

## The rhetorical messages of Megawati Soekarnoputri's speech in Aristotle's framework

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Submitted: 3 September 2024, Revised: 29 November 2024, Accepted: 11 December 2024, Published: 27 December 2024

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The speech by Megawati Soekarnoputri, the 5th President of Indonesia, commemorating the 50th anniversary of Partai Demokrasi Perjuangan Indonesia (PDIP), has sparked significant public debate. While critics argue her speech was overly critical of President Joko Widodo, others view it as constructive criticism. Therefore, it is significant to examine Megawati's actual perspective on the incumbent president and the real relationship between her position as chairperson and the president's status as her cadre. **Purpose:** This study aims to analyze Megawati's speech to uncover whether there is a misalignment between its intended message and impact which may have led to controversy. It analyzes the interpretation of people outside PDIP based on Aristotle's rhetorical framework—ethos, logos, and pathos—to assess her communication strategy and public reception. **Methods:** A descriptive qualitative approach was used, with special interviews to gain a broader perspective. Triangulation was achieved by involving informants, along with observations, juxtaposing it with previous related research. **Results:** Based on the research findings, the author discovered that Megawati's speech functioned primarily to communicate internally with the party's members within her role as the chairperson. Based on rhetorical frameworks, the speech was exclusive to the internal context, and it could have been misinterpreted by people beyond the intended audience if the message had been amplified by mass and social media channels. **Conclusion:** The controversy arose because some receptors were not intended to receive her message due to massive distribution to the public either by mass media or social media. **Implications:** Interpretation of Megawati's speech must be contextualized within the internal framework of PDIP reflecting its distinctive cultural and tradition attributes. The media outlets that cover this event should adopt a more balanced approach to present the realities to the public.

**Keywords:** Aristotle's rhetorical framework; descriptive qualitative; political communications; political party; political speech

#### To cite this article (APA Style):

Anindita, J., Muttaqin, R., Agustya, S.V., & Supriadi, D. (2024). The rhetorical messages of Megawati Soekarnoputri's speech in Aristotle's framework. *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi*, 12(2), 267-284. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk.v12i2.57652>

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## INTRODUCTION

January 10, 2023, during the 50th anniversary celebration of PDIP, the party's chairwoman and Indonesia's fifth President, Megawati Soekarnoputri—hereafter referred to as Megawati—delivered a political speech. This speech, regarding the party's historical journey, presented positioning and future strategic goals and garnered significant media attention due to controversial content related to the current President, Joko Widodo.

Data from the Intelligence Media Analytics (IMA) and Intelligence Socio Analytics (ISA) applications by PT. Indonesia Indikator noted that a total of 774 online news articles and 61 printed media discussed this speech throughout January 2023. According to *Kompas.com*, Megawati's speech highlights President Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) achievements—who was nominated by PDIP in two elections—attributing these successes to PDIP's support. Additionally, Megawati asserted that she is not only an intelligent but also a beautiful and charismatic woman, further emphasizing her qualifications as a leader by mentioning her two professorial titles and nine honorary doctorates (Aida & Pratiwi, 2023).

The sheer volume of media coverage of Megawati Soekarnoputri's January 10, 2023, speech highlights its public interest and controversy. The media's considerable attention to interpreting the content of the speech is indicative of Megawati's high "news value" as one of Indonesia's most influential political figures. Her political career has spanned a key period in Indonesian history, from the pre-reform era of the late 1980s, culminating in her party's ascension to power in parliament in 1999. This success also saw her rise to the vice presidency and later to the presidency in 2001 before experiencing electoral defeats in 2004 and 2009. These defeats positioned her as the leader of the opposition until 2014, when she, alongside PDIP, successfully backed Jokowi in winning two consecutive elections, restoring the party to its governing position.

Diah Permata Megawati Setiawati Soekarnoputri, by virtue of her profile, has highly potential to be viewed as a significant and influential figure in Indonesian politics. This is attributable to her leadership role within

the party, her involvement in Indonesian politics during the reform era, and her direct lineage as a descendant of Soekarno, the first President of the Republic of Indonesia.

As the fifth president and the first female president in the history of the Republic, she was seen as following in the footsteps of her highly charismatic father. Currently, in addition to leading PDIP as Chairperson, she also holds the positions of Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the Pancasila Ideology Development Agency and Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) (Sihombing, 2016). Furthermore, Megawati is seen as orchestrating the continuation of the Soekarno political dynasty through her eldest daughter, Puan Maharani, who currently serves as the Speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives and was previously considered a potential presidential candidate nominated by PDIP for the 2024 General Election.

The heightened media coverage of Megawati's political communication leading up to the 2024 General Election—particularly in front of top public officials she supports, such as President Jokowi—reveals not only the controversial nature of her speeches but also the fact that Megawati rarely makes public statements or gives interviews to the mass media. As a highly influential female political figure, her attitudes and ideas have not been widely studied, yet the public eagerly anticipates them. In fact, many studies have shown that the ruling party—like PDIP—receives more media attention due to its great role and influence in shaping public policy compared to opposition parties (Soontjens & Persson, 2024).

From the limited studies available, it is evident that her statements sometimes exhibit contradictions or inconsistencies. Coles (2018), in his research, highlights Megawati's advice to women aspiring to engage in politics, urging them not to focus solely on their appearance and beauty. She argues that by doing so, they will never fully grasp the essence of politics. However, in her speech at the 50th-anniversary celebration of the PDIP at JIExpo in 2023, Megawati claimed in front of party cadres that she was a beautiful leader. She stated, "Do you know that your mother is not only smart but also beautiful, charismatic, brave, what else?"

This tendency adds more value to news stories that cover her (Coles, 2018).

A critical aspect of political communication is the process of message production—how political actors generate and disseminate messages through traditional and new media channels, including but not limited to the context of electoral campaigns. One method of this is through speeches (Gonçalves et al., 2018). Given Megawati's strategic position, every statement she makes holds particular significance, as it often reflects layers of strategy and political communication employed when delivering a speech (Dirdjosisworo, 1999).

Given her considerable influence, every statement Megawati makes, particularly in the context of speeches delivered ahead of elections, holds a unique appeal. This appeal resonates not only with the mass media but also with her supporters, political opponents, the government (which is currently controlled by her party as the winner of the 2019 General Election), and the broader public. As a result, regardless of whether her speech was genuinely intended to remind the party cadres present (including President Jokowi), her political adversaries, or the public, the mass media has, either intentionally or unintentionally, framed it as a controversy with high news value.

This is not the first time Megawati has directed remarks at Jokowi in her role as party leader addressing a party member. In previous election periods, before Jokowi's first presidential term began, Megawati's rhetoric regarding Jokowi had already drawn attention. Notably, she referred to Jokowi as a "party official" when he was nominated as PDIP's presidential candidate on March 14, 2014. Again in 2023, despite Jokowi having served as President, Megawati remarked, "If not for the PDIP, oh, poor Jokowi..." during her speech to PDIP members at the party's 50th-anniversary celebration at JIExpo, Jakarta, which is now the main object of this study.

In rhetorical studies, speech is a prevalent medium for interpersonal political communication often utilized by political actors on various occasions. Through political communication, there is a linkage between the social community and the state, making political communication a tool for political education or developing citizen awareness in the

context of state relations. In practice, political communication is an activity undertaken by political actors (including Megawati), the media, or a group of citizens, utilizing complex language and symbols. The primary objective of this activity is to exert influence over target audiences concerning public policies or certain specific agendas (Perloff, 2016). A well-delivered speech can influence and motivate listeners, while also strengthening the identity of a political party and garnering support from voters. Furthermore, a speech can shape voters' perceptions without necessarily introducing new information (Dickson & Scheve, 2006). While political speeches, which often include explanations and analyses, are commonly used to persuade the audience to support the speaker's viewpoint. At the same time, these speeches are often crafted in a way that conceals or alters the discussion of certain phenomena (Wala' Al-Majali, 2015).

In practice, political communication rarely consists of factual statements. Instead, it frequently employs various forms of rhetoric to persuade the audience. These rhetorical strategies may include raising speculative concerns about an uncertain future, citing expert opinions, or encouraging altruistic (Harmon et al., 2015; Hoefer & Green, 2016).

Furthermore, speeches are organized systems of signs that reflect certain attitudes, beliefs, and values. Each speech contains meaning conveyed either directly or indirectly. Audiences are known to believe in their own ability to interpret and understand the implicit or hidden meanings within a speech (Lyu & Yuan, 2023). Psychologically, audiences even possess a certain flexibility in negotiating the implicit meaning of a speech (Sun & Liu, 2023). However, interpreting the implied or implicit meaning of a speech can be challenging, as it often contains ambiguity—whether intentional or unintentional—placed by the speaker to their advantage or for a specific purpose, such as concealing relevant details. Given its ability to diminish the critical capacity of the audience, especially those unaware they are being persuaded, implicit meaning is widely employed in political speeches (Cominetti et al., 2024). As a result, there is also the potential for the omission of important facts related to the speaker's position, role, or emotional and

historical ties (Sun & Liu, 2023).

Megawati's speech during the PDIP anniversary celebration, in addition to outlining the party's history and achievements, also contained party policies and her leadership commitments. This makes her speech a potential component of pre-election political campaigning (Konat et al., 2024). Representing the PDIP, even before the official campaign period from November 2023 to January 2024 had begun, she sought to convince the public that she holds the authority to select the party's presidential and vice-presidential candidates who would carry their political agenda forward, just as she had done in the previous two general elections.

One intriguing rhetorical study in the form of political speech or communication, presented in a video format, was created by social media activist Nuseir Yassin in his YouTube channel, Nas Daily, titled "What I Learned from a Trump Rally" (Nas Daily, 2020). According to the video, Donald Trump's victory cannot be separated from his use of simple and emotional rhetoric to influence voters. The rhetoric employed by Trump is also noteworthy because he broke many unwritten rules of American presidential campaigning (Rowland, 2019). Trump avoided complex political jargon by opting to speak like a sensational marketer, often in ways that were even unethical, creating a perception among the public that he was different from his opponents and represented change.

In some comparisons, the language used by Donald Trump is similar to that used by Megawati. Their similarity lies not in their controversies but in Megawati's style of speaking within the context and her use of simple, easily understandable language. Megawati also employs a varied linguistic style with humor and hyperbolic approaches, emphasizing solidarity through distinctive PDIP terminology. On the other hand, the way individuals use and interpret humor in their interactions with others can vary significantly, influenced by various factors such as the context, the topic of discussion, the history of the relationship between the parties involved, and even the tone used in conversation (Anderson & DiTunnariello, 2016). Nevertheless, incorporating humor into speeches is often a choice made by leaders because, while it can

have negative consequences, it also offers positive effects. In the corporate management sphere, humor has been shown to improve employee performance, loyalty, and company commitment to its employees (Cooper & Hiller, 2023). In the context of Megawati's speeches within her party, humor not only helps to humanize the speaker and strengthen her connection with party members (Mendiburo-Seguel et al., 2024), but it also boosts party performance, enhances party member loyalty, and encourages the party to increase its attention toward its members.

The research is based on previous studies conducted by Marselio S. Luhukay and M.F. Ardiansyah. Both examined political leaders using Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory. Luhukay focused on Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, while Ardiansyah studied Basuki Tjahaja Purnama. These two research designs form the foundation for analyzing Megawati's speeches within the framework of Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory (Ardiansyah, 2018; Luhukay, 2007).

Several studies have also focused on Megawati Soekarnoputri's communication style. An instance could be found in Yulyfatun's research on Megawati's speech seven years before the speech analyzed in this research. The study explored the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols in Megawati's speech at the 2016 PDIP National Working Meeting. Similar to the current research, this study used a qualitative approach although the method was different. Based on Barthes's semiotic framework, Yulyfatun's study found that Megawati possesses strong propaganda skills to ensure the loyalty of her party members (Yulyfatun, 2016). In addition, a qualitative case study on symbolic leadership conducted by Safitri has revealed another conclusion. By analyzing news reports during Megawati's political era, the study concluded that Megawati, with her communication style, could build a perception that she gave a mandate to Joko Widodo as her successor figure in the 2014 General Election (Safitri, 2016).

These previous studies' findings become intriguing as similar messages are consistently conveyed by Megawati in this political period. Through humorous remarks in her speech in 2023, Megawati continued to assert her position as the party leader, emphasizing that her party members (including Jokowi) ought to respect



and acknowledge her contributions.

Considering the existing phenomenon and previous research, this study investigated whether Megawati's rhetoric serves as a warning to all party cadres, including Jokowi. The main question: from the perspective of those who are not PDIP cadres, did Megawati's speech at the 50th anniversary of PDIP in 2023 not fulfill the criteria of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* within the framework of Aristotle's Rhetoric Theory, hence the controversy? This research is significant given the growing assumptions as well as a result of studies regarding the relationship between Megawati and President Jokowi. It can examine Megawati's actual perspective on the incumbent president. Furthermore, it can also reveal whether Megawati's position as the party leader exerts a certain degree of dominance over the leadership quality of President Jokowi as a PDIP cadre.

The researchers will delve into the layers of communication as Sadler (2021) formulated, from receptor to communication style, and diction selection. Furthermore, unlike the previous studies, this research will also include field research to gain perspectives from political actors outside the PDIP. The field research in the form of interviews is done to qualitatively understand Megawati's role as the party's chairperson through comparisons with similar roles undertaken by other figures.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a grounded theory approach, which emphasizes the codification of general elements that are subsequently transformed into specific elements before identifying their interconnections. This approach was chosen to explore a particular phenomenon by examining various sources collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and literature, which were then analyzed to identify specific patterns (Rogers, *et al.*, 2024).

This research gained information by conducting interviews to selected informants based on a particular framework. In this study, the author used Aristotle's Rhetoric Theory as a framework to understand one of Megawati's speeches. Rhetoric is known as the art of speaking and using words to convey specific

intentions and objectives (Sulistyarini & Zainal, 2020). It is also recognized as the art of effective communication, meaning that someone who uses rhetoric can deliver their message more quickly and persuasively to their audience, even influencing their emotions. When parties are in a logically balanced position, those who can effectively manage the emotional aspects of their rhetoric have a better chance of winning influence over others (Sulistyarini & Zainal, 2020). In a political speech, audience reception is influenced by not only the clarity and sincerity of the message but also the speaker's profile and the image they project. Moreover, politicians often use rhetoric to articulate and disseminate their policies, while also damaging the image of their political adversaries (Wright, 2024).

Aristotle's Rhetoric Theory is then managed through a grounded theory approach to uncover the interrelated factors within Megawati's speech (Budiasih & Nyoman, 2014; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021; Oktay, 2012). To assess the interpretation and responses of the audience, the author conducted interviews with politicians from parties outside the PDIP, including government supporters and opposition members, who have extensive experience and track records, as reflected in their positions within the party and their roles in legislative bodies. This approach was employed to ensure that the informants could fully comprehend the speech while also minimizing potential subjective bias, such as sympathy toward Joko Widodo, who appeared to be subordinated in the speech. The effort to neutralize subjectivity is expected to help understand the issues at hand (Nasution, 2023).

Aristotle's Rhetoric Theory was applied to examine whether the persuasion involved included the elements of *ethos* (ethics), *pathos* (emotion), and *logos* (logic), which are essential in achieving optimal outcomes in rhetoric. This theory remains relevant in modern rhetoric and communication, particularly in public activities such as politics, business, and education (Aristotle & Kennedy, 1991; McAdon, 2007). The theory perceives the speech in three levels, personal character, the logic used in the speech, and the emotional emphasis delivered in the speech (Dhia et al., 2024).

***Ethos*** focuses on the persona delivering the speech, including their identity, background, and

the position from which they deliver the speech. *Logos* emphasizes the logic and arguments used to persuade the audience to trust what is being said. Lastly, *Pathos* highlights the emotional emphasis, diction, or emotionally charged words intended to move the audience to follow the desires of the speaker.

The interviews involved three informants. The informants were selected based on the criteria mentioned earlier, holding positions in representation and coming from government parties outside the PDIP.

The informant from Partai Golkar was selected based on the party's track record and its significant role in Indonesian politics. As one of the oldest parties in the country, Golkar has consistently ranked among the top three election winners and has always been part of the government structure, including the cabinet, which later transitioned into Kabinet Indonesia Maju under President Jokowi. The informant from Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN) West Java was chosen due to the party's shift from opposition in the 2014 election to the government side in the last two cabinets. Meanwhile, the inclusion of an informant from the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) was made because, although this Islamic-based party has experienced being part of the government, it has more often been in opposition. This had been the case during the last two cabinets, where PKS remained in opposition against the government, standing in contrast to the nationalist-oriented PDIP. The diversity of informant backgrounds is expected to provide a varied analysis of the speech's content.

They were asked to provide their views in response to open-ended questions. After obtaining their perspectives, this study employed grounded theory to identify open coding or general categories to analyze Megawati Soekarnoputri's speech. Selective coding was then used to outline the factors that would influence the evaluation in the Aristotle Rhetoric analysis. Finally, axial coding was performed to uncover the relationships among the selective codes. Validity testing was carried out through the triangulation of data sources and methods, i.e., by juxtaposing informant statements with findings from observations and reference studies and then comparing them with previous research on Megawati's speech, which

**Table 1 Informant Identities**

No.	Initial	Sex	Age	Afiliation
1.	RA	Male	47 years old	Partai Golkar
2.	ET	Male	49 years old	PAN West Java
3.	NZ	Female	57 years old	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera

Source: Research Data, 2023

used a different approach. The interview-based study is expected to provide a whole picture of the researched phenomenon (Natow, 2020; Ahmed, 2024). Table 1 are the identities of the informants selected for this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Observations of Megawati's speech reveal a significant difference between her rhetorical style and that of her father, President Soekarno, despite both being able to evoke strong emotions in their audiences. Soekarno, in his explosive rhetoric, skillfully heightened listeners' emotions by using foreign languages such as Dutch, as well as repetition and emphasis on key messages. This style was deemed effective in boosting the morale of his audience, which, in the context of that era, was fighting for Indonesia's independence, and then during the independence period, he tried to strengthen it again through his efforts to unite opposing political forces – nationalists, religious groups and communists (Lesmana, 2009; Wardaya, 2021). Meanwhile, Megawati, while using clear language, often conceals specific intentions. She does not employ a direct language style, but her meanings are impactful. Megawati's distinctive language pattern resembles Javanese communication, which is rich in symbolism and double meanings (Prakoso, 2019; Pranowo & Yanti, 2019). In such a communication pattern, the audience must be able to interpret the messages and meanings behind her words.

A political speech like Megawati's, which contains negative phrasing and aggression, is highly sought after by journalists because it

includes elements such as damage, failure, risk, and ways to address or mitigate these issues. Once packaged into news, such information can become a key factor in shaping readers' or viewers' evaluations and decision-making processes. Moreover, the current dynamics of intense competition among mass media outlets, as well as between traditional media and new media such as social media, have led to a tendency toward infotainment-style news packaging, which prioritizes sensation over substance (Maier & Nai, 2022). Characteristically, they are expecting immediate interaction with their readers through journalistic products that are concise, using simple narratives, focusing more on the controversial side of the polarization between actors, as well as opinions involved, by selecting what is considered important and worthy of being conveyed to the audience. This kind of reactive reader engagement has the potential to produce, paradoxically, undemocratic outcomes (Ahlstrand, 2021; Carvalho et al., 2024).

From the speaker's perspective, mediatised political communication requires parties and political actors to adapt to the logic of mass media to avoid losing their autonomy in conveying messages (Tatchou, 2022). Media outlets package information according to journalistic standards (Moeller et al., 2014), often limiting the political agenda through the enforcement of journalistic ethics (Blumler & Esser, 2019). Criticism or attacks on personal figures or characters have proven to be more effective than criticizing a specific topic, but they can have negative consequences for the perpetrators because the public does not like this kind of attacks (Verhulsdonk et al., 2022; Nai, et al., 2022). In addition, part of Megawati's speech was directed at the popular figure of President Jokowi at a moment when his public approval was at its peak, 76 percent (Muhtadi, 2023). This study does not aim to describe or analyze the journalistic practices of mass media in covering the speech during the PDIP anniversary celebration. However, the aforementioned tendencies help illustrate the high news value of Megawati's speech and the potential for incomplete packaging by the media.

In the study, all three informants

acknowledged and suggested that the interpretation of Megawati's speech should be contextualized within the internal dynamics of the party. In this context, her speech was directed at PDIP cadres who were gearing up for the General Election. When those outside the party witnessed such a speech, its meaning could be interpreted differently because internal communication is characterized by a sense of closeness, an understanding of character, and the use of a particular linguistic style exclusive to those within that circle (Binrany et al., 2024; Hingkua et al., 2021; Irena & Rusfian, 2019). Consequently, it is much more challenging for external parties to grasp the messages in Megawati's speeches accurately. Terms such as "party officer," "what does Jokowi want to become," "smart and beautiful," and similar phrases are, according to the informants, appropriate for a party leader or the highest authority to convey to their cadres within the internal context of the PDIP, where there is a hierarchy of party institutions and power strata. However, such expressions have the potential to be misunderstood when taken out of the internal party context and into the public domain. Repeated rather than spontaneous attacks through supposition terms – such as "party officer," "what does Jokowi want to become," and "poor thing" – allow the public to perceive them as character assassination (Miskolczy & Gherghina, 2024).

Aristotle positions rhetoric as an inseparable interaction among the elements of *ethos*, or the character of the leader; *logos*, which refers to the arguments presented; and *pathos*, which pertains to the emotional responses of the audience. According to Aristotle, rhetoric serves as a medium of connection between leaders and their followers and cannot be separated from ethics and leadership (Hühn & Meyer, 2023).

The first level of discussion concerns *ethos* or the character of the speaker. *Ethos* pertains to the character, reputation, and integrity of the person delivering the message. Often, it is said that the words of successful people seem like pearls, while the words of failures are dismissed as nonsense. This saying simplistically explains *ethos* (Aisyah, 2022). The *ethos* of the subject's persona can be seen in the following Table 2.

In understanding the character of a rhetorician, it is essential to consider the role

**Table 2 Research Results Based on Ethos Elements**

Open Coding	Selective Coding	Axial Coding
Megawati's Character	Megawati is the longest-serving chairperson of a political party and the daughter of President Soekarno. She fought during the 1998 reform era. Under her leadership, PDIP has never ranked outside the top three in general elections.	Ethos: Megawati speaks as the chairperson of the party with the character of a maternal figure who communicates with her children to assert her desires and position as the party leader.
Megawati's Language Style	Megawati is a woman with a straightforward and to-the-point communication style, deeply rooted in Javanese culture.	
Megawati's Background	Megawati is a housewife who has received various awards and academic honors.	

Source: Research Data, 2023

they are playing. When someone speaks in a forum, they assume a role appropriate to that forum. For instance, a minister is the highest-ranking official within their institution, a leader. However, when attending a closed meeting with the president, they become a follower. We must first comprehend the speaker's position when they are addressing an audience because this helps clarify the intended meaning of their message.

In this case, when Megawati spoke during the celebration of her party's anniversary, she was speaking as the Chairperson of PDIP. However, the meaning of being a chairperson differs significantly across parties. For instance, in Golkar, leadership within the party changes periodically. This indicates that, while leadership in Golkar is political, administrative, and organizational, like in PDIP, it does not involve personalism. Meanwhile, within PDIP, Megawati has been the *de facto* chairperson since 1993 (when the party was still called PDI) until now, a remarkably long tenure. One way to understand the image she has built can be done by analyzing the sentences she used.

"So if you cannot understand what I mean, you shouldn't be in PDIP, you shouldn't. It's better to move, leave, because what we need here is to be of one heart."

"... hold the hand of unity, because if there's no bonding, it feels *anyep* (bland, in Javanese language). It's pointless to have this many. I'd rather have it like before, small, but militant."

These quotes illustrate that Megawati, on that occasion, personified herself as a maternal figure. This keyword can be used to interpret who Megawati is in the context of this research. While delivering her speech, she positioned herself not only as the chairperson according to the party's organizational structure but also as a mother to her party's cadres, PDIP.

This dual role as both chairperson and mother distinguishes her, for example, from the leader of another party like the Gerindra Party. Prabowo Subianto, as the Chairperson of Gerindra, is personified as the general leading the party to victory. His presence is contextualized as a figure leading the struggle toward change, with his choice of diction reflecting his image as a military leader on the battlefield (Ferlien & Rumaf, 2020; Laksono et al., 2020; Wardani, 2019). The perception and image of Megawati as the 'mother' of PDIP can be traced back to her historical background and the communication style she employs.

Megawati grew up as the daughter of a president, a proclaimer of independence, and a



founding father of the nation. However, despite the privileges she inherited, Megawati began her journey far removed from the political spotlight. She was neither an activist nor a politician, initially taking on the role of a housewife before the then-chairman of PDI, Soerjadi, sought her support ahead of the 1987 General Election to boost the party's electoral prospects.

Given this background, it is evident that Megawati spends much more time fulfilling her role as a housewife rather than engaging in activism (Widhana, 2016) or politics. Even after she decided to enter practical politics, experiencing the ups and downs with PDI, becoming the 5th President of the Republic of Indonesia, and eventually leading PDIP to this day, public perception of her remains the same.

The perception concludes that Megawati is a politician who often operates quietly or behind the scenes rather than engaging openly with the public. For instance, during the PDI headquarters takeover on Jalan Diponegoro, Jakarta, on Saturday, July 27, 1996, while many PDI cadres were actively delivering speeches in public, Megawati spoke sparingly, opting instead to play the role of a mother, personally encouraging PDIP sympathizers to carry out the party's mission (Gunanto, 2020).

The remarks of President Abdurrahman Wahid, popular as Gus Dur, who served from 1999 to 2001, during which Megawati was his vice president, provided a unique and interesting depiction of Megawati's tendency to make public statements rarely. "We are a perfect team. I cannot see, and she cannot speak," said Gus Dur, who indeed had a visual impairment (Coles, 2018).

Megawati has maintained a similar communication style by rarely speaking directly or granting interviews to journalists, with most of her quotations coming from her speeches. In terms of ethos or character, Megawati consistently presents herself as the party chairperson and a mother to all the party cadres she leads. In fulfilling her role as a mother, Megawati conveys a message that she not only cares for all her "children," the PDIP cadres, but also possesses greater wisdom and life experience than her "children" (Coles, 2018). For instance, in 2014, when she and the PDIP declared their support for Jokowi as a presidential candidate, she responded to

questions about why she would not run again by stating that, besides being tired, she also felt she had qualifications too high for a presidential candidate, thus choosing to take on the role of a mother overseeing her children.

Even President Jokowi, during the inauguration of the Masjid At Taufiq located in the PDIP Party School complex in Jakarta on June 8, 2022, was quoted by Kompas as saying that their relationship is akin to that of a mother and child in a large family, where it is natural to have a mischievous child along the way (Kompas.id, 2022). RA, as the first informant, argued that the metaphor of a mother is appropriate because history records that she has led and united the PDIP through difficult times under the pressures of the New Order regime, nurturing the party, winning elections, holding power, losing and becoming opposition, and then returning to power. Similarly, the second informant, ET, believes in the significance of a leader encouraging their cadres to be militant in pursuing the party's ideals.

Furthermore, in Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory, the aspect of *logos*, or the logic employed in delivering rhetoric, is essential. *Logos* provides a rational basis to convince the audience that what is being said is true, rather than merely being an attempt to persuade them to do something without justification (Isa, 2022; Ludvianto & Arifani, 2020).

In terms of *logos*, the context of Megawati's speech as the subject of this research can be summarized as follows Table 3.

In her speech, Megawati highlighted her achievements, including receiving several honorary doctorate degrees, and emphasized how her actions consistently captured public attention. This is reflected in the following excerpt:

"If I want to take a selfie, I'll get lots of likes, why? First, I'm a woman. Second, I'm beautiful. With just these two, I already get applause. Third, I'm charismatic. Fourth, *opo meneh* [what else], smart. Suddenly, I received two professor titles and nine honorary doctorates. I'm still waiting for five more because of the pandemic. Do you know that your Mother is already smart, beautiful, charismatic, a fighter, *opo neh* [what else]?"

By doing this, she effectively anticipated

**Table 3 Research Results Based on *Logos* Elements**

Open Coding	Selective Coding	Axial Coding
Megawati's Speaking Partner	Megawati speaks in the context of addressing party cadres during PDIP's anniversary.	
Megawati's Word Choice	Megawati employs simple language, with emotional undertones and everyday vocabulary.	
Megawati's Party Culture	PDIP has a strong cultural identity as a party with a Soekarno legacy.	
Facts in Megawati's Speech	The facts presented in her speech are not new but are accurate.	<i>Logos:</i> Megawati emphasizes the logic behind her intelligence, her prominent position, and influence in front of Jokowi and other party cadres, to affirm that she still holds significant power within PDIP.
Public Perception of Megawati's Speech	The perception of Megawati's speech could be seen as offensive to the public outside PDIP.	
Megawati's Position	Megawati acts as the chairperson of PDIP, providing direction.	
Megawati's Message	Megawati urges her party cadres to remain loyal and not switch parties. She instructs her cadres to avoid corruption.	

Source: Research Data, 2023

any attempts to discredit her educational background, considering that she did not complete her higher education.

“Pak Jokowi *iku ngono* [acts like that], you know, feeling entitled. Well, yes. But if Pak Jokowi didn't have PDIP, oh, poor thing. [...] Yes, legal and formal. He became president, but there's nothing, no legal formalities. I've been following him closely, the rules, the regulations...”

A central message in her speech, expressed from the outset, was the assertion that she holds a higher hierarchical position than other members or cadres within the party. Implicitly, this is intended to ensure that party cadres

remain unified under her leadership, even when there are other influential figures within the party, such as President Jokowi. The above excerpt exemplifies this point. According to party mechanisms, Jokowi's candidacy for the presidency had to receive her endorsement as the party chair. Notably, in her speech, Megawati did not acknowledge Jokowi's role in boosting the party's support based (Hanan & Irvani, 2022; Supriatma & Yew-Foong, 2022).

From the *logos* aspect, Megawati is not only consolidating the party but also reminding everyone that she is the ultimate decision-maker within the party, ensuring that no one within the party feels superior to her. In the context of the message directed at PDIP cadres, this is typical political communication, as confirmed by the

**Table 4 Research Results Based on Pathos Element**

Open Coding	Selective Coding	Axial Coding
Emotional Appeals	Intimidation and provocation by megawati in reminding the contributions of PDIP to Jokowi. Emphasis on strength in reminding party members to avoid corruption. Emphasis on her own character as a smart fighter.	Pathos: Megawati employs emotional attacks that may not be well received by the public outside of PDIP

Source: Research Data, 2023

research informants. This situation aligns with the findings of Hasto Kristiyanto (the Secretary-General of PDIP, who, along with his team, plays a significant role in drafting Megawati's speeches) and his colleagues. According to them, the public perceives PDIP leadership as the most capable in consistently enforcing party rules, ensuring that its cadres follow these rules, and effectively cultivating a culture of thinking and acting in line with the party's ideology (Kristiyanto et al., 2023).

However, if mainstream media and social media carry the message in the speech beyond the confines of PDIP and reach a broader audience, it will likely be interpreted differently. This is because, in the context of state governance, Jokowi, a PDIP cadre, is the President, a position that is above Megawati's, and he holds this office by virtue of being elected by the people. When Megawati delivers her message, she does so as the party chairperson addressing her cadres, aiming to reinforce their solidarity while asserting her authority—a stance expected of the highest leader in a party. Yet, in the broader context of party politics, this could be detrimental as it might appear that Megawati is discrediting Jokowi (Beso & Rahmawati, 2021; Zaman, 2022). Moreover, according to the third informant, NZ, the use of implicit and hyperbolic language could potentially lead to misinterpretation by the public, who may not fully understand the PDIP culture or the specific context in which the message was delivered.

The final aspect is *pathos*, or the emotional appeal embedded within the message of Megawati's speech. *Pathos* involves strengthening an argument and influencing the

audience to align with the message conveyed by the speaker. This can manifest through the use of emotional sentences, including specific diction, metaphors, comparisons, and more. When someone delivers a speech, they often use emotionally charged slogans to shift or reinforce a particular order. For instance, when the opposition aims to highlight their contrast with the incumbent, they are likely to employ the slogan 'change.' Conversely, when the incumbent gives a speech, they might emphasize the slogan 'continue.' The strength of a speech in persuading its audience not only derives from the robustness of the arguments presented or the credibility of the speaker but also from the ability to evoke and manage the emotions of the audience (Plantin & Punathambekar, 2019).

In terms of *pathos*, the emotions embedded in Megawati's message, as the subject of this study, can be summarized as follows Table 4.

In Megawati's speech, several emotional outbursts are used, such as "...what do you want to become?" and "...*magrok magrok*" (translated into English as simply doing nothing), along with other insinuations. These words and phrases can be categorized as intimidation or warnings from someone in a higher position.

In politics, intimidation is common, and part of the strategy, as politics, revolves around the configuration of powers (Dewi, 2017). Intimidation, as long as it is framed within legal boundaries, cannot be condemned and has been a recurring practice (Hady, 2022; Julkifli & Wibawa, 2022). In this context, political threats emerge through speeches delivered by leaders to their subordinates, containing explicit and

implicit intentions, desires, and even the potential to physically harm the audience for certain political reasons (Kalmoe & Mason, 2024). Although there is room for ethical violations, as critiqued by Aristotle, in Megawati's case, where she often personifies herself as a mother, the threats directed at the party cadres in her speeches are akin to a mother's admonishment to her children in pursuit of harmony toward a common goal.

Interpersonal communication through speeches, such as those delivered by Megawati, which include humor or jokes, can carry aggressive undertones if they involve physical and/or symbolic power to at least dominate and possibly harm, or at most, defeat and destroy the target which can include other people's bodies, material possessions, self-concept, the speaker's position within the communication topic, or their behavior (Infante, 1987; Winer et al., 2024). When framed as aggressive humor or verbal aggression, such as jokes that are humorous but combined with mockery, sarcasm, or attacks on the honor and self-concept of the target, to assert the rhetor's superiority, this can cause psychological harm, hurt, or damage to the target (Dicioccio, 2012; Karahan et al., 2019).

The characteristics of the information presented, which are readily comprehensible to the target audience (Verhulsdonk et al., 2022), make aggressive political humor often utilized by political actors or rhetoricians to portray themselves as intelligent, powerful figures (Mendiburo-Seguel et al., 2024) in order to strengthen their position in a certain political ecosystem. On the audience side, this requires a wise approach because if addressed to a third party to reduce tension or to amuse the recipient, this type of speech is categorized as affiliative or non-aggressive humor, not aggressive (Howland & Simpson, 2014).

Public reception of humor or satire with aggressive undertones can vary, reflecting findings that the effectiveness of humor as a communication strategy accompanying political actions is influenced by audience variation. Jokes presented in the public sphere (which is increasingly global) are rarely uniformly accepted. For audiences not related to the agenda within a political humor, there may be no laughter, but rather anxiety. Political

humor is also known to polarize audiences, trigger cycles of counter-jokes, and provoke aggressive reactions from targeted audiences (Basu, 2024). Aligned with the finding that speeches containing positive sentiments tend not to be remembered in detail by listeners, in contrast to speeches containing negative and emotional sentiments (Bartscherer, 2023).

Furthermore, claims in political speeches are not always rational truths. Aristotle believed that deliberation in the public sphere does not necessarily lead to rational consensus. Instead, Aristotle argued that political speeches should bridge the gap between public and private spaces, passion and reason, individual interests and the common good, equality and law. Political speeches are essentially rational, passionate, and reflect the speaker's character (Triadafilopoulos, 1999), which in the campaigning context could be asymmetrical, where the rhetor appears to be dominantly defend the themes as well as the discourse he or she presented (Jungherr et al., 2019; Rountree et al., 2023). Informants suggest that the impact of Megawati's use of emotional language is seen as typical in a party consolidation forum and does not necessarily diminish the stature and position of the president present as a party cadre.

This is not the first time Megawati has been able to deliver a speech that aligns with the Aristotle's Rhetoric framework. Using The Five Canon of Rhetoric approach to analyze her speech during the Second National Working Meeting of PDIP in Jakarta, June 21, 2022, studies found that Megawati was considered to meet the *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* criteria. However, a qualitative content analysis revealed that she failed to meet other criteria – wisdom and the ability to articulate – which then led to controversy (Riesardhy & Suryatini, 2024).

## CONCLUSION

The analysis using a rhetorical framework concludes that Megawati's messages, particularly regarding President Jokowi, are not political statements aimed at critiquing current policies. Rather, her speech represents the expressions of a party leader conveyed in an internal setting. Her expressions carry emotional



weight, given her status as a senior figure and a descendant of the Indonesia's founding father. However, this does not imply that her speeches constitute political directives that influence the quality of President Jokowi's leadership in the current administration.

From the *ethos* perspective, informants were able to interpret the content of the speech explicitly and implicitly, without assuming offense, viewing it as a common practice rather than an attempt to demean the president. It is only Megawati's way of demonstrating *ethos* or leadership character, which is expected of her.

The *logos* aspect presented to her cadres is seen by the three informants as something that should be emphasized by a party leader, as part of a leadership strategy. The actual recipients of the message in the speech were the party cadres, and similarly, President Jokowi's presence was also in his capacity as a party cadre. It means, the *logos* aspects were directed to internal member of PDIP, which might have not directly affected people outside the party.

From a *pathos* perspective, Megawati, who was consolidating and strengthening the militancy of PDIP cadres, chose emotional language to assert her stance in leading her party towards the upcoming elections. All informants view the use of verbal aggression or emotional attacks in building militancy as a norm.

In practice, the use of verbal aggression through the selection of specific phrases in Megawati's speeches directed at the PDIP cadres may very well lead to ethical violations. However, by employing the analogy of a large family, there are few, if any, children who object to their mother's admonishments. Instead, objections and feelings of offense tend to arise from "the neighbors," or the wider audience that does not belong to the PDIP.

This point is also emphasized by the informants. All three stated that the inadequate packaging of the speech's content has the potential to be misinterpreted by audiences outside the PDIP. The messages in several emotional phrases captured, then packaged and disseminated by the mass media to the public—who are not the intended audience of the speech—result in an interpretation suggesting an attempt to subordinate or belittle the elected president, Joko Widodo, manifesting as both political discourtesy and arrogance.

What Megawati conveyed has met all the criteria of Aristotle's Rhetoric, but there are still other factors that influence whether a political speech does not backfire, harming the rhetor. Her speeches contain a combination of diction choices such as supposition, sarcasm, and aggressive humor, so that some have negative sentiments, which tend to be highlighted by the public. While Megawati's supposition remarks about the president are not her first, amidst strong media coverage, repeated attacks against Jokowi have the potential to be interpreted as a character assassination, which would then provoke outrage against the perpetrators.

Based on the conclusion, this study endorses two recommendations. Firstly, the rhetorical phenomena reflected in Megawati's speeches should not be directly used to assess Jokowi's leadership quality or the nature of their relationship as PDIP leader and cadre. The context of Megawati's speech is not intended for a general audience but specifically for the party's internal affairs. Therefore, it is inappropriate to frame these speeches as a national issue or to use them as a basis for criticizing the quality of governance.

Secondly, the mass media should strive for a more balanced role in presenting reality, rather than solely emphasizing sensationalism. It could create misinterpretation of what happens. In this case, partly due to media coverage that inadequately and ambiguously presents the meaning conveyed by the party chairperson during her speech at the anniversary celebration in front of her cadres. Perspectives from politicians outside the PDIP, including those from opposition parties, with extensive experience, who can capture the explicit and implicit meanings of Megawati's speech should serve as an alternative and critical discourse, as well as a momentum for the mass media to provide political education to the public.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, J.A., R.M., S.V.A.; methodology, J.A., R.M., S.V.A.; software, D.R.S.; validation, A.S., J.R.S.; formal analysis J.A., R.M., S.V.A.; investigation, J.A., R.M., S.V.A.; resources, J.A., R.M., S.V.A.; data curation, J.A., R.M., S.V.A.; writing—original draft preparation, J.A., R.M., S.V.A.; writing—review and editing, J.A., R.M., S.V.A., D.S.; visualization, J.A., R.M., S.V.A.; supervision, D.S.; project administration, J.A., S.V.A., D.S.; funding

acquisition, J.A., R.M., S.V.A.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors are grateful for the reviewer's valuable comments that improved the manuscript.

**Data Availability Statement:** All data generated or analysed during this study are included in this published article.

**Conflicts of Interest:** Authors state no conflict of interest.

**Funding:** Authors state no funding involved.

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