



A Political Semiotic Analysis of the One Piece Flag: A Comparative Study of Demonstration Movements in Indonesia and Nepal

Wahyu Wiji Utomo

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

wahyuwijiutomo@uinsu.ac.id

Abstrak

Latar belakang penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana lanskap politik global telah mengalami transformasi melalui masuknya budaya populer ke dalam bahasa perlawanan. Simbol-simbol yang berasal dari anime dan budaya pop, khususnya Bendera Bajak Laut Topi Jerami dari serial One Piece, telah direkontekstualisasi menjadi alat semiotik politik dalam demonstrasi di Indonesia dan Nepal. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis semiotik Roland Barthes yang dikombinasikan dengan desain studi kasus komparatif. Kerangka metodologis ini memungkinkan interpretasi mendalam terhadap tanda-tanda visual dan proses pembentukan mitos yang mengubah simbol fiksi menjadi narasi politik perlawanan. Temuan utama mengungkap bahwa di Indonesia, Bendera Topi Jerami merepresentasikan perlawanan terhadap ketidakadilan ekonomi dan kekerasan negara, sedangkan di Nepal, simbol tersebut menandakan penentangan terhadap korupsi, nepotisme, dan sensor digital. Makna-makna ini berpadu menjadi bentuk perlawanan global yang menunjukkan bagaimana simbol budaya populer transnasional berfungsi sebagai infrastruktur solidaritas kolektif lintas negara. Kontribusi penelitian ini terletak pada perluasan kajian Semiotika Politik melalui konsep cultural hybrid resistance, yang memperlihatkan bagaimana simbol global memperoleh makna politik baru dalam konteks sosial-politik yang beragam. Implikasinya menunjukkan bahwa simbol-simbol budaya semacam ini seharusnya dibaca sebagai indikator kesadaran politik generasi muda, bukan sekadar ekspresi budaya populer semata.

Kata kunci: Semiotika politik, Simbolisme politik, Bendera topi jerami (One Piece), Gerakan politik pemuda

Abstract

The background of this research highlights how the global political landscape has transformed through the infusion of popular culture into the language of resistance. Symbols derived from anime and pop culture, particularly the Straw Hat Pirates' flag from One Piece, have been recontextualized as political semiotic tools during demonstrations in Indonesia and Nepal. The method uses a qualitative approach through Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis combined with a comparative case study design. This methodological framework enables a deep interpretation of visual signs and myth-making processes that convert fictional symbols into political narratives of resistance. Key findings reveal that in Indonesia, the Straw Hat Flag embodies defiance against economic injustice and state violence, while in Nepal, it represents opposition to corruption, nepotism, and digital censorship. These meanings converge into a form of glocal resistance, illustrating how transnational symbols of popular culture become infrastructures of collective solidarity across nations. The contribution of this research lies in expanding Political Semiotics through the notion of cultural hybrid resistance, showing how global pop symbols gain new political meanings within diverse socio-political contexts. The implication suggests that such cultural symbols should be read as indicators of youth-driven political awareness rather than dismissed as mere pop culture expression.

Key words: Political Semiotics, Political Symbolism, Straw Hat Flag (One Piece), Youth Political Movement



INTRODUCTION

Artikel In recent decades, the global political landscape has undergone a profound transformation in the language, symbols, and aesthetics of resistance. There has been a marked increase in the utilization of popular cultural icons such as films, comics, anime, and music as strategic instruments and communicative mediums within political discourse and activism.(Aistrope, 2020) This phenomenon has evolved beyond mere stylistic expression into a sophisticated form of political communication. Symbols originating from fictional narratives are appropriated for their capacity to transcend linguistic, cultural, and generational boundaries, along with their potent emotional resonance that effectively mobilizes mass participation, particularly among youth constituencies (Wu, 2021). In the protest movements of Indonesia and Nepal, the *Straw Hat Pirates' Flag* from *One Piece* has emerged as a striking and unifying visual emblem. Featuring a skull with its distinctive straw hat, the flag is not only displayed in demonstrations but also adapted as social media imagery, attached to backpacks, and printed on placards serving as a vivid manifestation of political semiotics in contemporary resistance movements.

The selection of Indonesia and Nepal as case studies is particularly relevant, as both nations despite their distinct historical trajectories have experienced dynamic waves of protest that employ popular culture symbols as instruments of political expression. In Indonesia, demonstrations have been driven by mounting economic concerns and deepening social inequality. The public has increasingly perceived several government policies as neglectful of the people's welfare, particularly amid rising unemployment, increased taxation, and widespread layoffs (Wulandari, 2025). Controversial measures, such as the parliamentary allowance increase reaching up to Rp100 million per month, were widely criticized as insensitive to the hardships faced by ordinary citizens.(Fajarihza, 2025). Additional discontent has been directed toward other policies, including government budget efficiency programs and the revision of the Military Law (UU TNI). The demonstrations escalated dramatically following the tragic death of Affan Kurniawan, an online motorcycle taxi driver who was fatally struck by a security vehicle during a protest.(Detikcom, 2025). This violent incident ignited broader public outrage, transforming existing grievances into a more massive and emotionally charged wave of street demonstrations.

Meanwhile, the roots of public discontent in Nepal stem from the widespread corruption and nepotism among state officials. Public anger further intensified as citizens witnessed the extravagant lifestyles of officials' children commonly labeled as "nepo babies" whose ostentatious displays of privilege were perceived as deeply insensitive to the economic hardships endured by the majority of the population (Guzman, 2025). This resentment was exacerbated by a persistently high youth unemployment rate, reaching 21 percent, which fostered profound feelings of frustration and disenchantment. The immediate trigger for the protest wave was the government's authoritarian decision to block access to 26 social media platforms, including Facebook and YouTube, on the grounds that these platforms had failed to register with the Ministry of Communications. This policy was widely perceived as an attempt to suppress freedom of expression and became the catalyst for massive demonstrations after the event reported as "Nepal lifts social media ban after protests leave 19 dead" (Sharma & Chitrakar, 2025).

Previous studies on political semiotics and social movements have demonstrated that symbols, rituals, and visual media play a central role in shaping collective emotions and facilitating mass mobilization (Angkasa, 2023) emphasizes how synchronous chanting in Indonesian demonstrations functions not merely as an expression of togetherness but also as an affective mechanism that reinforces solidarity and collective identity. This perspective aligns with (Teixeira, 2022) who argues that politics, in semiotic terms, extends beyond verbal texts to include figurativization through images, gestures, and social practices that construct systems of values and beliefs. On a spatial level, (Beckstead & Jordan, 2023) highlight streets and public spaces as liminal arenas that serve as the dramatic stage of politics, sites where visual symbols such as flags or murals articulate messages of resistance without the need for explicit verbalization. Meanwhile, multimodal research reveals how visual metaphors contribute to the construction of political imagery. (Guan & Sun, 2023)) demonstrate that political cartoons operate through the interaction

of multimodal metaphors and metonymies to form both positive and negative representations of political actors. This aligns with (Johann et al., 2023) who reveal that digital meme prosumption in the *Fridays for Future* movement enhances engagement, broadens online networks, and fosters political participation. Thus, chanting, visual symbols, and digital memes share a unified semiotic function: transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries, generating collective emotions, and consolidating movement identity. These insights form a solid theoretical basis for understanding how the *Straw Hat Pirates' Flag* from *One Piece* is reinterpreted in Indonesian and Nepalese protests as a universal emblem of resistance against authoritarianism and injustice.

The novelty of this research lies in its integration of global popular culture symbols specifically the Straw Hat Pirates' flag from the *One Piece* series into the analysis of political demonstrations in Indonesia and Nepal, two developing nations with distinct socio-historical contexts. Through a Comparative Political Semiotics approach, this research examines how transnational fictional symbols are recontextualized as instruments of political mobilization and resistance against authoritarianism. It highlights the globalization of resistance meaning,

Based on the phenomena outlined above, the central research question addressed in this study is: *How are the meanings and symbolic functions of the Straw Hat Pirates' flag from One Piece constructed and interpreted within protest movements in Indonesia and Nepal?* This study examines the question through the lens of Political Semiotics, which enables an exploration of how visual signs acquire political power, operate within public discourse, and shape the collective identity of movements. By comparing the two national contexts, the research seeks to uncover not only the similarities but also the divergences, thereby offering a deeper understanding of the dynamics of contemporary resistance in the digital era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research paradigm employing Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis within a comparative case study design between Indonesia and Nepal. The selection of this approach is grounded in the research's orientation toward symbolic meaning, political functionality, and the process of signification observed in the phenomenon of utilizing the Straw Hat Pirates' *Jolly Roger* flag from the *One Piece* series as a form of political articulation within protest movements. Semiotic analysis is deemed methodologically pertinent for deconstructing how popular culture symbols are articulated as multilayered systems of signs encompassing denotative, connotative, and mythological dimensions (Istiyanto et al., 2024).

This methodological framework is further reinforced by Dumitrica's (2022) perspective, which asserts that visual representations in protest movements serve a dual function: as emotional expressions and as strategic instruments of political communication that challenge the visual hegemony of mainstream media (Dumitrica & Schwinges, 2022).). Consequently, symbols such as the *One Piece* flag can operate as "emotional icons" that mobilize and sustain public solidarity. Żukiewicz and Gerlich (2023) further substantiate this analytical framework by demonstrating how symbols originating from popular culture, when mobilized within digital spaces, undergo performative transformations that bridge the virtual and the physical spheres producing a distinctive form of glocal protest performance characteristic of the social media era (Żukiewicz & Gerlich, 2023).

A comparative case study design was employed to elucidate the convergent and divergent meanings of the symbol within two developing contexts, each with a robust tradition of social protest. In the Indonesian context, the *One Piece* flag symbol is linked to resistance against state corruption and repression (Aqil & Atmojo, 2025). Conversely, in Nepal, protest symbolism is frequently anchored in an aesthetic of mourning and rituals of defiance (S. Rijal, 2024). This comparative analysis enables the identification of glocal meaning-making patterns, whereby global symbols are absorbed, reinterpreted, and localized within distinct political contexts to forge transnational solidarity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Deconstructing Symbols: The Universal Meaning of the Straw Hat Flag and Its Semiotic Politics for Social Movements

Phenomena such as the use of "The 'Guy Fawkes' mask became a symbol of resistance to power that was considered to have oppressed freedom of democracy" demonstrate that popular culture has evolved into an arsenal of semiotic tools for activists. As posited by (Levitt, 2022, p. 331), 'dystopian narratives may facilitate political engagement by encouraging the discussion of sociopolitical issues raised in these stories. Common themes include wealth inequality, governmentality (including surveillance and media manipulation to control citizen behavior).' Within this context, Japanese anime and manga, particularly Eiichiro Oda's *One Piece*, emerge as a potent symbolic force. *One Piece* is not merely a tale of pirate adventures; it is an epic narrative that explores freedom, friendship, justice, and resistance against oppressive authority themes that directly resonate with the issues of inequality and surveillance highlighted in the preceding quotation. It is these universal values that are subsequently extracted and transposed into the realities of contemporary social movements.

The dissemination and adaptation of these popular culture symbols have been exponentially accelerated by the advent of social media. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook function as both echo chambers and amplifiers that connect fans across the globe. In this context, the process transcends mere content circulation. As emphasized by (Baspehlivan, 2023, p. 3),

Social media algorithms foster fluid interpretive communities, wherein the original meaning of a symbol from *One Piece*, such as the Straw Hat Pirates' Jolly Roger, is continually recontextualized, altered, and imbued with new signification aligned with the specific political struggles of a collective. This process of semiotic reappropriation unfolds through organic and collective practices, effectively transforming social media into a dynamic workshop for the genesis and dissemination of novel symbols that challenge official state narratives. Corroborating the findings of Schaaf & Quiring (2023), these algorithms operate via opaque, automated processes that inherently "favor visual, emotionalizing, and negative content" (Schaaf & Quiring, 2023, p. 204).

This symbol was selected for its profound narrative resonance. The Straw Hat Pirates, under the leadership of Monkey D. Luffy, are characterized as protagonists who consistently champion the oppressed, contest a corrupt World Government, and advocate for absolute autonomy in determining their own destinies. Theoretically, this form of resistance embodies what psychological scholarship has termed "the anarchist insight" (Sarason, 1976). This insight, as elucidated by Malherbe (Malherbe, 2023, p. 218), posits that the state becomes an alien force acting against the interests of its populace, wherein increased state power directly correlates with a diminution of personal autonomy. Consequently, the act of flying this flag transcends mere popular culture reference; it constitutes a potent political declaration that the protesters embody Luffy's "crew," engaged in a struggle against their own "World Government."

The deployment of the *One Piece* flag in social protests and demonstrations constitutes a direct enactment of this political semiotics. This practice represents a struggle to re-signify the symbol within a novel socio-political context, a process fueled by the deliberate deconstruction of the very values it represents:

1. *Absolute Freedom*: constitutes the most fundamental principle for Luffy. His conception of liberty is not an anarchic lawlessness, but rather the autonomy to live according to one's desires free from oppression, to explore boundlessly, and to exercise self-determination. This philosophy is grounded in the theoretical framework of libertarian free will, which necessitates Agential Indeterminism. This concept is defined as a situation where "agential

- causes A (i.e. the background reasons, motivations, and/or character traits of the agent at time t) indeterministically causes E to occur or not" (Moore, 2023, p. 3).
2. *Loyalty and Comradeship (Nakama)*: The concept of nakama in One Piece transcends conventional notions of "friends" or "crew." It embodies an elective kinship, characterized by unwavering allegiance and a readiness for total sacrifice for one's chosen affiliates. Within a social landscape often marked by fragmentation and individualism, this principle resonates with a profound yearning for community, solidarity, and mutual belonging. As articulated by Robin Zheng (2023), solidarity of this nature constitutes 'the collective ability of disempowered people to organize themselves for transformative social change' (Zheng, 2023, p. 893).
 3. *Defying Oppressive Authority*: In the narrative, the World Government and its Marines are frequently portrayed as a corrupt and oppressive entity that instrumentalizes the concept of "justice" as a façade to maintain its hegemonic power. Luffy's defiance against this authority is not an act of mere chaos, but rather a fundamental challenge to an unjust systemic order. This fictional dynamic finds a potent reflection in contemporary socio-political realities, particularly as documented in reports on environmental activism. (Bennett et al., 2023, p. 5).
 4. *Championing the Oppressed*: Across nearly every island Luffy and his crew visit, they encounter societies in a state of crisis precipitated by systemic oppression, whether perpetrated by malevolent pirates, the World Nobles (Celestial Dragons), or local authoritarian regimes. Invariably, the Straw Hat crew aligns itself with the victimized, not for material gain, but as a principled stance against injustice. This core ethical principle facilitates their narrative transformation from conventional "pirates" into "champions of the populace." This fictional narrative finds a powerful resonance in the real-world struggles of numerous non-sovereign territories. As (Ferdinand et al., 2020).

Contextualization in Indonesia: Confronting Economic Injustice and State-Sanctioned Violence

Within the realm of activism, symbols possess profound power, capable of condensing complex ideas, collective emotions, and aspirations for change into a single, potent image. In Indonesia, during the approximate period of 2022-2023, the symbol of the "Straw Hat Flag" (the Jolly Roger of Monkey D. Luffy's pirate crew from the *One Piece* anime and manga) underwent a radical transformation, evolving from a mere pop-cultural icon into a sharp and potent symbol of dissent. This process of re-contextualization did not occur in a vacuum; it was a direct response to two acute issues within the nation: perceived inequitable economic policies and tangible state violence. This transformation vividly exemplifies what human rights scholarship terms "human rights as a language of resistance." (Dancy & Fariss, 2024, p. 9) assert, in contexts where governments employ illegitimate violence, human rights become "a logical language of resistance." The initial appearance of this flag in public protests can be traced to widespread public discontent, particularly among the youth, regarding several government policies. The decision to raise legislative allowances amidst significant national economic pressure was perceived as a profound irony and an indication of misguided policy priorities (Fadjarudin, 2025). The culmination of these tensions was marked by the legislative process to amend several controversial laws, widely perceived as favoring large capital interests while neglecting protections for marginalized communities and the environment. The protests against these amendments served as a convergence point for diverse societal groups to articulate their dissent. It was within this context that the Straw Hat Flag began to proliferate among the demonstrators. This aligns with the conception of new social movements, which, as (Dwi et al., 2025, p. 247).

However, the symbolic meaning of this flag underwent a significant escalation and a



profoundly personal reinterpretation following the tragic death of Muhammad Affan Kurniawan, a student and activist who died during a protest. Affan's death transcended the realm of abstract and unjust policy, transforming into tangible evidence of state violence and the impunity enjoyed by security apparatus personnel. Within the emergent narrative, Affan was no longer perceived merely as a demonstrator, but as a "crew" member who had fallen on the battlefield in the war against injustice, who documented how experiences of racialization and marginalization can shape collective identity and responses to violence. This parallel is evident in the context of "Islamist extremism" narratives, wherein "the location of critique in culture and public 'affairs' is telling underscoring the political stakes behind critique" (Williams, 2022, p. 5). The deployment of the flag across banners, posters, and, most notably, as social media profile pictures, constitutes a potent code of solidarity. Within the digital sphere, often saturated with political buzzers and official government narratives, adopting the Straw Hat Flag as a profile picture represents a bold political statement. This symbolic act serves as a declaration of allegiance, effectively communicating, "I am part of this crew; I stand in opposition to the prevailing injustice." This seemingly simple gesture provides a tangible manifestation of the principle that "social ties and networks create opportunities for youth to enhance their involvement in the public and political affairs in a community" (Ida et al., 2025, p. 2).

Consequently, the Straw Hat Flag in Indonesia has transcended its status as a mere fictional icon, evolving into a dynamic and potent living symbol. This symbolic meaning aligns with semiotic analysis, which posits that "the straw hat symbol on the skull implies solidarity and collective dreams, a representation of citizens yearning for a shared struggle for justice and political freedom" (Fikri et al., 2025). Furthermore, contemporary Indonesian youth movements exhibit a distinct pattern of digital-physical integration, where online activism and on-the-ground action are mutually reinforcing. This synergy is well-articulated by (Wahyuningroem et al., 2024), who state, "Young people play an active and central role in building online and offline movements, the online movement contributes to the growth of the offline protest movement, and vice versa." The capacity of these movements to generate symbolic innovations, such as the flag, constitutes an integral component of an increasingly dynamic protest repertoire strategy in the digital era (Sastramidjaja, 2025).

Contextualization in Nepal: Confronting Corruption, Nepotism, and Digital Censorship through the Straw Hat Flag

In Nepal, a nation grappling with a legacy of political conflict and a complex transition towards a stable democracy, the skull-adorned "Straw Hat" Jolly Roger transcends its origins as mere iconography from a popular anime. It has been appropriated and rearticulated as a symbol of resistance against tangible contemporary adversaries: systemic corruption that erodes institutional integrity, nepotism that privileges the ascendance of "nepo babies" over meritocratic principles, and, more recently, state-sanctioned curtailments of expressive freedoms via digital censorship. This digital censorship represents a manifestation of "rule by law" that perpetuates authoritarianism (Al-Faryan & Shil, 2023, p. 11).

The roots of the protests in Nepal are traceable to two chronic issues: systemic corruption and entrenched nepotism. The Nepalese public has long harbored deep-seated frustration towards a political class perceived as prioritizing personal and familial interests over public welfare. The globally recognized term "nepo babies," denoting individuals who accrue significant advantage from familial connections, holds particular salience in the Nepali context. The public directly witnesses the markedly transformed lifestyles of politicians, often shifting from modest to ostentatious, a change widely associated with the abuse of power (Shrestha & Subedi, 2022, p. 11),.



The primary catalyst for the appropriation of the Straw Hat flag was a governmental decision to block at least 26 social media platforms, including TikTok, Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram. The official justification for this action was to curb the dissemination of misinformation and content deemed detrimental to "social relations and familial harmony" (Untari, 2025). A significant portion of the citizenry, particularly the youth demographic, perceives this measure as blatant censorship and an attempt to suppress freedom of expression. This perspective is further corroborated by an analysis from Media Action Nepal, which stated that the proposed Social Media Bill "threatens the right to freedom of expression if implemented without necessary amendments" (Adhikari & Sah, 2024). Moreover, the study "An Investigation of Regulating and Monitoring Social Media in Nepal" identified a perceived necessity among young students, in particular, for regulations that strike a balance between social security and freedom of speech (N. Rijal et al., 2025). TikTok, a platform immensely popular among the youth, is regarded as one of their last remaining venues for digital democratic expression; consequently, its prohibition is construed as an infringement upon a vital digital public square, within *One Piece* that seeks to silence dissent. During the protests, these flags were prominently displayed outside the parliament building and amidst the crowds. The formation of these affective publics is possible thanks to certain affordances of the platforms that allow people who share interests and sensitivities to meet, with one of the most widely used being the hashtag, which has become one of the central tools of digital activism (Castillo-Esparcia et al., 2023, p. 5).

The contextualization of the Straw Hat flag in Nepal constitutes a compelling case study of how pop culture, This phenomenon demonstrates that universal values such as freedom, camaraderie, and defiance against tyranny possess profound resonance across diverse cultural and political landscapes. In the Nepalese context, the flag has evolved beyond a mere homage to *One Piece*; it has become a voice for the silenced, a beacon of hope for those demanding accountable governance, and a potent reminder that even when confronting formidable adversaries like systemic corruption and state censorship, the spirit to pursue the "treasure" of freedom and justice remains undiminished. This spirit is embodied by Nepal's youth, of whom." (Hutt, 2020, p. 5)

Comparative Analysis: Pop Culture as an Infrastructure for Transnational Solidarity

The contexts of Indonesia and Nepal exemplify how pop culture can function as an infrastructure for political solidarity that transcends national borders. Despite their distinct historical trajectories, both nations exhibit parallel patterns of resistance, characterized by: (1) profound dissatisfaction with perceived authoritarian governance, (2) disillusionment with elites viewed as indifferent to public suffering, and (3) the strategic mobilization of global pop culture symbols to articulate local dissent. This phenomenon affirms the theoretical framework of glocalization, a process wherein globalizing forces are not adopted uniformly but are adaptively integrated into local contexts through reflective and socially interpretative practices. The symbol of *One Piece*, for instance, serves as a global cultural artifact whose meaning is not universal but is instead reconstructed according to the specific socio-political conditions of its reception. In Indonesia, the symbol has been interpreted as a representation of economic inequality and state violence, whereas in Nepal, it has been reconfigured into an emblem of resistance against digital censorship and corruption. (González, 2024, p. 38). Within a comparative political semiotics framework, the Straw Hat Flag operates as a quintessential "floating signifier", a sign whose meaning is inherently unstable and perpetually negotiated within specific socio-political contexts. This symbol transcends its representation of agrarian protest movements, functioning as a vessel for marginalized voices and universal moral imperatives. However, from a power-dynamics perspective, symbolic politics is often strategically instrumentalized as a mode of tactical political communication. This form of



communication aims not for enlightenment or mutual understanding but to deceive public perception and, through this, secure mass support for the ruling elite's policies (Malyukova & Rybakov, 2020, p. 5).

This assertion is supported by recent empirical research: (León-Medina, 2023) found that “probability of displaying a ribbon is associated with the proportion of peers who also display it (friends that share their support for the political cause),” indicating that the dissemination of political symbols operates not through singular exposure but through complex contagion mechanisms predicated on peer influence and social learning. Ultimately, this phenomenon marks a new chapter in political studies—the democratization of the meaning of resistance. In the present era, anyone can partake in politics simply by raising the right symbol. In this regard, the Straw Hat Flag stands as the most tangible manifestation of *soft power resistance*: a form of subversive dissent that wields aesthetics, rather than weaponry, to challenge entrenched structures of authority. It imparts a crucial lesson: in a world pervaded by censorship, imagination endures as the final bastion of liberty.

CONCLUSION

Based on a comparative political semiotic analysis, this study concludes that the Straw Hat Pirates' flag from *One Piece* has been successfully constructed as a powerful and flexible symbol of political resistance in protest movements in Indonesia and Nepal. Its symbolic meaning is no longer confined to its original fictional narrative but has been recontextualized to address each nation's specific political challenges. In Indonesia, the flag signifies resistance against economic injustice and state violence, whereas in Nepal, it has evolved into a symbol of struggle against corruption, nepotism, and digital censorship.

The findings of this study provide significant implications for both academic scholarship and policy formulation. From an academic standpoint, particularly within the fields of Political Semiotics and Social Movement Studies, this research introduces and reinforces the concept of “cultural hybrid resistance”, a contemporary form of resistance emerging from the intersection of global popular culture, digital media, and local political realities. The comparative approach adopted in this study also paves the way for other cross-cultural inquiries into the dynamics of the “globalization of resistance meanings.” From a policy perspective, these findings serve as a crucial reminder for governments and stakeholders to adopt a more intelligent and sensitive approach in interpreting the symbols utilized by protest movements, especially those led by younger generations

As recommendations for future research, subsequent studies could deepen the analysis by exploring cases in other countries to examine the resonance of the *One Piece* symbol or other global pop culture artifacts within different contexts of resistance. Furthermore, longitudinal studies could be conducted to observe the durability and evolution of this symbol's meaning over time, determining whether it evolves into a more structured political movement or becomes co-opted by mainstream political forces. Future inquiries may also investigate more thoroughly the role of social media algorithms in accelerating the dissemination and polarization of such symbolic meanings, as well as assess the potential risk of depoliticization when resistance symbols are reduced to mere aesthetic trends devoid of substantive political content.

REFERENCE

- Adhikari, S., & Sah, B. K. (2024). Proposed Social Media Bill Puts The Yardsticks Set By The Constitution For Freedom Of Expression In Jeopardy. In *Media Action Nepal*. https://mediaactionnepal.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Media-Action-Nepal-Analysis-of-the-Social-Media-Bill.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Aistrope, T. (2020). Popular culture, the body and world politics. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 26(1), 366–374.
- Al-Faryan, M. A. S., & Shil, N. C. (2023). Governance as an Interplay between Corruption and

- Polity: Conceptualizing from a National Perspective. *Economies*, 11(2), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies11020065>
- Angkasa, W. (2023). Synchronous Chanting in Indonesian Social Movement Repertoires: A Tool for Emoting and for Manipulating Emoters. *Human Arenas*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-023-00360-8>
- Aqil, H. L., & Atmojo, D. P. (2025). *Politik Simbolik dan Resistensi Kultural Anak Muda Menjelang HUT ke-80 RI : Analisis Wacana Pengibaran Bendera One Piece*. 3(2).
- Baspehlivan, U. (2023). Theorising the memescape: The spatial politics of Internet memes. *Review of International Studies*, 23(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210523000049>
- Beckstead, Z., & Jordan, G. A. (2023). Politics in Transitional Spaces: Direct and Indirect Political Participation. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 57(4), 1444–1456. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-023-09755-2>
- Bennett, N. J., López de la Lama, R., Le Billon, P., Ertör, I., & Morgera, E. (2023). Ocean defenders and human rights. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 9(January), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2022.1089049>
- Castillo-Esparcia, A., Caro-Castaño, L., & Almansa-Martínez, A. (2023). Evolution of digital activism on social media: opportunities and challenges. *Profesional de La Informacion*, 32(3), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2023.may.03>
- Dancy, G., & Fariss, C. J. (2024). The Global Resonance of Human Rights: What Google Trends Can Tell Us. *American Political Science Review*, 118(1), 252–273. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000199>
- Detikcom, T. (2025). 5 Poin Pernyataan Prabowo Sikapi Affan Kurniawan Dilindas Rantis Brimob. Detiknews.Com. https://news.detik.com/berita/d-8086978/5-poin-pernyataan-prabowo-sikapi-affan-kurniawan-dilindas-rantis-brimob?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Dumitrica, D., & Schwinges, A. (2022). Agents of Change and Contentious Agents Interwoven Narratives in the Visual Representations of the Protester in News Magazine Covers. *International Journal of Communication*, 16, 5647–5673. https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/108420593/Agents_of_change_and_contentious_agents.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Dwi, U., Asih, R., Novianto, V., & Setiawati, E. (2025). *From Street Protests to Digital Hashtags : The Repositioning of Indonesian Student Movement in 1998 and 2025 in Alan Touraine ' s Perspective* (Issue Iconis). Atlantis Press SARL. <https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-464-8>
- Fadjarudin, M. (2025). *Said Iqbal Kritik Tunjangan DPR Rp600 Juta: Rakyat Sakit Hati, Buruh Naik Gaji Rp100 Ribu Harus Turun ke Jalan*. Suarasurabaya.Net. <https://s1-matematika.fmipa.unesa.ac.id/post/kenapa-banyak-yang-kibarkan-bendera-one-piece-saat-demo-ini-maknanya?https://www.suarasurabaya.net/kelanakota/2025/said-iqbal-kritik-tunjangan-dpr-rp600-juta-rakyat-sakit-hati-buruh-naik-gaji-rp100-ribu-harus-t>
- Fajarihza, R. F. (2025). *Bos Buruh Kritik Kenaikan Tunjangan DPR: Menyakiti Hati Rakyat!* Bisnis.Com. https://ekonomi.bisnis.com/read/20250828/12/1906528/bos-buruh-kritik-kenaikan-tunjangan-dpr-menyakiti-hati-rakyat?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Ferdinand, M., Oostindie, G., & Veenendaal, W. (2020). A global comparison of non-sovereign island territories: The search for ‘true equality’. *Island Studies Journal*, 15(1), 43–66. <https://doi.org/10.24043/isj.75>
- Fikri, M., Yakin, F. A., Muslim, M., Jl, A., Sukarto, I., Baru, B., Sukowono, K., & Jember, K. (2025). Bendera Bajak Laut di Negara Bajakan : Semiotika Perlawanan terhadap Nasionalisme Palsu dan Kekuatan Rakyat Sekolah Tinggi IlmuSyariah Nurul Qarnain , Indonesia Bulan Agustus di Indonesia secara historis diposisikan sebagai ruang simbolik dianggap remeh s. *Jurnal Yudistira: Publikasi Riset Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Bahasa*, 3(2).
- González, R. M. (2024). The Global, the Local, and the Glocal. In *Visualising Glocalization*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.23056123.8>
- Guan, S., & Sun, Y. (2023). Multimodal metaphor and metonymy in political cartoons as a means of country image construction. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 27(2), 444–467.



- <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-31664>
- Guzman, C. de. (2025). *What to Know About the Deadly 'Gen Z' Protests Over a Social-Media Ban and 'Nepo Kids' in Nepal*. TIME. https://time.com/7315492/nepal-gen-z-protests-social-media-nepo-kids-corruption-explainer/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Hutt, M. (2020). The changing face of Nepal. *Current History*, 119(816), 141–145. <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2020.119.816.141>
- Ida, R., Mashud, M., Saud, M., Yousaf, F. N., & Ashfaq, A. (2025). Politics in Indonesia: democracy, social networks and youth political participation. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 11(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2432071>
- Istiyanto, B., Putri, K. Y. S., Muzykant, V. L., Siregar, A. M., & Khadiz, A. V. (2024). R. Barthes's Semiotic Approach to Media Reports: Indonesian Case. *RUDN Journal of Language Studies, Semiotics and Semantics*, 15(2), 430–442. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2299-2024-15-2-430-442>
- Johann, M., Höhnle, L., & Dombrowski, J. (2023). Fridays for Future and Mondays for Memes: How Climate Crisis Memes Mobilize Social Media Users. *Media and Communication*, 11(3), 226–237. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v11i3.6658>
- León-Medina, F. J. (2023). Social learning and the complex contagion of political symbols in Twitter: The case of the yellow ribbon in Catalonia. *Big Data and Society*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517231180569>
- Levitt, L. (2022). Divergent Fan Forums and Political Consciousness Raising. *Media and Communication*, 10(1), 329–338. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v10i1.4707>
- Malherbe, N. (2023). Returning Community Psychology to the Insights of Anarchism: Fragments and Prefiguration. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 11(1), 212–228. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.9385>
- Malyukova, O., & Rybakov, O. (2020). *The Symbolic Subject in the Optics of Symbolic State Power*. 468(Iccessh), 87–92. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200901.018>
- Moore, D. (2023). A nonreductive physicalist libertarian free will. *Inquiry (United Kingdom)*, 66(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2023.2166982>
- Rijal, N., Paudel, B., Raj, K., Gurung, L., & Adhikari, B. N. (2025). An Investigation of Regulating and Monitoring Social Media in Nepal. *Journal of Health and Social Welfare*, 13(1), 1–51. <https://doi.org/10.58196/jhsw.v13i1.a2>
- Rijal, S. (2024). Political Demonstrations, Nepali Youths and the Politics of Mourning: A Semiotic Analysis. *SCHOLARS: Journal of Arts & Humanities*, 6(1), 28–40. <https://doi.org/10.3126/sjah.v6i1.62761>
- Sastramidjaja, Y. (2025). Connective spaces of radical hope: rhizomatic youth struggles for viable futures in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 6261, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2025.2556927>
- Schaaf, M., & Quiring, O. (2023). The Limits of Social Media Mobilization: How Protest Movements Adapt to Social Media Logic. *Media and Communication*, 11(3), 203–213. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v11i3.6635>
- Sharma, G., & Chitrakar, N. (2025). *Young anti-corruption protesters oust Nepal PM Oli*. Reuters.Com. https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/young-anti-corruption-protesters-oust-nepal-pm-oli-2025-09-09/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Shrestha, R., & Subedi, D. (2022). Youth, politics, and youth-led political violence in Nepal. *Asian Politics and Policy*, 14(3), 332–350. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12658>
- Teixeira, L. (2022). Semiótica e política: um estudo de caso. *Estudos Semióticos*, 18(1), 64–80. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1980-4016.esse.2022.195448>
- Untari, P. H. (2025). *26 Medsos yang Sempat Diblokir di Nepal hingga Picu Ricuh, Instagram-YouTube*. Cs. Teknologi.Bisnis.Com. <https://teknologi.bisnis.com/read/20250910/84/1910073/26-medsos-yang-sempat-diblokir-di-nepal-hingga-picu-ricuh-instagram-youtube-cs>
- Wahyuningroem, S. L., Sirait, R., Uljanatunnisa, U., & Heryadi, D. (2024). Youth political



- participation and digital movement in Indonesia: the case of #ReformasiDikorupsi and #TolakOmnibusLaw. *F1000Research*, 12, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.122669.3>
- Williams, R. (2022). Is Violence Critique? *Religions*, 13(11). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13111111>
- Wu, Y. (2021). Can pop culture allay resentment? Japan's influence in China today. *Media and Communication*, 9(3), 112–122. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v9i3.4117>
- Wulandari, T. (2025). *Kenaikan Tunjangan DPR Didemo Mahasiswa-Buruh, Dosen UGM: Kebijakan Nirempati*. Detik.Com. https://www.detik.com/edu/detikpedia/d-8085781/kenaikan-tunjangan-dpr-didemo-mahasiswa-buruh-dosen-ugm-kebijakan-nirempati?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Zheng, R. (2023). Reconceptualizing solidarity as power from below. *Philosophical Studies*, 180(3), 893–917. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-022-01845-y>
- Żukiewicz, P., & Gerlich, D. (2023). Poland as Gilead. Pop culture fiction and performative protests in the era of the pandemic. *Media, Culture and Society*, 45(7), 1418–1434. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437231179350>