



# Framing of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) financial scandal: Politicising by mainstream and alternative newspapers before and after change of government

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## ABSTRACT

This study compares the framing of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) financial scandal and the politicising of the issue by a mainstream and an alternative newspaper before and after the historic change of ruling party in Malaysia in the 2018 general election. A quantitative content analysis of 1,357 news articles in *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* was conducted along with lexical analyses using a textual analytics software known as AntConc. The results indicate that 1MDB was more salient in *Malaysiakini* before the change of government but its salience was elevated in *The Star* during the new *Pakatan Harapan* regime. Both newspapers were oriented towards episodic framing, but in the new regime, *The Star*'s percentage of episodic articles increased while that of *Malaysiakini* decreased. The low percentage of thematic articles (less than 11%) indicate that the media framing of 1MDB could have made readers oblivious to the ramifying impacts of 1MDB on Malaysia and its citizens. *The Star* tended to quote ruling party politicians and adopted a formal stance in reporting 1MDB-linked events whereas *Malaysiakini* used more varied news sources and a personalised stance to engage readers. Before the change of government, *The Star* had a balance of positive, negative and neutral 1MDB-related articles but *Malaysiakini* articles were inclined towards a negative valence. During the *Pakatan Harapan* regime, both newspapers adopted a positive stance in reporting on 1MDB, focusing on actions to resolve the financial scandal. The textual frequency analysis reveals an obvious lack of negative adjectives, indicating an avoidance of evaluative judgements on a financial scandal involving high-ranking political figures.

Keywords: *alternative media, mainstream media, framing, 1MDB*