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**Between fear and power : Kompas, Indonesia's most influential daily newspaper, 1965-2010**

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

*“Kompas is a newspaper from three different eras. Established in 1965 when President Sukarno still ruled Indonesia, it became a leading newspaper during the New Order, to survive as the most prestigious newspaper during the Reform era.”*

*~David T Hill, Professor in Southeast Asian Studies, Murdoch University, Kompas, June 28, 2015*

It was Sunday afternoon, June 28, 2015. The yard of Bentara Budaya building, which was located right across from the *Kompas* newspaper office in South Palmerah street, Jakarta, was filled with hundreds of journalists. They wore traditional Indonesian costumes from all over the islands: Batak, Betawi, Sunda, Java, Sulawesi and Papua; as if they wanted to confirm that *Kompas* represented a ‘miniature of Indonesia’ – a popular government slogan that the newspaper echoes. These journalists did not come alone. They brought their families as well: wives, husbands and kids. Not all these journalists were working in Jakarta; some senior journalists were based on the outer islands, and had been given special return flight tickets in order to be present here on this day. Those who came were not only active journalists, but also retired ones. Their faces were flushed with smiles and pride.

On the far side of the yard, in a small pavilion (*pendopo*), a limited number of guests were being welcomed and seated. Though small in terms of number, these guests were very important: amongst them were the Vice President of

Indonesia, Jusuf Kalla; the Minister of Trading and Industry, Rahmat Gobel; some former ministers of the Indonesian cabinet such as Muhammad Luthfi, who used to serve as the Minister for Trading and Industry; some media elites such as Chairul Tanjung, the owner of Trans corporation; Agus Sudibyo, the former member of the Indonesian Press Council; Islamic religious elites such as Ayumradi Azra; as well as academics such as Rhenald Kasali. Joining these distinguished guests were the elites from *Kompas* newspaper, such as Randu Raharjo<sup>1</sup>, the new Chief Editor of *Kompas*; Sularto, the Senior Editor of the newspaper; and Agung Adi Prasetyo, the Chief Executive Officer of *Kompas Gramedia Group*.

As dusk fell, the central focus of the celebration was underway. The large screen started showing a recorded speech of Jakob Oetama, the founder, owner and General Director of *Kompas* daily newspaper. Although the 83-year old Jakob was seated there amongst the guests in the audience, he did not deliver his speech live due to poor health. For about 10 minutes, all the people in the room, including Jakob himself, watched the video and listened to the melodious voice of the most important person at *Kompas*. The overall theme of his speech was an expression of gratitude that the newspaper had run for more than 50 years, making it the longest running newspaper in this post-authoritarian country. He expressed his gratitude to all of the people who had contributed to its success, with special emphasis on the government, who in his view had kindly given them an opportunity to be a part of the state and society. In his words:

*Thank you as well for the collaboration of all stakeholders, such as the readers, the advertisers, opinion writers, sources, the ombudsman board, newsagents, retailers, **as well as the government, who has given Kompas a chance to contribute to the life of the state and the***

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<sup>1</sup> In this dissertation, some names of informants have been changed due to ethical considerations.

*society*. (Oetama, Kompas, June 28, 2015<sup>2</sup>, emphasis added by the author).

This expression of gratitude by Jakob echoed an event that had taken place almost four decades earlier, in 1978, when Jakob thanked President Suharto for allowing his newspaper to run again after being banned by the regime. At a press conference at the Indonesian Press Day on February 8, 1978, Jakob shook the hand of the ruler of the New Order, and spoke refined Javanese: "*Matur nuwun sampun diparengaken terbit malih*", which literally means: "*thank you for allowing us to open again*." The authoritarian ruler replied with a cold smile and a curt reply, also in Javanese, but a coarse version: "*ojo meneh-meneh*", which literally means: "*never again*" (Sularto, 2011: 23). Prior to that day, from January 21 to February 5, 1978, *Kompas* had been closed after covering a student protest demanding Suharto not to run for President again in the upcoming elections.

In fact, this ban had been so traumatic for Jakob Oetama that he still remembered it long afterwards. On the front page of the newspaper published earlier on the day of the ceremony, Jakob admitted how this trauma still lingered in his mind:

*After being banned from January 20 to February 5, 1978, choosing, sorting and giving meaning to our journalistic works was no longer an easy thing to do... for a variety of issues as well as events which were seen as very sensitive, journalistic work needed to be done in the state of, quoting the words of philosopher Soren Kiekergaard, "**fear and trembling**". (Oetama, Kompas, June 28, 2015, emphasis added by Jakob himself.)*

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<sup>2</sup> All references for *Kompas* newspaper articles are available on request. When citing, the date and author will be noted for opinion columns, and only the date for other types of articles as these are usually written by a group of journalists, and usually using code names.

Witnessing the ceremony, as well as reading the newspaper of that day, even a casual observer would immediately recognize an apparent ambivalence. While tens of powerful figures had congratulated the paper on its anniversary, ranging from intellectuals, religious elites, businessmen, political elites, and even the president himself, the trauma of the dark past was one of the main themes commemorated by the journalists. That journalism under Suharto's authoritarian regime had to be conducted 'in fear and trembling' is hardly a surprise. But that the Chief Editor of *Kompas* should choose to recall that fact so prominently almost two decades after Suharto's fall, and that he should then also feel the need to thank the (democratically elected) government for giving the newspaper 'a chance to contribute to the life of the state and the society', raises important questions about the nature of *Kompas* journalism in the ongoing democratization process in Indonesia. Do old habits of deference to authority really die that hard? Or is there an ongoing price that *Kompas* must pay, in terms of gratitude to and cooperation with today's political establishment, for its continuing status as Indonesia's ultimate establishment newspaper?

With this background in mind, this book will investigate the biography of *Kompas* newspaper, the largest and most influential daily newspaper in Indonesia, which has managed to survive under more than three decades of authoritarian rule (1965-1998), and discuss its responses to the radical shift in the Indonesian political system from an authoritarian regime to a democracy, focusing particularly on the first 17 years of democratization (1998 – 2015). This change included the amendment of the constitution regulating that the President shall be elected directly by the people, and that his time in office will be limited to two terms only. At the local level, this change included the direct election of governors at the provincial level, as well as regents and majors at the regency and city level. In regard to media freedom, the amendment regulated the freedom of expression through the use of all possible communication channels (article 28 E, 1945 constitution). This change also included the enactment of the Press Act 1999, which regulated that unlike the previous era, the state was no longer able to shut down media outlets. Furthermore, government permission was no longer needed to establish a new

publishing company. As a result, the Indonesia's media experienced euphoria, and there are now 351 TV stations, 1.248 radio stations, and 1.076 print media (Nugroho, Putri & Lakshmi, 2012).

The three central questions in this book are: How were the journalistic values and practices of Kompas developed during the authoritarian era? To what extent did those journalistic values and practices change or continue after the fall of the authoritarian regime? And, what were the forces, inside and outside the newspaper, that influenced the changes and continuities?

To address these questions, this book will use historical material, interviews, newsroom ethnography, and content analyses to trace the evolution of *Kompas* over its fifty years of operation. On the basis of this material, I argue that during the New Order, *Kompas* developed a distinctive style of journalism that was polite, indirect, and cautious, and that this style has changed remarkably little after Indonesia's transition to democracy. In the authoritarian period it was shaped by a combination of personal and cultural factors - most importantly the pervasive influence of the newspaper's founder, Jakob Oetama, a Javanese Catholic - and it broadly supported many of the regime's aims out of political necessity to avoid conflict with those in power. In doing so, the paper could secure its economic interest as a media company, managing to accelerate its business operations and accumulate wealth by receiving tremendous financial support from the state. The persistence of the same cautious journalistic practices in the democratic era has to do partly with Jakob's continuing leadership, and with the momentum of an established and respected newsroom culture. In addition, the close relationship which the newspaper had built up with Indonesia's political elite - which remained very much intact and stable despite the regime change - proved a continuing and valuable asset which it was reluctant to jeopardize by adopting a more critical, investigative style of watchdog journalism. This was partly because the newspaper depended on its elite connections for access to newsworthy information, and partly because under democracy, the danger of state repression was replaced by a new threat in the form of hostile social forces,

notably on the Islamic right, which it had to be wary of offending, and from which it knew it might ultimately need the state's protection. With this close relationship with the regime established, *Kompas* could secure its symbolic capital as the most influential newspaper in Indonesia, targeted to the upper class and elite, who are their main audience. More importantly, it could also secure economic gain from advertising revenue from the regime itself, or from private businesses which have close political ties to the power holders.

In investigating this, my book aims to contribute to academic debates about the character and evolution of journalism in post-authoritarian settings. A common observation in this literature is that restricted journalistic practices under authoritarian regimes tend to linger. It is these authoritarian journalistic practices, characterized by commercialism, partisanship and non-criticality, as well as non-investigative reporting of the power holders, which have prevented the media from becoming a fully effective force for speeding up the ongoing democratization process. Yet, there is considerable disagreement about why newspapers and journalistic find it difficult to change when their country democratizes. While some scholars believe that the entrenched journalistic culture developed under the old authoritarian regimes have been the main factors constraining the newsroom from adapting to the democratization process, others blame the political economy pragmatism of the media workers themselves, which has resulted in the media losing its autonomy and remaining committed to partisanship. Furthermore, how these two factors might interact with each other has barely been examined in existing literature. Indeed, so far the study of post-authoritarian journalism falls into a theoretical dichotomy categorized by two main approaches: a political economy approach and a cultural approach. I will discuss these briefly, before further developing my integrated approach that transcends this theoretical dichotomy and finally outlining the main arguments in this book.



## **1.1 Journalism in Post-Authoritarian Countries: Political Economy Approaches**

The first significant approach explaining journalism in post-authoritarian countries are the political economy theories. To put it briefly and without wishing to generalize, this perspective assumes that media owners, media producers, or media journalists are groups of actors whose actions are guided by the desire to maximize their private political economy interests. This private political economy interest then becomes the main driving force of news production, which ultimately manifests in the media content. The simplest version of this theory is often caricatured as a “conspiracy theory” in which there is “a ruling directorate of the capitalist class that dictates to the editors and the reporters what to run in newspapers” (Schudson, 1989: 266-267). The more critical version of this theory argues that power holders are usually also economic conglomerates, or at least allied with them, and therefore might not implement such “vulgar” control of the media, but rather, exert influence through an ideological hegemony resulting in a situation where the media produce consent among “the public” to legitimize the existing political establishment (Laughey, 2007).

Regarding journalism in the post-authoritarian setting, the political economy factors that prevent the media from fully functioning as a critical watchdog of the power holders are: media ownership by politicians or by media conglomerates who have close political ties with power holders; media dependency on financial support from the state or state advertising; media dependency on the state as a news source or for access of information; and market pressure or business competition between media groups. These political economy analyses also include threats of physical violence from intolerant, radical members of society. This was closely related to either the state’s failure to establish law enforcement measures to secure journalists’ safety, or the failure to implement such laws where they exist.

A study in line with this political economy approach can be found in the work of Waisbord in the case of four Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Peru (2000). In research that has been much cited by scholars studying journalism in the region, Waisbord proposed the convincing argument that after the fall of authoritarian regimes, there was a rise in watchdog journalism. However, the investigative model of watchdogging, which is believed by many scholars to be the true manifestation of watchdog journalism, did not occur in those aforementioned countries. Waisbord argues that financial dependency on state advertising as a key of source of revenue made the media hesitant to expose the wrongdoings of power holders. This situation was made worse by journalists' reliance on sources from within the state to access information about the existence of corruption. This encouraged journalists not to be critical of elites in order to ensure continued access to information. Therefore, it was of no surprise that any exposure of wrongdoing was mainly initiated by the political elites themselves, in order to beat down their political rivals who were usually mid-level politicians. Waisbord also suggests that the continued repressive political environment made journalists vulnerable to the threat of physical violence, and further prevented them from taking up adversarial positions to those in power.

In contrast to Waisbord, who still believed that to some extent there was a rise of watchdog journalism, Ferreira (2006) provides a more critical view, claiming that the media was used as an instrument by power holders in Latin American countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela and Cuba, to deepen the political oppression of citizens. However, in line with Waisbord, he explains this as being due to political economy factors such as media ownership by conglomerates that had close political ties with regimes. He also cites the use of judicial threats such as libel lawsuits, treason charges, as well as impending threats of physical violence from members of civil society, as being influential factors that forced journalists in these countries to self-censor their work. Echoing Waisbord, he argues that dependency on government and corporate sources is an indirect form of control.

To a large extent, the arguments of these two scholars about the prominent influence of political economy factors on the conduct of the media has resonated with other scholars working in the region. Surveying various countries in South and Central America such as Cuba, Guatemala, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Chile and Venezuela, Hughes and Lawson (2005), for instance, emphasize the oligarchic ownership of media outlets as the main factor that prevents the media from becoming an effective force in supporting democratization. Focusing on the case of Mexico, Fromson (1996) and Benavidez (2000) identify the widespread practice of *gacetilla* among the print news media, whereby the state paid newspapers for writing news stories that promoted the government. This dependency on state finances, they argue, was one of the main reasons the newspapers in that country could easily be tamed by the government. Another recurring theme reported on by many scholars is the threat faced by journalists in regard to the implementation of libel laws, as well as threats of physical violence from certain hostile groups in society. It can be found, for instance, in the works of Whitten-Woodring (2009) and (Bustamante & Relly, 2014) in their studies on Mexico, Lavieri (1996) in his study on Argentina, as well as Alves (2005) and Hughes and Lawson (2005) in their extensive comparative investigation of several Latin American countries.

In Southeast Asia, the same line of argument was proposed by McCargo (2003), who compared three post-authoritarian countries: Thailand, The Philippines and Indonesia. He suggests that even though the media enjoyed more freedom in these countries after the regime change, they were less protected. The threat of physical violence, posed by private agencies or political forces from outside the state, was significant. In addition, the political business alliance between the media and parts of the political establishment is a source of partisanship and reporting bias, preventing the media from functioning as a rigorous watchdog. This situation is made worse by the increasing concentration of media ownership amongst a handful of media moguls. Echoing McCargo, Heryanto and Hadiz (2005) found a similar situation in their observations on political journalism in these three post-authoritarian Southeast Asian countries. They argue that despite the increasing freedom enjoyed by the

press, the media faced some serious challenges from oligarchic power holders consisting of the political and business elites, who have persistently pressured the newsroom to serve their political business interest. Furthermore, the threat of physical violence from radical groups is another factor that has prevented journalists from fulfilling their watchdog function.

In line with the various scholars above, the vast number of studies focusing on post-authoritarian Indonesia have emphasized the influence of political economy factors as the main explanation for the failure of the media from playing a watchdog function in the process of democratic consolidation (Lim, 2011 & 2012; Haryanto, 2011; Ida, 2011; Nugroho, Putri & Laksmi, 2012; Tapsell, 2012 & 2017; Sudibyo 2004 & 2009; Sudibyo & Patria, 2013; Andres, 2016). One of the main factors preventing the media from being critical of power holders is the concentration of media ownership amongst a handful of media conglomerates which have political business interests. This argument was proposed by Lim (2012), in what she names “the league of thirteen” media moguls, who she believes threaten the democratization of the Indonesian media. Similar concerns were shared by Nugroho, Putri and Laksmi (2012), who further argue that this situation led journalists to favor and support government and corporate policies. Furthermore, this situation has also led to a lack of quality media content, as media companies prioritize ratings and circulation. Tapsell (2012) and Haryanto (2011) confirmed the findings above by providing a detailed analysis of how political economy factors influence the daily practice of journalistic works at the micro-level. Conducting interviews with newspaper journalists of different media and at different periods of time, both scholars came to the same interesting conclusion that media owners, motivated by political economy interests, have intervened substantially in the newsroom, resulting in a climate that favors self-censorship. Researching five newspapers owned by political business figures (President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s *Jurnal Nasional*, Surya Paloh’s *Media Indonesia*, Bakrie’s *Surabaya Post*, Dahlan Iskan’s *Jawa Post* and Riyadi’s *Jakarta Globe*), Tapsell identifies the way control was executed directly from the media owner to the Chief Editor. The Chief Editor would then give instructions to the managing editors, who in

turn gave instructions to the editors, and finally these were relayed to the journalists. This has led to the practice of self-censorship. Meanwhile, examining two print media outlets (*Lippo's Magazine* and *Suara Pembaharuan*) and two television stations, Haryanto reached the same conclusion: that media owners influence the practice of self-censorship in line with their own political business interests.

Whereas the research above provides evidence of how political economy factors have strongly influenced the national media, the research by Hill (2007) and Ida (2011) provide evidence at the local level. Examining the mass media at the local level, which has rarely been done in Indonesia, they showed how the it is used by their owners as an instrument to favor certain candidates running for mayor or regent in local elections. Hill, for instance, presents empirical evidence by mapping media involvement in the 2004 local election for city mayor in Manado. He illustrated how *Global News*, a local newspaper in Manado, was used by its owner, Wempie Frederik, as an instrument for promoting his candidacy when he successfully ran for election. Meanwhile, using Robison and Hadiz's (2004) argument on the emergence of local oligarchies in Indonesia as a point of departure, Ida also argued that there was a concentration of oligarchic power at the local level, consisting of local politicians and local media owners. She supported her argument using the evidence of the owner of *Jawa Pos* newspaper, Dahlan Iskan, and his involvement in supporting a candidate who ran for the 2005 local election in Surabaya. She also identified a similar situation in the case of Satria Naradha, the CEO of the *Bali Post* group, and his close relationship with the local Balinese state administration.

In summary, it can be seen that political economy theories advocate the essential role of political economy forces in shaping journalistic practice in post-authoritarian countries, which has prevented the media from playing a role as a critical watchdog over the power holders. These forces ranged from: (a). media dependency on state advertising, (b). media dependency on political elites as news sources or for access to information, (c). media ownership by politicians

or by media conglomerates who have close political ties with power holders, (d). the increasing concentration of media ownership by a handful of media conglomerates, to (e). the threats of libel and physical violence from conservative members of society. However, factors such as market pressure or business competition between media outlets has not been examined much in the literature, and this will be a key feature of this study in regard to the case of *Kompas*. Furthermore, these theories neglect the role of cultural factors in shaping journalistic values and practices in these countries, and fail to examine how journalists in the newsroom legitimize or justify political economy pragmatism in the daily production of news. The influence of cultural factors in shaping the process of news production in the media newsroom is significant and cannot be ignored, and I will examine these cultural theories in the next section.

## **1.2 Journalism in Post-Authoritarian Countries: Cultural Approach**

While political economy factors are arguably obvious as they materialize in the form of political interests of media owners, advertisers, market pressures, as well as pressure from the state, there has been debate amongst scholars as to how to define culture, and what role this plays in shaping media norms. Accordingly, this research will follow the theorization of Hanitzsch (2006) who defined culture in six different ways. First of all, there is the territorial-based definition which maps culture to certain geographically or spatially defined systems, such as ethnicities, language, or even the state within a particular nation. Second, there is the essentialist definition in which culture is believed to be the 'true' essence, which mostly relates to individual characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion and gender. Third, there is the milieu-specific definition which refers culture to specific, socially distinctive lifestyles signaling the identity of its followers, and which distinguish them from other members of society. Fourthly, there is the value-centered definition which defines culture as sets of values, attitudes and beliefs embraced by certain individuals or communities, such as those found in the ideology of "Asian Values". Fifth, the organizational definition refers to collective values and practices that

distinguish the members of one organization from another. Finally, there is professional culture, which is the conscious ideological views shared by either all members of a particular profession, or a subpopulation of the profession.

In this regard, it is important to note that some categories or definitions of culture may overlap. For example, the value-centered definition in terms of 'Asian Values' can also be understood as an essentialist definition, as it is attached to a certain race (Asian) or nation (Asia), as well as a territorial-based definition referring to a certain geographically defined system (Asia as a continent). Furthermore, value-centered definitions in terms of religious values could as well refer to the essentialism definition, such as when we talk about Islamic values. However, despite the potential overlap, it will become clear in the following explanation that the differentiations above will be useful to understand how culture is understood and theorized differently by scholars in South America and Southeast Asia.

In regard to the theorization of Hanitzsch above, in post-authoritarian South America, scholars talk about culture in light of organizational culture which refers to sets of collective values and practices of individual journalists in the newsroom organization. In South America, this organizational culture of the newsroom was very much shaped by its authoritarian past, which they refer to as "authoritarian journalism culture". A study conducted by Marquez-Ramirez (2012) in Mexico advocates this theory. In her study, she argues that an "authoritarian journalism culture" was developed during the authoritarian period, and continuously maintained after the regime change. In her argument, she proposes that a defining feature of this authoritarian journalism culture was the culture of distanced, cautious, passive and detached reporting, employed to soften the tone of political coverage. In doing so, the media hoped to avoid being banned by the state, and to maintain economic benefits derived from government advertising, or more controversially, from bribes in the form of direct payments to news executives, publishers or radio anchors (2012: 243). This situation was made possible by the hierarchical organizational structure within the newsroom in which the editorial policy was very much directed by

media elites, who were under the strong influence or control of the media owner. These sets of values and practices developed in the authoritarian era transformed into an entrenched organizational culture in the media newsroom, creating a template to be re-adopted when the political regime transitioned to a democratic government. As a result, she concluded that instead of a progressive cultural transformation, what happened within the media was development of a “hybrid journalism culture”, where the liberal discourse of professionalism has blended with authoritarian practices, thereby preventing the media from fully fulfilling a watchdog function.

Hughes (2006) takes a more optimistic view compared to that of Marquez-Ramirez, in the apparent rise of civic journalism, which included the implementation of watchdog journalism in post-authoritarian Mexico. She emphasizes the role of cultural factors such as organizational culture as well the social psychological world of individual journalists in supporting change. However, in line with Marquez-Ramirez, Hughes also acknowledges the existence of a hybrid journalism culture in Mexico, in which the old authoritarian journalism culture still influences current journalistic practices. Similarly, Pinto (2009) also argues that it is the impact of authoritarian journalism culture in the past that explains the “diffusion” of the recent practice of watchdog journalism in Argentina. Mostly owned and founded by wealthy political elites during early independence, Argentina’s media was financially dependent on these elites and adopted a partisan voice in support of its politicians. This early period, which he calls “agrarian oligarchy”, lasted for 70 years (1860-1930), and was followed by an authoritarian period under military regime which suppressed press freedom for 53 years (1930-1983). These two periods shaped the journalistic culture of the media newsroom and compelled journalists to embrace partisan loyalties which aligned with significant economic interests. As a result, when the period of political and economic liberalization finally arrived between 1984-2000, the media did not automatically transform into a fully effective force in supporting democracy. In the short liberal period in which the media embraced the idea of watchdog journalism, the implementation of this ideal was diffused and translated



according to the journalists' pre-existing values and beliefs. When the country was hit by economic recession and the threat of being banned was re-implemented again by the state, watchdog journalism was abandoned by the major print media in the country.

The same phenomenon has been observed in post-authoritarian countries in Southeast Asia, in which the media could not fully play a watchdog role due to cultural factors. However, while the scholars in Latin America talked about the "authoritarian journalistic culture" or "hybrid journalistic culture" which refers to organizational culture, scholars in Southeast Asia discussed culture in light of value-centered or essentialist-centered definitions, embodied by the theory of "Asian Values" and religious values (such as Islamic values). One example of this argument can be found in the work of Massey and Chang (2002) in their content analysis of 10 online newspapers containing what they defined as "Asian Values" from ten Asian countries with varying degrees of press freedom. Specifically, there were six newspapers from Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Thailand, The Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei); two newspapers from East Asian (Japan and Hong Kong); and two newspapers from South Asian countries (India and Pakistan). They found that in terms of the degree of press freedom, three regions were considered free (Japan, Thailand and The Philippines), four were partly free (Indonesia, Hong Kong, Pakistan and India), and three were not classified as free (Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore). From their analysis, it was found that newspaper content which was seen as emphasizing the importance of respect, supporting social harmony and avoiding conflict (and thus illustrating 'Asian Values'), were found predominantly in the newspapers of Southeast Asia. Confirming the findings above, Romano (2005) argued that Asian Values such as "respect for elders and leaders, concern for upholding harmony, respect for the importance of saving face, and a preference for communicating criticism in a mild, courteous rather than brusque fashion" shaped the ideas and practices of journalists in Asia, including Southeast Asia (Romano, 2005: 6-7). It was these values that provided the justification for the journalists to embrace the idea of journalists as nation builders or government partners in development. The later point was also often

conceptualized in the idea of 'development journalism'. Romano points out that this journalistic culture is in sharp contrast to the idea of detached and adversarial watchdogs seen in Western democracies, as in Southeast Asia any questioning of the power holders was expected to be done without "offending the feeling or disturbing the authority of the honored leadership figure" (2005: 10).

Regarding essentialist or value-centered definitions of culture, Tekwani (2008) suggests that when reporting conflict, religion and ethnicity has an important impact on the work of journalists in various countries in Asia, including post-authoritarian Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. Biases were often adopted by journalists, for example in reporting conflict between minority and majority groups within a country, with the coverage tending to align with the journalist's religious views or ethnic affiliation. Indeed, the fact that in most Asian countries, the society is culturally diverse in term of language, ethnicity and religion, has provided much context for the conflicts studied in the book. Cultural forces in essentialist or value-centered terms have also been suggested as factors influencing journalism in post-authoritarian Indonesia (Hanitzsch, 2005 & 2006; Pintak & Setiyono, 2011; Lang, 2016).

One prominent theme proposed in the essentialist argument regards the influences of Javanese values to Indonesian journalism, as well as religious values such as Catholic values and Islamic values. Comparable to the notion of "Asian Values", Javanese values emphasize the importance of respect for the elderly and authority, as well as the hierarchical order in society. Furthermore, there is also an emphasis on conflict avoidance, called *rukun*, in order to maintain social harmony (Geertz, 1960; Koentjaraningrat, 1989; Suseno, 1997). In the study of journalism, this argument was proposed by, amongst others, Thomas Hanitzsch (2005), who suggested that instead of playing an assertive watchdog role, Indonesian journalists acted instead as a "timid watchdog". He argues that this situation was shaped by the Javanese values embraced by Indonesian journalists, especially those who had roots in central parts of Java such as Jogjakarta. In these values, the principle of harmony and respect for authority are an integral feature of the Javanese way of life (Hanitzsch,

2005 :502). He goes on to suggest that the Java-based media and Javanese journalists tend to be politer in conveying messages, and thus tend to be politically uncritical (Hanitzsch, 2006). He argued that within these Javanese values, the practice of bribery, evoked by the concept of “*sungkan*”, also evolved among media practitioners and owners. In the case of bribery from the government (as a news sources) to the journalists, *sungkan* referred to the mutual expectation in which the journalists felt hesitant to refuse the bribe to avoid offending the giver or losing their trust. On the other side, the sources felt compelled to offer bribes as they believed that the journalists expected this, and a failure to do so would result in negative coverage.

In line with Hanitzsch, Romano (2003) observed earlier the importance of cultural factors to the everyday lives of Indonesian journalists. Combining in-depth interviews and a quantitative survey, she shows that the pattern of journalistic routines (or what she called a journalistic culture/micro culture) had been shaped by the broader Indonesian political culture, which was characterized mainly by paternalism (macro culture). This patriarchal culture provided a space for the state possession of power to define what would be the appropriate ideas and practices in Indonesian journalism. In term of ideas, the state controlled Indonesian journalism through the enigmatic notion of *Pancasila*, resulting in a journalistic practice which did not allow for the implementation of the media as a watchdog. In terms of practice, the state enforced regulation that gave them the right to censor the media or even ban them if considered appropriate. Based on her study, Romano believed that the roots of such journalistic culture was the strong influence of the organic political philosophy claimed by the Javanese authoritarian ruler as being the essential, authentic Indonesian character. This philosophy, which emphasizes the harmonious relation between the ruled and the ruler to maintain social order, was seen as best suited to Javanese values.

Other scholars have also promoted the influence of culture in the essentialist or values manner, but with more emphasis on the role of religion. This can be found in the work of Pintak & Setiyono (2011) and Lang (2016). Surveying 600

journalists across the Indonesian archipelago, Pintak & Setiyono (2011) observed the increasing influence of Islamic values in the newsroom. Many journalists saw themselves, first and foremost, as Islamic believers rather than as journalists. This shaped their attitudes towards politics, where they chose to avoid being a critical watchdog and instead preferred to be in partnership with the government. This supports earlier arguments by Romano (in Pintak & Setiyono 2011: 187) who quotes a journalist: “*I do not wish to be a fierce watchdog, I wish to be like [the Prophet] Muhammad and to spread a good agenda. Muhammad was not fierce.*” In this light, these scholars have concluded that Indonesian journalists were no longer as timid as during the authoritarian era; however, they were also never in an oppositional position with the elites, as they were still keen to maintain their partnership with the political establishment. Therefore, even though international journalistic practices might influence Indonesian journalists, it would be misleading to see them as adopting them wholesale.

A similar argument about the influence of religion was revealed in the work of Lang (2016). Analyzing the position of four Indonesian print media (*Kompas*, *Republika*, *Jakarta Post* and *Suara Hidayatullah*) towards the foreign policy of the United States, he suggested that religion did play a role in shaping the editorial policy of those newspapers. Referring to the United States’ war on terror, two Islamic newspapers (*Republika* and *Suara Hidayatullah*) reacted negatively as they believed the policy had unfairly attacked the Islamic international community. In contrast, the secular media (*Jakarta Post*) and Catholic media (*Kompas*) supported the policy. Furthermore, with regard to conflicts in Muslim nations such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine, *Republika* and *Suara Hidayatullah* suggested that Indonesia could play a bigger role in helping them. Meanwhile, *Kompas* and *Jakarta Post* took a softer stance; the former suggested that Indonesia was not strong enough to play an active role in supporting those countries, whilst the later suggested that Indonesia should play a role at the regional level of Southeast Asia instead. Therefore, it is obvious for Lang that religion was the underlying explanation behind the different positions of these four newspapers in these cases.

In summary, from the discussion above, it is clear that cultural factors have an important influence on journalism in post-authoritarian countries. However, culture has been understood differently between scholars in South American countries and Southeast Asian countries. While in South America, culture was defined in terms of organizational culture which is theorized as an “authoritarian” or “hybrid” culture, scholars in Southeast Asia defined culture in light of values or essentialist focused definitions, by suggesting that culture refers to certain values, religion, race or ethnicity. In this regard, cultural theorists in South America are aligned with the political economy theorists by suggesting that in the beginning, it was political economy forces that shaped the authoritarian journalism culture. However, they overlooked the role of culture in the essentialist or value-centered understanding, such as that of Asian values, Islamic values, or Javanese values in the case of Southeast Asia and Indonesia. In contrast, cultural theorists in Southeast Asia are proficient in explaining the role of values, race, ethnicity, and religion in shaping journalistic practices, but they undermined the important role of political economy factors.

### **1.3 Previous Studies on Kompas Newspaper**

From the explanation above, it is clear that there is a theoretical dichotomy in explaining journalism in post-authoritarian countries between political economy theories and cultural theories. Interestingly, this dichotomy has also colored academic research on *Kompas* daily newspaper. This section will discuss some of these works. One of the earliest works on *Kompas* can be found in the study of De Jong (1990), who examined the values directing the work of *Kompas* journalists. Conducting interviews with Jakob, *Kompas*' founder, as well as 13 journalists working for the paper, he concluded that the journalists had been inspired to practice the ideology of transcendental-humanism, which could be traced to the teachings of the Catholic religion. Under this ideology, *Kompas* journalists believed in the virtue of promoting humanistic values without undermining the existence of God as being supreme. Humans were seen as the creation of God, and they have dignity and rights and should therefore be treated with compassion. Even in cases of humans

committing any wrongdoing, they still have the potential for virtue and kindness in their hearts, and therefore should be given a chance to save face. It is in this light that *Kompas* journalists play their role as polite watchdog of the power holders, as manifested in their gentle and refined political coverage.

This work emphasizing the role of values was then re-emphasized by Keller (2009), who examined the influence of Javanese values held by Jakob Oetama, *Kompas*' owner and founder, in guiding the work of *Kompas* journalists. She argues that the influence of these Javanese values has shaped the cautious and uncritical reporting style of the newspaper. She also argues that these Javanese values influenced the newspaper's tendency to avoid conflict with the elites, so that when there was a dispute or protest from them over a particular news item, *Kompas* journalists were expected to apologize, even if they actually believed that they had been journalistically correct. The ultimate purpose of this was to establish and maintain social harmony, which is touted as another virtue according to Javanese values. She claims that this culture created a strongly paternalistic relation between Jakob and *Kompas* journalists, with the former being seen as a father figure whose words must be obeyed and respected. The fact that Jakob remains such a central figure despite the regime change has made it difficult for the newspaper to transform its journalistic culture.

In contrast to De Jong, Dhakidae (1991) proposed the importance of political economy factors as the underlying explanation for the journalistic practices of *Kompas* journalists. In his work, he believes that the cautiousness of *Kompas* in its political reporting can only be understood when considering the authoritarian state's relation to the emerging capitalist groups in Indonesia. He argues that given the nature of Indonesian capital as "*state-induced capital*", the capitalists in the media industry were actually state-nurtured capitalists. Consequently, Indonesian journalism during this period was politically uncritical and avoided being a direct adversary to the state. Furthermore, given that only a limited number of mass media are allowed to operate, they enjoy a huge market share. As a result, the newspapers in the New Order era were

economically prosperous but politically uncritical. Indeed, Dhakidae claims that *Kompas'* enormous wealth could not have been achieved without the financial support of the state.

More recently, Andres (2016) argues that in this situation of media oligarchy, political business elites have manipulated media freedom for their own private interests by employing it as a political weapon in the struggle for power in key political institutions and for political resources. It is noteworthy that this situation flourished due to the fact that most media owners have positioned themselves as actors in the intra-elite struggle. This entails a permanent or temporary coalition between the media and political elite, where certain political scandals are splashed across the media in order to destroy political opponents and even change the composition of elected officials in government. Andres argued that *Kompas* was involved in such a conflict amongst the political elites, in the case of the political scandal of Century Bank, which forced the then Finance Minister, Sri Mulayni, to resign from office. She suggested that in doing so, the newspaper adopted a partisan bias by siding with the establishment, in order to avoid escalating the scandal and causing further economic and political instability.

This research on *Kompas* has echoed the mainstream political economy and cultural approaches in general, which remain trapped in a theoretical dichotomy. In this regard, just like the cultural theorists, De Jong (1990) and Keller (2009) do not pay sufficient attention to the influences of political economy factors. Moreover, they also do not support their arguments with a content analysis of the newspaper to demonstrate how the Catholic or Javanese values are manifested. On the contrary, Dhakidae (1991) and Andres (2016) convincingly demonstrate how *Kompas'* close relationship with the political elites made the newspaper uncritical of power holders, and shaped its bias towards elite interests. However, they ignore the agency of *Kompas* journalists, and their personal values for providing justification or legitimation for their actions. Therefore, in the following section I will explain how this study will contribute to filling the gap between existing research.

#### 1.4 Habitus and the Journalistic Field: Bridging the Theoretical Dichotomy

The existing literature on journalism in various post-authoritarian countries, as well as on *Kompas* daily newspaper, has produced a theoretical dichotomy as discussed above. This study believes that the theory of habitus in the journalistic field could offer a solution to bridge these two contrasting approaches. In fact, over the last decade there has been a growing interest among media scholars to take advantage of the work of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (2005), in approaching the study of the field of journalism (Benson, 1998 & 2006; Benson and Neveu, 2005; Hanitzsch, 2011; Hensmondhalgh, 2006; Marlière, 1998 & 2000; Schultz, 2007;). One of the cornerstones of Bourdieu's influence can be seen in the manuscript edited by Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu entitled "Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field" (2005). As well as presenting a translation of Bourdieu's article entitled "The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field", this book also provides some articles by Bourdieu's colleagues, and more importantly, articles written by media scholars from English speaking countries explaining their responses to and theoretical reflections on Bourdieu's theory (Champagne, 2005; Darras, 2005; Duval, 2005; Hallin, 2005, Klinenberg, 2005; Marchetti, 2005; Schudson, 2005).

The starting point for understanding this theory of journalism is Bourdieu's general theory of 'field'. Departing from Weber's sociology of religion, Bourdieu suggested that society consists of various fields, each with its own rules, and each of which is a space of unequal social relationships between agents who are struggling either to transform or preserve that social space. Within each field, there are two opposing poles: the heteronomy pole representing the political and economic forces (which is a reflection of the penetration of external forces into the field), and the autonomy pole that represents capital unique to that field. Thus, the field can be distinguished by both the specific type of capital it utilizes, and the degree of autonomy it has in relation to the dominant economic and political field.



The first step to understanding the journalistic field is to position it amongst other fields. In this case, the journalistic field lies within the field of cultural production, which itself lies within the field of power. The field of cultural production consists of two aspects: the field of restricted cultural production and the field of large-scale cultural production. According to Bourdieu, journalism belongs mostly to the field of large-scale cultural production which contains the conflict between cultural forces and political economy forces. This cultural power is a type of capital that is unique to the field, whilst the political and economic forces are factors that come from outside, namely from the field of power. The greater the cultural capital of the field, the more autonomous a field will be. On the contrary, the bigger the political and economic forces in the field, the more heteronomous a field will be. So in this journalistic field, there is a constant struggle between poles of autonomy and heteronomy.

In addition, the journalistic field is exposed to two binary oppositions between the old and the new, which compete dynamically for the preservation or transformation of the existing field. Each agent operating in the journalistic field arrives with a series of life trajectories, experienced through other fields in an earlier period of life. This long process of socialization shapes the agent's predisposition in terms of feeling, perception, thought and action. Therefore, the study of the journalism field is the study of the process of convergence between disposition (*habitus*) and position (*location in a field that has its own rules.*) Indeed, *habitus* is one of the central concepts in Bourdieu's field theory, which he defines as:

*systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating of a conductor. (Bourdieu, 1977: 72 )*

This is where the theory of field focuses on change. The presence of new agents entering the field will be a force for both preservation and transformation. To be able to make changes, new agents have to show their differences to those already in the field. It is important to see who these new arrivals are, what their social and economic backgrounds are, where they schooled and got their training, and where they developed their work practices. Furthermore, the already established field has its own rules that must be accepted by the newcomers. In other words, for the presence of new agents to be able to bring about change, the balance of power between heteronomy-autonomy within the field, and ultimately larger societal structure of class relations, can only occur under certain conditions.

It is this explanation of change that is one of the main reasons why Bourdieu is highly influential. His field theory offers an explanation which unites both cultural and political economy factors, which operate together to influence the media, and he was able to observe this precisely because he used an historical approach to examine changes in journalism in France. We can find this argument in his work entitled "On Television" (1998), in which he theorized about the change in journalistic practice of TV in France before and after the 1970s. He argued that before 1970, journalism was serious and more autonomous, while after 1970 it became "cheap and sensationalistic", and more heteronomous. He argued that there are at least two factors explaining this change. Firstly, since 1968 journalism was subject to increasing privatization, resulting in the increased influence of the economic field in the journalistic field. Secondly, there was a generation of new journalists carrying a particular news habitus that was based more on practical considerations rather than on philosophy or critical studies. Therefore, the entry of these new journalists also influences the composition of the field. In the words of Benson:

*According to field theory, the changes are born by two sources namely internal dynamic within the field and the transformation that occurs in the surrounding environment either in the form of political break, economical break, technology and demography. To do so*

*methodologically, field theory suggests that the best way to analyze this change is to take a case study to see media field relationships with other fields for years or even decades. Thus it would appear that "the current state of the field of the result of a complex historical change". Media field studies combine extensive theoretical reflections, detailed ethnographic descriptions, tell anecdotes and integrate them with macro data such as media ownership, percentage of advertising revenue, journalists' numbers and trends in journalist training. Although Bourdieu is well known as a grand theorist, his concept of field, habitus and capital (these methods and approaches) is indeed intended to be a flexible tool for empirical research that is open to exploration. (Benson, 1998: 448)*

In summary, as suggested by Benson (1998), field theory can contribute to media research in different ways, and those that are germane to my research are: firstly, that, it offers a theoretical and empirical bridge between macro-societal media theories such as cultural, political economy and technological theories; and micro-organizational approaches. This theory also provides a bridge between cultural and political economy approaches in media theory, by suggesting that political economy and culture are not two competing explanations of the social world, but rather are two intertwined aspects of social reality. Secondly, it explains processes of change, both how the media field itself is transformed and how a reconfigured media field affects other major societal sectors. In this regard, this study believes that Bourdieu's field theory is useful as a theoretical tool of analysis in this study of *Kompas* newspaper. This theoretical avenue of investigation becomes more significant when considering that although Bourdieu made an important contribution to media studies, surprisingly Indonesian media scholars have yet to profit fully from his work.

### 1.5 Argument of this Book

This book argues that *Kompas* developed a polite, indirect and cautious style of journalism over more than three decades under authoritarian structures, which has prevented the newspaper from performing a critical watchdog role, and has prevented it from being a fully effective force in supporting the deepening of Indonesian democracy. This particular style of journalism was developed as a result of two different forces interacting with each other in shaping the habitus of *Kompas*, namely cultural forces and political economy forces. On one hand, there was the strong influence of Jakob Oetama, one of the founders and owners of the paper, who possessed the habitus of a Javanese man and acted as Chief Editor of the newspaper in the first 40 years. At the same time there was the persistent threat of a ban from the authoritarian regime, and due to the newspaper's Catholic and Chinese roots, there was also verbal and physical threats from intolerant conservative Islamic groups. These factors contributed in creating a culture of fear among *Kompas* journalists. During this development, and despite this fear, *Kompas* also succeeded in transforming itself into an economic giant with the support of the authoritarian regime, rendering the newspaper financially dependent on the power holders. This paradoxical fear of and financial dependency on the regime forced *Kompas* to establish a good relationship with the power holders, in order to maintain its economic advantage, as well as secure political protection. The fact that *Kompas* was a profit-oriented news company that focused on political news, required that the newspaper be close to the power holders, not only to gain access to political information, but also to boost their sales by branding themselves as the newspaper with exclusive access to the palace. This last factor has exacerbated the newspaper's dependency on the state, creating a complex and uneven power relationship with the state as the patron.

After the collapse of the authoritarian regimes, the old habitus developed during the authoritarian past did not immediately vanish from *Kompas*, as the entrenched political economy and cultural forces were still intact. Culturally, this situation reflected the lack of meaningful structural changes within the

*Kompas* newsroom. The pyramidal distribution of power and hierarchy inside the news organizations remained intact, whereby ordinary reporters, who despite holding university degrees, were positioned at the bottom and had limited influence in decision-making processes. In contrast, the editorial elites possessed the privilege of determining the editorial policy, and were therefore in a much stronger position in the daily production of news, with Jakob Oetama at the top of the structure. As the General Director of the newspaper, Jakob also had the privilege of determining the composition of the editorial board and could, at any time, intervene in editorial decisions whenever the interest of the newspaper's owner was under threat. Furthermore, with his extensive experience as a journalist, Jakob also accumulated the symbolic, cultural and economic capital needed to establish his authority, resulting in his nearly unchallenged influence at *Kompas*.

In terms of political economy, the fact that *Kompas* media outlet developed into a giant business group forced the newspaper to remain cautious in its journalistic style to avoid offending any powerful political or business actors, or any social groups, not only for the sheer survival of *Kompas* itself, but also for other business entities under *Kompas* in general. There were also some aspects of the existing legal system which threatened press freedom and discriminated against the rights of the Chinese-Catholic minority group, which further added to the complexity of the problem. The fear of being a minority was persistent, primarily because the problem of intolerance persisted in Indonesia and was even greater in the post-authoritarian era. Most importantly, the nature of patronage relations between *Kompas* and the regime was still preserved, wherein *Kompas* needed the regime for access to information, political protection, as well as to safeguard its economic interest. It is to serve this purpose that *Kompas* has always maintained its close relationship with the power holders and has always kept its polite tone, despite the change in political regimes.

It is in their explanatory power to reveal that both political economy factors as well as cultural factors have intertwined and shaped the habitus of *Kompas*

newspaper, and herein lies the original aspect to this study. In examining this, this study has gone beyond the theoretical dichotomy between political economy as well as cultural approaches, which has become mainstream in journalism literature of post-authoritarian countries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In order to address the theoretical challenge above, this research employs a historical comparative methodological approach, and frames its research perspectives by combining ethnographic fieldwork involving on-site observations in the newsroom, content analyses of the newspaper archive across different political regimes, as well as oral history through in-depth interviews with journalists. These three methods for data gathering are explained below:

## **1.6 Research Method**

### **Research Method 1: On-Site Observation within the Newsroom**

The on-site observations in this research are conducted to capture the dynamic within the newsroom, in order to examine the ideals and practices of current *Kompas* journalists, and to investigate the underlying forces which influence news production at the newspaper. In my fieldwork, the on-site observations lasted for approximately six months, started from the end of January 2014 until early July 2014. During this observation period, I was treated like a *Kompas* journalist, with an identity card which gave me free access to enter the newsroom at any time, and also my own workstation and desk. In regard to my research, which focuses on the relation between the newspaper and the power holders, I was seated with the group of journalists at the political desk, who were in charge of political news. This gave me a chance to interact with them very closely from morning until midnight. Furthermore, I was also allowed to attend all *Kompas* editorial meetings related to the editorial policy. This consisted of daily, weekly and monthly editorial meetings, and the meeting of the ombudsman board, which is also held every month.

The daily editorial meetings took place twice a day: in the morning at 9 am and in the afternoon at 4 pm. The morning editorial meeting aimed to discuss the main prominent issues and stories of the day, which could be considered for the next day's coverage. Meanwhile, the afternoon editorial meeting planned this coverage in more detail, and here editors provided detailed lists of coverage to every desk. This afternoon meeting was referred to as "budgeting". Both meetings were usually attended by members of the editorial board, representatives of the research division, as well as the editor of every desk at the newspaper. However, the number of journalists attending the morning meeting was usually smaller than in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, the weekly meetings took place every Wednesday at around 11 am. During these meetings, an evaluation of the newspaper's performance during the previous week was usually discussed, and sometimes, the agenda was set for the next week. In this meeting, the Human Resource Manager was also present, and she would report on the current progress of newly recruited journalists. In addition, the journalists from the online version of the newspaper, *Kompas.com*, also joined this meeting. It goes without saying that those journalists who were usually present at the daily meetings also joined this weekly meeting, as they were the key people in charge of the daily editorial policy. On very rare occasions, Jakob Oetama, the General Director and owner of the newspaper, also attended this meeting.

The monthly meetings were held by each division in the newsroom, and aimed to establish the agenda for the upcoming month. Since my observation was at the political desk, I attended their meetings, for instance, when they discussed their position during the upcoming Indonesian legislative election, as well as presidential election in 2014. Unlike in the daily or weekly meetings, which were attended by the elites, this meeting was attended by all journalists from the political desk, including new journalists who were still in their probation period. On top of that, the Chief Editor of the newspaper, as well as some members of the editorial boards, were also present.

Furthermore, there was a monthly meeting of the ombudsman board which I could also attend. This board consisted of a handful of experts whose job was to give monthly evaluations of the newspaper's coverage. Therefore, unlike the weekly evaluation performed by journalists, this monthly meeting provided the view of external experts. Among the members of the boards were Daniel Dhakidae –a media scholar who had also previously worked as the Chair of the research division of the newspaper; Ashadi Siregar –a media expert who was also an academic at Gadjah Mada University, a well-known state university in Jogjakarta; Ignatius Haryanto –a senior media researcher who also worked as an academic at the Media Nusantara University, a prominent private university in Jakarta; Faisal Basri –an economist as well as an academic at Indonesian University, Jakarta; and, finally, Nurul Augusta, an environmentalist who was also an activist in the non-government sector. While the first three people focused on the evaluation of media issues, Faisal Basri focused on the evaluation of the economic news of the newspaper. As an environmentalist, Nurul focused on the coverage of environmental issues in the newspaper. During this meeting, the members of the editorial board, as well as representatives of the journalists from the various desks, were also present. Therefore, the evaluation of the ombudsman board could be conveyed directly to the journalists.

Apart from those formal meetings, on some occasions, I also went into the field with *Kompas* journalists. I used this opportunity to watch very closely how the journalists interacted with their news sources, not only in conducting interviews but also in the way they built rapport with their sources. Alongside these formal journalistic activities, I also participated in informal gatherings such as birthday celebrations –which happened quite often, eating dinner together during the fasting month of Ramadan, as well celebrating the anniversary of the newspaper itself. I noticed that within the newsroom, there were many occasions to eat together, thereby providing a moment for socializing. Particularly with the journalists of the political desk, there was a moment to dine together every day. In terms of building trust and friendship with these young journalists, what surprised me the most was that we



sometimes engaged in karaoke singing together - there was a special room for singing karaoke inside the *Kompas* newsroom.

In addition to the activities above, I also spent my first three months living in the house of a mid-level *Kompas* journalist. During my stay, he often shared the gossip inside the newsroom with me, and gave his personal views about it, as well as expressing his satisfactions and disappointments working at *Kompas*. It is important to note here that even though my on-site observation formally ended in July 2014, I was still allowed to come back to the newsroom for additional on-site observations and interviews. The journalists said that I was now a member of the large *Kompas* family and that their door was always open to me, so I used this opportunity. I attended the monthly meetings of the ombudsman board in August and September 2014, and on June 28, 2015, I was present at the celebration of the golden anniversary of the newspaper: a historical, significant moment in the history of the Indonesian media, as *Kompas* celebrated being the longest running newspaper in Indonesia, operating for for over half a century.

### **Research Method 2: Content Analysis of the Newspaper Archives**

The ultimate result of the process of news production within a daily newspaper is news in its printed format. In this regard, the newspaper archive is seen as a cultural artifact; an integral part of cultural production. As a cultural artifact, newspaper archives represent the way a group of people communicates to the world, including to the power holders, through language, symbols, or pictures. Furthermore, while the on-site observations mostly served as a tool to look at the present, a content analysis provides a tool to examine both the present and, more importantly, the past. The underlying assumption is that the newspaper content reflects the way journalists interact with power holders over time and across various regimes.

Hsieh and Shanon (2005) propose three kinds of approaches used in the current application of content analysis method: conventional, directed, and summative. The conventional approach suggests that the categories for coding are directly

derived from data. Therefore, this approach is highly inductive and is usually used to explain phenomena in which the number of existing theories or literature is very limited. The ultimate result is a description of a certain phenomenon. The directed approach uses theories or findings of previous research as a starting point for categorization and coding. This approach is deductive, but the key building blocks are derived from the naturalistic paradigm. This approach therefore uses theory for guidance and aims to validate or extend it. The summative approach conducts an analysis using counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, alongside interpretation of the underlying context. In this approach, a researcher chooses certain keywords based on her interest or on the literature, and then counts the frequency of the keywords within certain texts. The purpose of this approach is to explore an idea or concept.

In my research, these three aforementioned approaches are combined according to the specific aims of the particular chapter. For instance, in chapter 5 which examines the role of watchdog journalism, this study uses the directed approach by approaching the content of the newspaper using the perspective of watchdog journalism theory, and developing categories based on previous studies or research. The categorization will then be used to analyze *Kompas'* content on corruption across different regimes from 1965-2015, and thereby determine whether it performed a watchdog function. Meanwhile, in chapter 6 which explores the newspaper's position during the 2014 presidential election, this research uses a combination of the directed approach and summative approach. On one hand, this chapter uses the theory of media neutrality to examine *Kompas'* position in the election, but on the other, it also counts the amount of *Kompas* coverage given to both candidates in order to quantitatively see the degree of balance in their coverage. In the rest of the chapters, this study uses the conventional approach of content analysis by taking a direct inference from the text. Above all, a content analysis of the newspaper is the interpretation of text in its socio-political context, and it is therefore an integral part of this study and will appear in every chapter. A more detailed elaboration of the content analysis will also be given in each chapter.

### **Research Method 3: In-depth Interviews as Oral History**

Finally, in addition to the on-site observation as well as content analyses, this research also conducts in-depth interviews involving oral history as a method of data gathering. For this study, interviewing is vital to gaining an understanding of the ideals and values of *Kompas* journalists over time. First, it is used to determine the ideals and values of the journalists, and how they apply them in their daily journalistic practice. Secondly, in-depth interviews indicate how journalists conduct their work both in the current era and in the past, which captures the changes and continuities in their ideals and practices. Finally, but no less importantly, in-depth interviews are instrumental to understanding the underlying reasons behind journalistic practices, including why some ideals and practices are preserved and others transformed within the newsroom. In particular, this research will employ a specific method of in-depth interviewing, namely an oral-historical method.

As explained by Leavy (2011: 1), oral history is a method of qualitative interviewing that stresses participants' perspectives, and generally includes multiple open-ended interview sessions with each participant. He explains that the main purposes of oral history are: (1) to fill a historical record; (2) to understand people's subjective experience of historical events; (3) to understand people's subjective experience of historical periods or periods of social change; (4) to understand people's subjective experience of current or recent events; (5) to contribute to the understanding of topical areas; and (6) to gain community experiential knowledge (Leavy, 2011: 19-20).

Oral history has its root in anthropological research, which is often used in field research to access the experience of people living in the field sites. This method is based on oral traditions of knowledge transmission, usually family or community knowledge that is transferred from generation to generation. Furthermore, regarding the ontological assumption of research methods, oral history assumes that meaning is not externally "out there" waiting to be discovered. Instead, narratives are constructed and interpreted through the process of interviewing. Therefore, oral history believes that social knowledge

does not exist independently of the research process, but instead, it is created through the process. Accordingly, as a logical consequence of this ontological assumption, this method believes in the epistemological assumption about the collaborative relationships between researcher and participant in the process of data collection. This means the researcher is not seen as the sole authority in the process of knowledge production. Furthermore, it relies on the highly inductive interview format and claims that no two interview sessions are the same.

In order to gain an understanding of the ideals and values of *Kompas* journalists over time via interviews, three groups of journalists became the informants for this study:

1. Senior journalists who had experience of working in both eras.  
The first group of participants in this study are senior journalists who experienced both the New Order era and the current Reformation era. They are particularly important to help me understand the beliefs, values, attitudes, ideas, and language they use as journalists, and also to hear their stories and experiences in dealing with the power holders during the two eras. In addition, by having them as informants, I wish to understand the meaning behind their experiences. This group of participants are living witnesses of two different parts of history, and therefore these interviews can shed light on whether they perceive change is occurring, and if so, to what extent.
2. Retired or inactive journalists who had experience of working in the New Order era.  
As explained by Leavy (2011:2), one of the advantages of using oral history as a method is that it allows us to hear the views of marginalized groups in a certain culture. While history is usually written by the rulers, oral history gives serious attention to marginalized voices. Therefore, I also interview retired journalists who worked during the New Order, and those who were fired from their jobs, as both are seen as representatives of marginalized voices in the *Kompas* institution. The aim of interviewing this particular group is to understand their beliefs, values, attitudes, ideas and the

language that they use as journalists, and also to hear their stories and experiences in dealing with the power holders in the New Order era, and their interpretations of these experiences.

3. The new generation of journalists with experience of working during the Reformation era.

The last group of participants in this study are the current journalists who only started working at the newspaper after the fall of Suharto on May 21, 1998. Their presence is important to capture the beliefs, values, attitudes and ideas from the latest generation of journalists working in the current Reformation era, and to understand their experiences in dealing with the power holders, and their interpretations of these experiences.

The interviews were conducted from the time I started my fieldwork in July 2013, when I arrived at the newsroom for the first time to obtain permission to conduct on-site observation within the newsroom. They were conducted most intensively when I was in the newsroom from January 2014 until July 2014, though they were some ongoing ones after I had left the newsroom. These were with retired journalists whom I visited in Jakarta in 2015 and 2016, as well as in Jogjakarta in 2015. In addition, as I am writing this book in the Netherlands, I also conducted some interviews through telephone calls to *Kompas* journalists in Jakarta. On top of all this, as I was already considered a member of the *Kompas* family, I continued to visit the newsroom every time I went home to Indonesia, where informal interviews inevitably took place. Therefore, the in-depth interviews were conducted from 2013 to 2017.

### **1.7 Structure of the Book**

Because my intention is to investigate the biography of *Kompas* newspaper with a special emphasis on the changes and continuities of its relationship with power holders across different political regimes, this book is structured into historical sequences, starting from the time of the birth of the newspaper to the current period. Meanwhile, in order to reveal the dynamics within the

newsroom in the daily production of news and to capture the tension between ideals and practices, this book is divided into three main parts.

After a preliminary chapter explaining the justification for this study, as well as research objectives, theoretical frameworks and research methods, the first part: ***the Kompas Way***, will describe the ideals and values of *Kompas* journalists and explain why they embrace and adhere to them. This part consists of two chapters: Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. Chapter 2 will explain the socio-historical background that contextualize the origins of the newspaper. It will explain the fear that has been a running theme throughout the newspaper's history. On one hand, *Kompas* was established under an authoritarian political regime and operated during its first three decades under the threat of being banned. Thus, there is a tangible and persistent fear of being banned by power holders. On the other hand, there is a fear of being attacked by hardline Muslim groups due to the fact that the newspaper was founded by a minority Catholic-Chinese group. In the course of the newspaper's history, *Kompas* has experienced both being banned by the regimes, as well as attacks from Islamic groups, leaving historical trauma in the minds of the journalists.

Chapter 3 will describe the profile of *Kompas* journalists and explain that the journalistic values of the newspaper are very much inspired by Jakob Oetama: the founder, owner, as well the General Director of the newspaper. Jakob's overwhelming influence on *Kompas* is not only down to him occupying these three important positions, but also because he successfully ensured *Kompas'* survival during the regime changes. In addition, he made the newspaper one of the biggest and most influential in the country. Jakob's journalistic style is characterized by a strong sense of indirectness, cautiousness and politeness, and this has successfully saved the newspaper from the rage of the authorities. It is noteworthy that this style of journalism is strongly influenced by the background of Jakob, who was born and raised as a member of the Javanese gentry. In turn, this style of journalism has been socialized by, and internalized amongst, *Kompas* journalists across generations, both through the everyday news making process, and through the daily social interaction within the newsroom.

The second part, *Ideals and Pragmatism in Practice*, concerns how these ideals and values are being carried out in practice by the journalists. This part consists of three chapters: chapter 4, chapter 5 and chapter 6. Chapter 4 discusses the practices of self-censorship within the newspaper and explains how *rasa*, a key value in Javanese culture, has provided a basis for these practices. I will further demonstrate in this chapter that even though *rasa* is a cultural concept, its implementation in the self-censoring of *Kompas* journalists is compelled by the need for survival against the threat of being banned by the regime. In turn, *rasa* based self-censorship has also provided a useful strategy for journalists to preserve themselves from the rage of Islamic groups in Indonesia, which could flare up at any time, not only because of their coverage, but more importantly, also due to the newspaper's Catholic-ness. Therefore, to some extent, the practice of self-censorship actually reflects the hidden political and economic interest of *Kompas* journalists as a minority group in Indonesia.

In line with this, in chapter 5, I demonstrate how Javanese values have been significant in the practice of watchdogging. Presenting the results of a content analysis of the newspaper's coverage on corruption over 50 years, I clearly show that the stories on corruption rely heavily on official sources and are mainly framed in a legal theme. This means that they do not take the initiative to unearth any misconduct of the power holders, but merely report on cases of corruption already processed by the legal apparatus. Thus, the newspaper mainly functions as a megaphone of the legal officials. By doing so, it still strives to hold those in power to account, while at the same time, minimizing any direct confrontation with them. In this chapter, I characterize this practice of watchdog journalism at *Kompas* as a "polite watchdog", to show that they do not actually function as an agent of moral guardianship or monitor the actions of power holders as is understood in Western conceptions.

The need to build a close relationship with the power holders is also reflected in the newspaper's position during the Indonesian presidential election in 2014, as explored in Chapter 6. Amid close and fierce political competition between the two candidates running for the presidency, there was a strong wave of political

polarization within Indonesian society. During the highly charged, emotive campaigns waged by followers of both candidates, there was intense tension between opposition supporters involving not only political parties, but also civil society in general. This was reflected in the Indonesian media, which were divided into two camps: those who supported Prabowo and those who supported Jokowi. *Kompas*, however, decided to remain neutral in their editorial policy by not siding with either candidate. As demonstrated in my second content analysis, this effort to be neutral was successfully achieved through giving equal space, in quantitative terms, to the two campaigning candidates. Nevertheless, in terms of tone, *Kompas* was in practice more inclined towards Jokowi than to Prabowo. This paradoxical mix between neutrality and partiality was a reflection of the collision between the idealism to support democracy, and pragmatism to stay close to whichever candidate won the election.

In the last part of this book I will show that even though the newspaper belongs to a minority group in Indonesia, they have been very influential over the power holders across different political regimes. In chapter 7, I will present three case studies from three different political regimes where *Kompas* managed to influence the power holders in some crucial matter. Therefore, while there is a compromise between idealism and pragmatism in their journalistic practice as described previously, the newspaper has managed to show their commitment to defending public interest and in supporting democracy.

Finally, Chapter 8 brings together the major findings of this research by providing an answer to the research questions proposed in this introduction. I will also make a number of suggestions based on these findings about what the story of *Kompas* tells us, not only about the relationship between the media and power holders in Indonesia, but also the relationship between the media and power holders in post-authoritarian countries in general. Therefore, I will situate my findings in the context of the current research on media and politics, by comparing the case of *Kompas* to similar cases in other countries. To close this chapter, I will discuss the limitation of this research and suggest a possible topic for further research.