran. Kelakuan si admin ga ada bedanya sama orang Israel.” This comment shows skepticism about the post’s accuracy and accuses the page administrator of bias. Here, distrust was directed not only at the information itself but also at the actor who circulated it.

Fourth, some comments contained criticism of Indonesian political elites regarding the conflict. This can be seen in the comment, “Malah Iran yang membalas kematian TNI, dan si Wowo malah enak-enakan keliling dunia buat cari buat, biar bisa nyetor uang lagi ke Trump dan seriwil.” This response shows how the conflict was linked to dissatisfaction with national leadership. Rather than discussing only Iran and Israel, the users brought Indonesian political figures into the discourse and used the conflict as a vehicle for domestic political criticism.

Fifth, some comments expressed irony and disbelief at how the conflict was narrated online. This appears in the comment, “Perasaan yg mati pemimpin Iran mulu, tpi di Indonesia seolah pemimpin Israel yg mati dan Tel Aviv yg hancur. Benar-benar lucu memang.” This kind of comment reflects doubt about the imbalance between the reported narrative and the perceived reality of the conflict. It suggests users were reacting not only to the war itself but also to how it was framed and imagined in Indonesian online spaces.

Overall, the comments under the Majelis Humor Indonesia post show that responses varied widely, ranging from sarcasm to domestic political criticism, ridicule of other users, distrust of sources, and ironic reactions to media framing. This suggests the comment section functioned not only as a place to respond to war-related information, but also as a discursive space where international conflict mixed with local political frustration, interpersonal hostility, and skepticism toward digital information. In this context, the post generated not only reactions to the conflict itself, but also broader emotional and political expressions from Indonesian online audiences.

Table 2. Initial Findings from the Majelis Humor Indonesia

Response pattern	Example	Brief description
Domestic political sarcasm	“Di indonesia ada ya MBG”; “Indonesia kabarnya tidak tinggal diam... mengirimkan MBG yg tidak habis dimakan...”	Users shifted the discussion from international conflict to cynical criticism of Indonesian government policy
Ridicule toward other views	“Si oten akan bilang hoak...”; “Segitu dongoknya ya...”	Users mocked other people who were seen as denying or misreading the conflict situation
Credibility questioning	“Minimal cantumin sumber yang valid”; “ada ngga bukti kerusakanya?”	Users doubted the validity of the information and asked for clearer evidence and sources
Accusation of media/admin bias	“admin nyantumin berita asal asalan...”; “cuma buat nyenengin simpatisan Iran”	Users accused the page administrator of spreading one-sided or biased information
Criticism of Indonesian leaders	“si Wowo malah enak2an keliling dunia...”	Users used the conflict issue to criticize Indonesian political elites and leadership
Irony toward conflict framing	“di Indonesia seolah pemimpin Israel yg mati dan Tel Aviv yg hancur”	Users expressed irony toward the way the conflict was narrated in Indonesian online discourse

4.3. SINDOnews.com

Another finding comes from the Facebook post uploaded by SINDOnews.com.

Rentetan proyektil menerangi langit Israel Utara pada Rabu (1/4/2026) malam. Serangan gabungan Iran-Hizbullah ini terjadi tepat saat warga sedang merayakan Seder Paskah, memaksa keluarga-keluarga berlarian mencari perlindungan di tengah suara sirene yang terus meraung. Konflik semakin tak terkendali sejak eskalasi besar pada akhir Februari lalu. Dunia kini menahan napas saat serangan rudal terus menghantam pemukiman dan infrastruktur energi. Apakah ini awal dari babak baru yang lebih gelap di Timur Tengah? (Sindonews.com, April 1, 2026).

Users’ comment: “jangan sampai ada yg sisa termasuk Abu Janda, wkwwkwk...”. Another comment, “berita Endoneztan itu Iran yang selalu menang”. “Bravo Iran”.

The post described a scene in northern Israel on Wednesday night, April 1, 2026, when a series of projectiles lit up the sky. It stated that the combined Iran–Hezbollah attack occurred while residents were celebrating Passover Seder, forcing families to run for shelter amid the sound of sirens. The post also framed the situation as part of an escalating crisis since late February. It ended with a dramatic question about whether this marked the beginning of a darker new phase in the Middle East.

Based on the post's content, several important tendencies emerge. First, the post uses a highly dramatic and emotionally charged narrative. Unlike a purely descriptive report, the wording emphasizes fear, urgency, and uncertainty. Expressions such as families running for shelter, the continuous sound of sirens, and the suggestion of a darker new chapter in the Middle East create a strong atmosphere of crisis. This means the post not

only informs readers about a military event but also frames the conflict in an intense, suspenseful way.

Second, the post foregrounds the attack's humanitarian and emotional dimensions. By mentioning civilians celebrating a religious event and suddenly being forced to seek protection, the narrative draws attention to vulnerability and civilian fear. This kind of framing can increase emotional engagement among audiences because the conflict is presented not merely as a military exchange, but as a threatening event affecting ordinary people.

Third, the post uses a broad escalation frame. The conflict is not presented as a single isolated attack, but as part of a larger pattern of worsening violence since the end of February. The final rhetorical question—whether this is the start of a darker chapter—further intensifies the sense of uncertainty and danger. In this way, the post encourages audiences to interpret the event as historically significant and morally alarming, rather than as routine war news.

Based on the comments found under this post, several response patterns can also be identified. First, some comments contained extremely hostile expressions. This can be seen in the comment, “jangan sampai ada yg sisa termasuk Abu Janda, wkwkwkw...”. This response does not engage the event analytically; instead, it expresses violent hostility and extends the discourse beyond the conflict itself to other figures symbolically inserted into the conversation. The presence of such language shows that the comment section became a space for aggressive emotional expression rather than reasoned discussion.

Second, some comments expressed distrust and irony toward how Indonesian media reported the conflict. This can be seen in the comment, “berita Endoneztan itu Iran yang selalu menang”. This response suggests skepticism toward recurring media narratives that are perceived as one-sided or exaggerated. Here, the user does not simply react to the war event but questions the broader pattern of representation in the Indonesian information environment. This indicates epistemic distrust directed not only at a single post but at media framing more generally.

Third, some comments expressed direct support for Iran. This is evident in the statement, “Bravo Iran.” Similar to the pattern found in the Kompas.com case, this type of response shows open symbolic alignment with one side of the conflict. The comment does not evaluate the event in strategic or humanitarian terms; rather, it serves as a brief expression of approval and emotional identification.

Overall, the comments under the SINDOnews.com post show response patterns of hostility, distrust, irony, and symbolic support. This indicates that the comment section functioned not only as a place to discuss the reported attack, but also as a discursive arena where users expressed emotional aggression, questioned media credibility, and displayed partisan alignment. In this context, the post generated not only reactions to the conflict itself, but also broader expressions of antagonism and skepticism in the digital public sphere.

Table 3. Initial Findings from the SINDOnews.com Post

Response pattern	Example	Brief description
Dramatic crisis framing	“Dunia kini menahan napas...”; “babak baru yang lebih gelap”	The post presents the conflict in an emotionally intense and suspenseful way
Hostile expression	“jangan sampai ada yg sisa...”	Users responded with aggressive and violent language
Distrust toward media framing	“berita Endoneztan itu Iran yang selalu menang”	Users expressed skepticism toward how the conflict is narrated in Indonesian media
Support for conflict actor	“Bravo Iran”	Users showed direct symbolic support for Iran

Discussion

Media Framing, Contestation, and the Emergence of Discursive Chaos

The Facebook post from Kompas.com presents the attack in a relatively factual and event-centered manner. The text reports that fragments of an Iranian missile, intercepted by the Israeli air defense system, hit an industrial facility in southern Israel and caused a pesticide tank fire. It also mentions the absence of casualties, temporary evacuation, and another fire incident in Haifa, while situating the event within the broader Israel–Iran conflict. On the surface, the report appears descriptive and informative. However, once this news enters the Facebook comment section, the event's meaning is no longer determined solely by the media text. Instead, it becomes a site of discursive struggle, emotional contestation, and symbolic escalation.

This pattern supports the argument that social media content does not remain a stable informational product. Rather, it becomes raw material for public reinterpretation, emotional projection, and ideological contestation. In this case, the comment section shows that even a relatively descriptive report can quickly be absorbed into a polarized, unstable discursive environment. This is consistent with the logic of agenda-setting and framing. The media post sets the issue agenda by making the attack visible and salient, but the framing effects are not received uniformly. Users actively reframe the event in line with their ideological positions, suspicions, and emotional alignments [21], [22].

An important first pattern in the comments is contesting factual credibility. One user writes that access to information is still open, then contrasts this with the claim that the internet in Iran has been inaccessible for nearly two months and implies that this information blackout aims to hide the violent actions of the IRGC and the Basij against demonstrators. This comment is significant because it shifts the discussion away from the specific reported event and relocates it into a broader geopolitical narrative about repression, censorship, and hidden violence. In this sense, the user does not simply respond to the post; they reconstruct the interpretive frame. The comment suggests that the conflict cannot be understood through isolated incidents but must be read through competing informational regimes. This reflects how social media users act not only as audiences, but also as counter-framers who challenge the boundaries of media narratives.

However, other comments move in a different direction. Statements such as “Kota Israel dimana mana hancur lebur” and “Dikilo az lah besi bekas nya, dibikin panci lbh

manfaat” exaggerate destruction and turn the event into an object of ridicule. This is followed by comments such as “Bravoo Iran!” and even “Ratakan seluruh bumi Israel dengan tanah.” These responses are not attempts at factual engagement. Rather, they demonstrate affective and moral positioning. The conflict is translated into an emotionally charged binary in which one side is celebrated, and the other side is dehumanized. Here, the comment section no longer functions as a deliberative space for discussing a war event. It becomes a performative arena of hostility, cheering, and symbolic violence.

This finding is strongly relevant to the concept of affective polarization. The comments are not primarily organized around policy reasoning, legal judgment, or strategic analysis. Instead, they are organized around emotional alignment and moral antagonism. Users express approval, mockery, denial, and hatred in ways that show strong emotional investment in one side of the conflict. As Iyengar et al. (2012) argue, polarization in contemporary political communication is often not ideological in a strict sense, but affective. What matters is not only what one believes, but whom one loves, hates, trusts, or despises. In the present case, support for Iran and hostility toward Israel are expressed through emotionally loaded language that intensifies antagonism rather than reflection.

A second pattern is the delegitimization of mainstream media authority. One comment says, “Iiissh....kompas ini lho. Fitnah.” These responses show a deep distrust of the news source itself. The issue here is no longer the military event, but the credibility of journalism. The accusation of “fitnah” and the suggestion that the report may be considered “video AI” illustrate how digital publics increasingly interpret news through a lens of suspicion. This supports the argument that digital chaos is not only about disagreement over facts but also about the erosion of epistemic authority. In such environments, even visual evidence or mainstream reporting can be dismissed as manipulation, fabrication, or propaganda.

This pattern is important theoretically because it shows that media bias is perceived, negotiated, and amplified socially. Whether the media text is objectively balanced or not becomes less important than the fact that users experience it as partisan, manipulative, or untrustworthy. This is where framing theory intersects with platform dynamics. Media framing creates the initial structure of meaning, but the platform environment allows users to openly attack, invert, and destabilize that meaning in public view. As a result, the comment section becomes a space not only of political polarization but also of epistemic fragmentation, where no shared standard of truth is fully accepted.

The interaction's style itself further intensifies this epistemic fragmentation. The comment “Hoaxx itu... hahahaa” is short, dismissive, and mocking. It does not provide evidence, but it performs skepticism in a socially visible way. Such comments matter in platformed discourse because they are highly replicable, emotionally efficient, and easy to amplify. Their power lies not in argumentative strength, but in discursive contagion. In algorithmically curated environments, brief, sarcastic, and emotionally provocative comments often travel more effectively than careful reasoning. Therefore, the platform does not merely host polarization; it structurally favors interactions that compress complexity into emotionally legible signals.

From an algorithmic amplification perspective, these comments are likely to become more visible precisely because they are provocative, categorical, and emotionally resonant. Comments that celebrate destruction, accuse the media of lying, or call for total annihilation are more likely to invite reactions, replies, and further escalation. In this sense, the platform does not create hostility from nothing, but it amplifies the visibility of hostile discourse once it emerges. Lazer et al. [23] show that platform filtering and user choice jointly shape exposure to information. In the present case, this means that emotionally intense interpretations may become more dominant in the user's experience of the discussion than the news's original informational content.

From this interaction emerges the digital chaos this study conceptualizes. The comment section displays several core characteristics of such chaos: first, the collapse of shared factual ground; second, the replacement of argument with emotional signaling; third, the circulation of ridicule, celebratory violence, and totalizing hostility; and fourth, the weakening of media authority as a source of public orientation. Importantly, this chaos is not reducible to "misinformation" alone. Some comments deny the report, others exaggerate destruction, and others celebrate violence. These are distinct discursive actions, but together they create a fragmented public sphere in which truth, morality, and political identity are simultaneously contested.

This finding strengthens the study's central argument. We argue that digital chaos emerges when media reports on conflict enter a platform environment where users interpret news through partisan emotion, low institutional trust, and symbolic antagonism. In such conditions, media bias is not simply a property of the news text. It becomes a socially activated perception that users mobilize to justify disbelief, ridicule, and hostility. At the same time, we argue that algorithmic amplification intensifies this process by increasing the visibility of emotionally charged comments, thereby transforming the comment section into a recursive space of polarization and epistemic disorder.

At the same time, this excerpt also shows an important nuance. The chaos is not caused by one single discursive mode. It emerges from the combination of at least three interacting responses: counter-framing ("the real issue is censorship and hidden violence"), dismissive distrust ("ini fitnah, hoax, AI"), and affective militancy ("bravo Iran," "ratakan Israel"). This confirms that digital conflict discourse is multi-layered. Users do not respond in one uniform way. Instead, they produce different but mutually reinforcing forms of instability. One group attacks credibility, another group escalates hatred, and another inserts broader geopolitical narratives. Together, these reactions overwhelm the post's original informational function.

This case shows how a Facebook news post about a military event can quickly become a dense arena of moral judgment, symbolic violence, distrust, and geopolitical imagination. This is precisely why the concept of digital chaos is useful. It captures not only falsehood or polarization in isolation, but the broader condition in which mediated conflict reporting generates a fragmented, emotionally overheated, and non-deliberative public discourse.

Ideological Framing, Domestic Projection, and the Intensification of Discursive Chaos

The Majelis Humor Indonesia post is not structured as a neutral conflict update. Unlike the Kompas.com post, which still retains a relatively descriptive, event-centered news logic, this post already carries a more emotionally charged, ideologically suggestive tone from the beginning. The language of “martyrs,” “resistance,” and the naming of the operation as *Ya Fatimah al-Zahra* does not merely report military action. It symbolically elevates the attack, moralizes the conflict, and implicitly positions one side as legitimate and honorable. In this sense, the post not only presents information about war but also offers an interpretive frame through which audiences are invited to read the event. This corresponds with framing theory, which holds that media texts do not simply transmit facts but define problems, attribute causality, make moral evaluations, and imply particular lines of interpretation [24].

From an agenda-setting perspective, the post makes the Iran–Israel conflict salient, but it does so through a frame that is already emotionally primed. In other words, the issue is not merely made visible; it is made meaningful in a specific direction. The Facebook page functions not only as a distributor of information, but as an actor in the symbolic construction of conflict. This is important because agenda-setting is not exhausted by issue salience alone. Once an issue is rendered visible, its framing shapes how audiences orient toward it, what they consider morally central, and which side they are encouraged to sympathize with [24], [25].

However, once this post enters the Facebook comment section, the meaning of the event is no longer stabilized by the text itself. Instead, it becomes the object of discursive struggle. The comments under the post reveal that users do not merely receive the frame; they actively redirect, stretch, invert, and weaponize it. One of the clearest patterns is the displacement of an international conflict into a domestic political register. Comments about MBG and wasted government spending do not engage the war update at the level of geopolitical analysis. Rather, they localize the conflict by converting it into a sarcastic critique of Indonesian public policy and state priorities. In this process, the war abroad becomes a symbolic resource for articulating domestic grievances. The event is no longer only about Iran and Israel; it has become a vehicle through which Indonesian users express dissatisfaction with their own political environment.

This pattern is analytically important because it shows that digital conflict discourse is not merely reactive but appropriative. Users take a distant geopolitical event and resignify it within local ideological and emotional frameworks. This appropriation expands the comment section's function beyond response to projection. The war is not simply discussed; it is domesticated and reinserted into local narratives of waste, incompetence, and political frustration. This dynamic helps explain why social media conflict discourse often becomes unstable. Multiple secondary grievances rapidly overlay the original multiple informational referent. The comment space thus turns into a crowded arena where transnational conflict, national discontent, and interpersonal antagonism collapse into one another.

A second major pattern is the presence of ridicule as a mode of political positioning. Comments mocking others as naïve, stupid, or incapable of seeing “reality” are not

incidental. They are central to the discursive structure of the thread. Rather than challenging claims through evidence, users attack the competence and intelligence of imagined opponents. This matters because ridicule is not a neutral rhetorical style. It is a status move. It delegitimizes other participants while simultaneously affirming the speaker's own epistemic and moral superiority. In this way, mockery functions as a shortcut to discursive domination. The discussion shifts from whether a claim is true to who deserves to be taken seriously.

This pattern aligns with scholarship on affective polarization. Contemporary polarization is often driven less by coherent ideological programs than by emotional identification with an in-group and hostility toward an out-group [26]. Later scholarship has also shown that affective polarization varies across contexts, but where it intensifies, public discourse tends to become more emotionally oppositional and socially exclusionary rather than substantively deliberative [27]. In the present case, the comments do not display careful strategic analysis of the Iran–Israel conflict. Instead, they show contempt, irritation, and derision toward other users, political elites, and information sources. This suggests that the thread is organized not primarily by geopolitical reasoning, but by emotional sorting and antagonistic identity performance.

A third pattern concerns epistemic distrust. Several comments demand valid sources, visible evidence of damage, and clearer proof that the missile strike actually produced the reported outcomes. At one level, this can be read positively as a form of verification demand. However, the discourse quickly moves beyond ordinary skepticism into accusations that the admin spreads unverified material merely to satisfy pro-Iran sympathizers. This is significant because distrust here operates on at least three levels simultaneously: distrust of the event claim, distrust of the frame, and distrust of the communicator. The issue is no longer just whether the missile was launched or whether damage occurred; it is whether the page itself is acting as an ideological manipulator.

This layered distrust is crucial for understanding digital chaos. A fragmented digital sphere is not defined only by the circulation of falsehood, but by the erosion of shared epistemic authority. When users no longer share even a minimal standard for what counts as credible mediation, every post becomes vulnerable to reclassification as propaganda, slander, manipulation, or partisan theater. Recent work on epistemic vulnerability links distrust in professional media and a sense of informational disorientation to broader problems of democratic communication and public judgment. In this kind of environment, people are not only uncertain about facts; they are uncertain about which institutions remain reliable enough to arbitrate factual disputes [28], [29].

This problem becomes even sharper when viewed through the logic of platform visibility. On Facebook, the comments most likely to become salient are often not the most evidentially grounded, but the most emotionally efficient. Short, provocative, sarcastic, or accusatory comments can attract replies, reactions, and further circulation more easily than careful reasoning. That does not mean the platform mechanically creates hatred, but it does mean that emotionally intense discourse is more likely to gain visibility once it appears. Ferrara et al. [30] found that Facebook exposure is shaped by both network structure and platform filtering, meaning that the information users encounter is co-produced by social

ties and algorithmic systems. In highly contentious threads, this creates favorable conditions for discursive escalation: provocative comments invite responses, responses increase interaction, and interaction increases visibility.

The comments criticizing Indonesian leaders also deserve deeper attention. These responses show that users do not isolate the international conflict from domestic political dissatisfaction. Instead, they use the war as a stage to project judgments about national leadership, elite behavior, and foreign policy posture. This is not merely topical drift. It is a process of symbolic linkage in which separate political domains become emotionally fused. The war functions as a trigger for broader narratives of governmental weakness, elite indifference, and public betrayal. In this sense, the comment section becomes a reservoir of displaced political resentment.

This dynamic is especially important because it demonstrates that digital conflict discourse is not linear. The original post may concern missiles, military targets, and geopolitical escalation, but the public response quickly becomes multidirectional. One cluster of users politicizes the conflict domestically. Another mocks perceived ignorance. Another demands verification. Another question is the page's motives. Another highlights narrative imbalance and exaggeration. These responses are different in tone and function, yet they converge in producing discursive instability. The result is not a single polarized binary, but a layered field of competing framings, weak trust, symbolic aggression, and emotionally saturated reinterpretation.

Comparative scholarship strengthens this reading. Humprecht, Esser, and Van Aelst's cross-national analysis of Facebook discussions found that hostile emotions in news comments are shaped by wider information environments and media ecologies, with more polarized environments showing higher levels of hostile expression and poorer deliberative quality. Their findings are useful here because they suggest that hostility in comments is not reducible to individual temperament alone; broader communicative structures and outlet types pattern it. Similarly, research on online comments in other polarized settings has shown that readers' comments often do not simply mirror the news article's frame but transform it, sometimes intensifying antagonism and undermining deliberation [24], [27].

This comparative insight is relevant to the present case. The Majelis Humor Indonesia thread should not be treated as an isolated anomaly or as evidence of mere "netizen noise." Rather, it reflects a broader pattern in which platformed comment spaces function as sites of frame contestation, emotional escalation, and epistemic fragmentation. What makes this case distinctive is how an international war narrative is folded into Indonesian domestic sarcasm and leadership criticism, producing a hybrid discursive form: part geopolitical commentary, part anti-elite resentment, part media distrust, and part interpersonal humiliation. That hybridity is precisely what makes the discussion chaotic. The disorder lies not only in hostility, but in the simultaneity of multiple destabilizing modes.

For that reason, the concept of digital chaos is especially useful here. The thread displays several of its core features: first, the absence of a stable shared interpretive ground; second, the displacement of evidence-based engagement by sarcasm, ridicule, and moral signaling; third, the weakening of trust in media intermediaries; and fourth, the

amplification of emotionally resonant discourse over slower forms of reasoning. Importantly, digital chaos is not the same as misinformation in a narrow fact-checking sense. It is a broader condition in which truth claims, moral claims, identity claims, and political resentments collide without a common framework for resolution. The comment section becomes crowded with mutually reinforcing forms of instability: skepticism without closure, mockery without argument, outrage without deliberation, and interpretation without epistemic settlement.

Thus, the Majelis Humor Indonesia case shows that social media posts about war do not merely transmit conflict updates. They can activate a recursive chain of ideological framing, local political projection, emotional antagonism, and epistemic distrust. Once this process unfolds in a platform environment optimized for engagement, the original post's informational function becomes increasingly secondary. What remains central is not what happened in the conflict alone, but how the conflict is appropriated, emotionally charged, and publicly performed in digital discourse. In that sense, the post does not just report war; it becomes infrastructure for reproducing discursive chaos.

Dramatic Crisis Framing, Epistemic Distrust, and Affective Alignment

The SINDOnews.com post is structured through a strong crisis frame. Rather than presenting the attack in a narrowly descriptive way, the post emphasizes emotional imagery, civilian vulnerability, and the possibility of a darker new phase in the Middle East. Such wording does not merely communicate facts; it also directs audiences toward a particular emotional and interpretive orientation. In line with framing theory, the post selects certain aspects of the event and makes them more salient, especially fear, urgency, and escalation [17]. This means that the news item already enters the Facebook environment as a morally and affectively primed text rather than as neutral information.

Once the post enters the comment section, however, the media text no longer stabilizes the meaning of the event. Instead, it becomes the object of discursive struggle. One clear pattern is the emergence of extremely hostile expressions, as shown in the comment calling for nothing to be left, including a domestic public figure. This is analytically important because it demonstrates how the comment section enables an event in international conflict to be appropriated for symbolic violence and expanded into local antagonisms. Research on news comments has repeatedly shown that online user discussions often move away from deliberation and toward hostility, incivility, and emotional confrontation, especially in contentious political contexts [18], [21].

A second major pattern is epistemic distrust. The comment “berita Endoneztan (Indonesia) itu Iran yang selalu menang” reflects not only irony but a deeper suspicion toward the representational habits of Indonesian media. The issue is no longer simply whether the specific event happened as reported, but whether the broader narrative environment is trustworthy. This is highly relevant to scholarship on perceived media bias and hostile media effects, which shows that audiences exposed to social-media news and surrounding comments can develop stronger perceptions of bias and reduced credibility, particularly when the discursive environment appears incongruent with their own expectations or allegiances [24], [26]. Recent work on epistemic authority in the digital

public sphere further argues that public communication becomes unstable when traditional authorities such as journalism are no longer consistently recognized as valid mediators of knowledge [19].

A third pattern is affective alignment, visible in the short supportive comment “Bravo Iran.” This response does not attempt strategic analysis or moral balancing. Instead, it condenses the conflict into an emotionally legible binary of support and opposition. This supports the broader literature on affective polarization, which explains that contemporary political and conflict discourse is often structured less by reasoned disagreement than by emotional sorting, symbolic identification, and hostility toward perceived adversaries [15], [14]. In this sense, the comment section becomes not just a feedback space, but a stage for affective performance.

These three patterns—dramatic framing in the post, distrust toward media credibility, and affective support or hostility in the comments—help explain why the SINDOnews thread can be read as part of a broader condition of discursive chaos. The problem is not only misinformation in a narrow sense. Rather, the instability arises from the interaction among emotionally charged framing, comment-based hostility, and weakening confidence in the media as epistemic intermediaries. As scholarship on user comments and digital public discourse suggests, comment sections often become unruly arenas where issue discussion is mixed with symbolic conflict, distrust, and performative aggression, reducing the possibility of common interpretive ground [16], [18]. Platformed environments further intensify this condition because visibility is shaped not only by information quality, but also by emotionally resonant interaction [22].

Thus, compared with the Kompas.com post, which leaned more toward descriptive event reporting, and the Majelis Humor Indonesia post, which already carried stronger ideological cues, the SINDOnews.com case occupies an important intermediate position. Its post is not explicitly celebratory, yet it is clearly dramatized. Once it enters the comments, it generates the same key dynamics found in the other cases: symbolic support, hostility, and skepticism toward mediation itself. This strengthens the article’s central argument that digital conflict discourse in Indonesian Facebook spaces is shaped not only by what media reports, but also by how users emotionally reinterpret, distrust, and weaponize those reports in participatory comment environments.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that Indonesian Facebook responses to media posts about the Iran–Israel conflict produced a form of discursive chaos marked by credibility contestation, ridicule, symbolic alignment, hostile expression, and epistemic distrust. The findings indicate that comment sections do not function merely as passive spaces of audience feedback. Rather, they operate as active arenas where media narratives are reinterpreted, contested, emotionally intensified, and sometimes detached from their original informational context.

The analysis demonstrates that discursive chaos emerged through the interaction of several factors. Media posts made the conflict visible and provided the initial narrative frame. Users then reworked this frame through emotional, moral, religious, and

geopolitical interpretations. At the same time, distrust of mainstream media weakened shared factual ground, while antagonistic participation turned the comment section into a fragmented, highly charged discursive space.

This study contributes to digital political communication scholarship by showing that public responses to international conflict in Indonesia are shaped not only by misinformation or ideological division, but also by affective polarization and epistemic distrust. In the Facebook comment section, the Iran–Israel conflict became more than a geopolitical issue. It became a symbolic arena where users expressed suspicion, moral judgment, political identity, and emotional alignment. Therefore, understanding digital conflict discourse requires attention not only to media content, but also to how users reinterpret and destabilize that content in platform-based public spaces.

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