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

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Cover Page



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Chapter 5

**Polite Watchdog:
Kompas' Coverage on Corruption**

*“The classical formula of a watchdog can’t be delivered in black or white. The representation needs to come with tolerance (**tenggang rasa**) and self-awareness (**tahu diri**). This means that we have to be critical while showing empathy to the person we are criticizing at the same time. This can be manifested as straightforward (**tegas**) at one time, and indirect (**miyar miyur**) at another time. This flexibility reflects our wisdom. This wisdom is like that of a teacher who never forces (**memaksa**), but rather, suggests. Kompas is in the middle with **ngono yo ngono ning ojo ngono, apike ngene bae** (“you are free to behave like that, but behave like this instead”), including in distinguishing its dependency and independency.”*

~Jakob Oetama, Keep the Voice amid Noise, Kompas, June 28, 2015

It was an evening in the fasting month of Ramadan, on July 18, 2014. The ombudsman board of *Kompas* was conducting its monthly meeting with the senior editors of the newspaper. This ombudsman board consisted of a handful of experts who have the responsibility to evaluate the newspaper’s coverage on a monthly basis. Therefore, unlike the weekly evaluation performed by the journalists of the newspaper, this monthly meeting provided the view of the experts from an external perspective. Among the members of the boards were: Daniel Dhakidae –a media scholar who 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 prominent state university in Jogjakarta; Ignatius Haryanto –a senior media researcher who also worked as an academic at the newly established private Media Nusantara University in Jakarta; Faisal Basri –an economist as well as an academic at the illustrious Indonesian University in Jakarta; and finally, Nurul Augusta, an environmentalist who is also an activist in the non-governmental sector focusing on environmental issues. While the first three members focus on the evaluation of media issues, Faisal Basri focuses on the evaluation of the economic news of the newspaper. As an environmentalist, Nurul focuses on the coverage of the environmental issues in the newspaper. During this meeting, the members of the editorial board of the newspaper as well as the representatives of journalists of the relevant desks were all present. Therefore, the evaluation of the ombudsman board could be conveyed directly to the journalists, who could follow-up with a discussion afterwards.

The meeting was held in a conference room, on the third floor of the *Kompas* building on South Palmerah Street. The initial purpose of the meeting was to evaluate and reflect upon *Kompas*' coverage of the presidential election, which had just been concluded on July 9, 2014. Inside the room, the members of the ombudsman board were joined by the editorial elites: Sulastro (Vice General Director of the newspaper), Tryas Kuncahyono, Randu Rahardjo, Sutta Dharmasaputra and J Osdar. As with any other *Kompas* meeting, the discussion was running in a casual and relaxed manner. We could hear joking and laughter emanating from the room, as if the meeting were a warm family reunion.

However, approaching the hour of the sunset Maghrib prayer, the supposedly relaxed meeting suddenly turned heated. The debate was triggered by the protest of Faisal Basri, one of the members the ombudsman board with expertise in economics. He was distressed that his statement mentioning the name of the entrepreneur, Muhammad Riza Chalid, whom he believed was

involved in a corruption scandal on oil production in Indonesia, had not been covered by *Kompas*. The statement was made in an interview with a *Kompas* journalist after a seminar discussing the economic program of one of the then presidential candidates: Jokowi Widodo. Emil Salim, the former Environment Minister under Suharto, who had shared the panel with Faisal, had also mentioned the name of Muhammad Riza Chalid in connection with the scandal. However, the daily had not published this statement by Emil either. In an article dated July 3, 2014, entitled: “*Emil Salim mentions the existence of oil mafia*”, the paper only wrote a story saying that Emil acknowledged that there was an oil mafia in Indonesia (*mafia migas*), but it did not report the names of its members.

From the tone of his voice, it was obvious that the absence of this detail in the coverage had really upset Faisal. Faisal argued that it would not harm the paper to mention a person’s name, if they are merely quoting someone else. He confronted the journalists at the meeting by demanding whether they doubted him as a credible source who has authority of the issue, or if the omission was because they were too cowardly to write the name. The concerns of Faisal obviously demanded an answer. In an attempt to provide one, another journalist was invited to come into the meeting room. His name was Suranto. It was Suranto²⁵ who served as the Chief Editor (*kepala desk*) of the economic desk, and was one of the authors of the article²⁶. With a smile on his face, Suranto explained to those in the room that he had a different opinion to Faisal’s. He believed that Emil had not actually mentioned the name of Muhammad Riza Chalid at all.²⁷ However, he admitted that Faisal had

²⁵ Suranto was not present at the meeting at the beginning, because the meeting was initially dedicated to discussing the political coverage of the paper, which is the remit of the political desk.

²⁶ There are some pages in *Kompas* that are dedicated to specially covering current economic affairs.

²⁷ It is interesting to note that in the news coverage of Indonesian online media, *Detik.Com*, it was reported that Emil Salim did mention the initial of the person involved in the oil

mentioned the name. He went further by explaining that even if Emil had revealed the name, it was not possible for him to publish this, as there was no legal evidence suggesting Muhammad's involvement in the corruption scandal.

This statement of Suranto triggered more debate in the room between two opposing groups. The first group argued that the editorial policy of the economic desk was understandable. Journalists such as Asep Setiawan and Sularto argued that mentioning the name of a reputable person in a scandal of corruption could damage the person's reputation unnecessarily, especially if there was no strong evidence to back it up. Interestingly, though, they acknowledged that it was a public secret that Muhammad was involved in the scandal. The second group, led by journalists such as Ryaas Cahaya and Poppy, argued that it was correct to quote that statement, as it is the source who is responsible for the statement - not the publisher.

The debate did not seem to be nearing an end as night was drawing in, and the time for breaking the fast for Muslim journalists had arrived. Therefore, those in the room agreed that they would discuss the matter more at the next monthly meeting of the ombudsman board. In particular, they planned to discuss whether the daily had carried out its function as a critical watchdog of the power holders when it came to the story of corruption. More generally, they would also discuss whether the paper should even aspire to conduct investigative journalism, or seek to conduct investigations into the wrongdoings of the power holders. Ignatius Haryanto, one of the ombudsman members,

corruption scandal. He intimated that the initial of the person was "R" and that he was of Pakistani descendency. The article was entitled: "*Emil Salim Confirmed that there is Oil Mafia*", dated July 2, 2014. (<http://finance.detik.com/energi/2626171/emil-salim-benarkan-ada-mafia-minyak-di-ri>). More interestingly, the statement of Emil Salim as well as Faisal Basri were reported more completely in another online media, *Tribunnews.com*. In the article entitled "*The Involvement of Oil Mafia is Revealed*", it was reported that Emil as well as Faisal mentioned the initial of the mafia member. <http://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2014/07/04/keterlibatan-mafia-migas-dalam-pilpres-semakin-terkuak>

suggested that the title for that next meeting should be “*Jurnalisme Investigasi Yang Pas Untuk Kompas* (‘Investigative journalism that suits Kompas culture’).” The proposal brought smiles to the faces of those in the rooms. There seemed to be a mutual, unspoken understanding among them that there were cultural constraints to applying the principle of watchdog or investigative journalism at the newspaper. This was not the kind of topic that the journalists discussed with ease, but despite this, no one in the room disagreed with Haryanto’s title.

Having been in the newsroom for almost half a year by the time that meeting occurred, I was aware that something extremely interesting was being debated. As I returned home, I jotted down some questions in my field notes. Apart from the debate following the protest by Faisal Basri above, I wondered about how the newspaper had actually been covering the story on corruption so far? Had the coverage lived up to the idea of watchdog or investigative journalism? Furthermore, how exactly had the news on corruption been manufactured in the newsroom? Does the news-making process implement or undermine the idea of watchdog journalism at *Kompas*? Finally, given the fact that the newspaper has operated for more than 50 years, does the character of the corruption coverage change or persist across time and under different political regimes? What are the underlying forces behind the changes and continuities?

This chapter will argue that *Kompas* journalists do not implement this watchdog role according to the western ideal. This is because, in the first place, they do not actually aspire to carry out investigative journalism, which focuses on exposing the misconduct of public officials. The absence of investigative journalism can be seen in their coverage on corruption, which relies heavily on official sources and largely restricts the coverage to discussing ongoing court cases of corruption. In other words, *Kompas* rarely endeavors to unearth the misconduct of the power holders of its own initiative. This is reflected in the absence of a special investigative desk and the lack of journalists tasked with exposing cases of corruption. The way the daily covers news on corruption is simply by sending their journalists to attend the press release from two main

institutions: the Indonesian Special Commission for Corruption Eradication (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi/KPK*) and the Special Court for Corruption Trial (*Pengadilan Tindak Pidana Korupsi/Pengadilan Tipikor*). Interestingly, this way of producing and covering news on corruption in the current era is not much different compared to the way *Kompas* covered corruption during the New Order. There are some possible explanations for this. Under Suharto, this tepid reporting of corruption cases was motivated by the need to avoid being banned. Nowadays, it is to maintain political connections, avoid legal suits and due to financial considerations. Furthermore, the absence of the tradition of investigative journalism in the past has also formulated certain cultural constraints which prevent the idea from being implemented in the recent era.

The argument above will be explored in the following section, where firstly I will discuss contesting theories on watchdog journalism. These theories serve as a lens in which to analyze the form of watchdogging being practiced at *Kompas*. The next section discusses the design of my content analysis, which examines the newspaper's coverage of corruption scandals throughout its existence, spanning more than 50 years. I will then present the findings of this content analysis, followed by a discussion of the dynamics of the newsroom in the manufacturing process of news on corruption. The final part of this chapter is a discussion of the underlying factors that influence the watchdogging practices of the newspaper, and situate it in the broader context of journalism practice around the globe. The chapter will close with a conclusion and some predictions about the future of watchdog journalism at *Kompas*.

5.1 Conceptualizing Watchdog Journalism

In order to examine whether or not the journalists aspire to, and actually implement, the idea of watchdog journalism, a clear definition of the concept is inevitably required. In this regard, this study follows the conceptualization of most media scholars who suggests that watchdog journalism is actually synonymous with the concept of investigative journalism (Coronel, 2010; Kalogeropoulos et.al., 2015; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007; Lateef and Sherlock,

2003; Starkman, 2004; Tong, 2011). These scholars believe that both watchdog journalism and investigative journalism are equally characterized by the exposure of the misconduct of power holders at the initiative of media workers, in order to hold them to account. The tone of the coverage is, therefore, critical of or adversarial towards those in power.

Coronel (2010), for instance, defines watchdog journalism as “*exposure journalism*”. She believes that unearthing the misconduct of those in power is at the heart of watchdogging activities. In an eloquent description, she suggests:

Watchdog journalism is exposure journalism. The ethical standards of the journalist or the quality of the reporting may be high or low. What distinguishes watchdogging is the exposure of wrongdoing in the public interest. Whatever motivates the journalist or the news organization that publishes a muckraking report is not the issue; what matters is that the reporting warns citizens about those who are doing them harm and empowers them with the information they need. (2010: 112-113)

In line with Coronel, Kovach and Rosenstiel believe that playing the role of watchdog means that the media monitor the power holders, thereby “discovering the usual cheats in the great games of the Kingdom.” (2007: 141).

The definition of watchdog as suggested by the scholars above is similar to the definition of investigative journalism. Scholars like De Burgh (2000), and Lateef and Sherlock (2003), define investigative journalism as the discovering or exposing of corrupt officials by shining a light on their activities for the attention of the public. Therefore, it is no surprise that scholars like Coronel (2010) argue that investigative journalism is the most perfect manifestation of watchdogging. Jingrong Tong (2011) even uses the term “watchdog journalism” interchangeably with “investigative journalism”. It is also important to note that concerning investigative journalism, most scholars suggest the originality of the journalistic work, which is based on the initiative of the journalists and

does not simply rely on the investigation of those in authority, to be another characteristic of this journalistic form. This notion has been the generally accepted theory on watchdog journalism.

Following the theorization above, a media is seen as living up to watchdog journalism if they expose the wrongdoings of the power holders, based on their own initiative, from an adversarial position to those in power. It is this definition which will be used as a theoretical framework to analyze *Kompas*' coverage on corruption, as well as examine the manufacturing process of its news on corruption.

5.2 The Coverage on Corruption: a Content Analysis

In this section, I will examine *Kompas* newspaper's coverage of corruption through a qualitative content analysis, and here I outline the method and methodology to be used. Referring to Hsieh and Shannon, qualitative content analysis is defined as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (2005: 1278). Meanwhile, the approach that is used in this qualitative method is the *directed* approach, meaning that I use the theory on watchdog journalism outlined above as a starting point for categorization and coding. Using the theoretical framework discussed above, I will pay particular attention to whether (1) the coverage on corruption exposes the wrongdoing of the individual or power holders; (2) the coverage is based on journalists' own initiative, and (3) whether the coverage has an adversarial position towards the corruption suspect as well as to the practice of corruption, or in other words, whether the coverage presents the practice of corruption (and the corruption suspect) in a negative light. In this research, factors number 1 and 2 will be seen as manifested in the coverage when fulfilling two criteria: *sources* and *themes*. Factor 3 will be determined by the *tone*.

Criteria 1: News Sources

The sources of the news will be seen as meeting points number 1 and 2 when the sources used are whistleblowers, archival documents and journalists' own observations. Deborah Potter defines "source" as a person or document who can give information about a certain topic, including from first hand observation, if he also witnesses the news event (2006: 16). She further points out that there is no single source which can provide all the complete information. Therefore, it is necessary for a reporter to verify by having multiple sources in order to have a credible story. This means that the journalist does not rely solely on official sources, such as government officials or legal apparatus. The underlying assumption is that such initiatives to conduct exposure journalism will be possible only if the journalists do not solely follow the official version of the corruption scandal, and instead, they try to find alternative sources such as whistleblowers or archival documents that have been hidden by the authorities. With regard to sources, Shoemaker and Reese (1996: 46) argue that the heavy reliance on the official sources when reporting on news about presidents, ministers as well as other government apparatus reflects that the newspaper is legitimizing the government, rather than holding it to account.

Criteria 2: The Themes

In terms of themes, factors number 1 and 2 are seen as manifested in the coverage when the theme of the story is a whistleblower or exposure theme. In this regard, there are five potential themes which I analyze in the texts²⁸: first of all, the legal theme (**L**). An article will be categorized as having a predominantly legal theme when it is framed in the legal narrative by covering the ongoing judicial process. Some of the phrases that might be found are: corruption (*korupsi*), judge (*hakim*), attorney (*jaksa*), lawyer (*pengacara*), allegation (*dugaan*), witness (*saksi*), punishment (*vonis*), graft (*suap*), bribes,

²⁸ Any article that does not fit any of these five themes is classified as 'Other'. See appendix 2.

suspect (*tersangka*), investigation (*penyelidikan*), National Commission on Corruption Combat (KPK), law (*hukum*), jail (*penjara*), bill (*undang-undang*).

Second, there is the guilty man theme (**GM**). An article will be categorized under this theme if corruption is framed as the story of a guilty person with a criminal background, making him the suspect of corruption. Some of the phrases which might be found are: bad politician (*politisi busuk*), criminal (*penjahat*), dishonest (*tidak jujur*), corruptor (*koruptor*), political mafia (*mafia politik*), nation betrayer (*pengkhianat bangsa*).

The third theme is the civil society organizations movement theme (**CSO**). An article will be categorized as predominantly CSOs when it is framed as the movement of the civil society to combat corruption. Some potential phrases are: corruption (*korupsi*), demonstration (*demonstrasi*), protest (*protes*), action (*aksi*), to fight (*melawan*), refuse (*menolak*), the citizen (*warga*), the students (*mahasiswa*), the mass organization (*ormas*), the civil society organization (*LSM*) and movement (*gerakan*).

Fourthly, there is the whistleblower/exposure theme (**WB**). An article will be seen as using a whistleblower theme when it tells the story of an insider leaking the existence of corruption in his own institution. Some of the phrases that might be appear are: insider (*orang dalam*), expose (*membongkar*), document from the inside (*dokumen dari dalam*), and bank note (*rekening bank*).

The last theme is the anti-corruption theme (**AC**). An article will be categorized under anti-corruption if the story is framed as an anti-corruption campaign or campaign for corruption eradication without specifically presenting any particular case of corruption. Observable phrases are: corruption levels get worse (*tingkat korupsi makin parah*), corruption causes state's lost (*korupsi merugikan Negara*), and corruption threatens democracy (*korupsi mengancam demokrasi*).

Criteria 3: The Tone

Meanwhile, factor number 3 of the coverage to be investigated (the adversarial position) will be determined from the *tone* of the coverage, by examining whether the incident of corruption is reported in a favorable or unfavorable tone. In conjunction with the themes mentioned above, a story is seen as having a negative tone when it is framed in the guilty man theme (GM), legal theme (L), civil society organization theme (CSO) and whistleblower theme (WB). This is because in all of these themes, corruption practices as well as the perpetrator of corruption is seen as violating the social norm.

Therefore, in summary, the content analysis of this research will look at three different categories: *news sources*, *the frame* and *the tone* of coverage, as an analytical tool to examine the idea of watchdog journalism. In this regard, a news story will be seen as functioning in a watchdog role when factors number 1 (exposes wrongdoings of power holders), 2 (based on journalist's initiative) and 3 (journalist's adversarial position) are manifested in the text.

The Periods of Analysis

Having described the indicators to be used to examine whether a news item on corruption is living up to the ideal of watchdog journalism, this part will explain the periods for the content analysis. In order to answer the question whether or not the coverage on corruption has changed along with the changes of the political regimes, I will look at the news on corruption in three different periods: firstly, the Old Order regime under Sukarno's Presidency, which lasted from 1959-1966. The second period is the New Order regime under Suharto's presidency, which lasted from 1967-1998. Those two regimes are the authoritarian regimes which in total ruled Indonesia for 39 years. The last period is the reformation era, which is characterized by the radical changes in the political environment from an authoritarian to democratic political system.

Units of Analysis

Since the purpose of the content analysis is to examine the way news coverage on the misconduct of the power holders are framed, the units of analysis in the

content analysis are only articles that cover the misconduct of the power holders themselves, or to make it clear, all articles that cover the practice of corruption of the power holders. In this case, this research used the database of *Kompas* newspaper, which has archived every edition since its very first publication, until the most recent editions. This database is provided by the research division of the newspaper and is available online, at *Pusat Informasi Kompas* (Center of Kompas' information). This website is equipped with a special search engine which enables the researcher to find any kind of article by typing some key words. In order to find the articles on corruption, I typed the word "korupsi" (corruption) in the search engine, where it then displayed the number of articles dealing with this in any given year. By doing this, I could identify the quantity of articles dealing with corruption every year.

Sampling Units

By typing the key word "*korupsi*" (corruption), it appears that there are hundreds of articles that mention corruption every single year. That means there are thousands of articles containing the word "corruption" over the past 50 years (1965-2015). It is impossible for me to analyze these thousands of articles, considering the time constraint and resources for this piece of research. Therefore, in addition to selecting some distinctive years for each political regime, this study will also use research sampling by referring to the theory of Stempel (in Krippendorf, 2004: 123). This is a theory of sampling commonly used in communications research, which believes that in the analysis of a newspaper's content, an increasing sample size of more than 12 will not make any significant difference to the result. Stempel, who has conducted an exploration of effective and efficient sample sizes, has found that 12 issues from two consecutive weeks of a daily newspaper can effectively represent the content of an entire year. In this regard, he operationalized two consecutive weeks from Monday to Saturday (without Sunday) in any given year. Based on this consecutive weekly period, he conducted an experiment with 12, 18, 24, and 48 issues, and found that the results are not significantly different. Therefore, this research only examines 12 articles from each selected year. It is

noteworthy, however, that during the time when the research was conducted, *Kompas'* database of articles from 1965 to 1994 were not yet fully accessible. They were only available in PDF format and had not yet been filed into a systematic sequence. In order to read them, I had to use a computer at the office of PIK Kompas. Therefore, due to this restriction, instead of rigorously following Stempel, this research selected the first 12 articles that could be found during my visit to the PIK Kompas. This means that my research applies Stempel by extension or by analogy. Furthermore, to maintain the consistency in the way I collected the data, I also selected articles from 1994 onwards in the same manner of data collection.

The analyzed years were selected based on their significance to each political regime: the Old Order (1965), the New Order (1967, 1971, 1974, 1978, 1983, 1994, and 1998) and the Reformation era (2000, 2003, 2009, and 2015). Therefore, in total, the sample of the content analysis will be 144 articles, consisting of 12 articles from the Old Order, 84 articles from the New Order and 48 articles from the Reformation era. Further elaboration of these selected years will be explained in the next part of this chapter.

5.3 Coverage on Corruption during the Old Order

The Selected Years

As explained in the chapter 2, the Old Order period actually began in July 1959, when Sukarno declared the beginning of guided democracy. This period ended on March 11, 1966, when Suharto took over power through Supersemar (Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret), which literally means "*Letter of Instruction on the 11th of March*". In that letter, Sukarno signed a paper in which he gave a mandate to Suharto to stabilize Indonesian politics and resolve the security situation, following the killings of seven generals in the night of September 30, 1965. However, the newspaper was not formed until June 28, 1965. Therefore, this research only conducted content analysis on *Kompas'* coverage on corruption during the last 10 months of Sukarno's presidency (June 1965 – March 1966).

Furthermore, following the rule of Stempel as mentioned above, this research selected 12 articles from the year of 1965.

The Findings

From the samples, it can be seen that in 1965, the news sources of *Kompas'* coverage on corruption are as follow:

Table 1
News Sources of Corruption Coverage 1965

Num	Sources	Percentage
1	Legal apparatus	47.1%
2	Government official	17.6%
3	Corruption suspects	17.6%
4	Civil Society activists	11.8%
5	Whistleblower	-
6	Document	-
7	Observation	-
8	Unclear source	5.8%
	N	17 sources

From the table above, it can be seen that most of the sources are legal which make up 47.1%. Legal apparatus are all persons who play a role in the legal proceeding of a corruption case, from the preliminary investigation (*penyelidikan*), the investigation (*penyidikan*), the prosecution (*penuntutan*), advocacy or legal defense (*pembelaan*) to the punishment (*penjatuhan hukuman*). So this legal apparatus refers to all the people involved in the process of a corruption trial in the court, such as the police, prosecutor, general attorney, judge, lawyers, and witness. The second most cited sources are governmental, such as the governor of Jakarta and other government officials, which provides 17.6% of the news source. This percentage is equal to that of

sources from corruption suspects (17.6%), whose statements are cited during the legal process. Considering that the legal apparatus, government officials, as well as the statement of corruption suspects during the trial all portray official versions, therefore, it can be said that 82.3% of the cited sources are official sources. Meanwhile, there are no sources which reflect journalists' initiative to expose corruption such as whistleblowers, documentary or journalists' own observations. Therefore, it shows that there is next to no coverage which is based on the journalists' own initiative.²⁹

In terms of themes, or the way a story on corruption is framed, the content analysis finds as follows:

Table 2
Theme of Corruption Coverage in 1965³⁰

No	Theme	Percentage
1	Legal	50%
2	Guilty Man	8.3%
2	CSO movement	8.3%
4	Whistleblower	-
5	Anti-Corruption	33.3%
	N	12 articles

From the table above, it can be seen that most of the articles convey information in the legal frame (50%), indicating that the news mainly reports on the legal processes in the case of a corruption suspect. An example of such an

²⁹ In this research, with regard to initiative, news stories that simply report the story of civil society group's protest is not seen as being a journalist's own observation.

³⁰ For coding results, please see table 1, appendix 2.

article framed in the legal theme is entitled “*Corruption Perpetrators Get Punished*” dated August 31, 1965, as follows:

Corruption Perpetrators Get Punished

Padang State Court, in its corruption trial on Monday, punished all of the suspects in the case of corruption of Lebak Buaja bridge development, with a sentence as long as 3 years 11 months and 23 days in total. The corruption suspects were Dalmin Kasimin BRE, Danis Katar and Sjahrun Sirun who got, in sequence, 1 year 5 months 23 days, 1 year 4 months and 1 year 2 month. Each has been in jail since 7 March 1964.

Those suspects were accused of committing 7 kinds of violation against the law: creation of a fake document, involvement in the tender of a project which should have been under their supervision as civil servants, theft, larceny of wood supplies, bolts, of stone, and embezzlement of funds to the tune of more than 1.7 million rupiahs.(Kompas, August 31, 1965)

Furthermore, as can be seen in table 2 above, 8.3% of articles are framed in the CSO’s movement theme, showing that the coverage tells the story of activists demanding that a corruption case is seen to by the authorities, or that a corruption suspect is prosecuted by the attorney. An example of this type of article is as follows:

PKI Stole 700 Million Rupiahs, North Sumatera and Mass Organizations Demand the Liquidation of PKI

The union of counter-revolution eradication in the north Sumatera level, consisting of political parties and mass organization affiliated to them such as: PNI, NU, PERTI, IPKI, PARKINDO, the Catholic Party, and

Golkar, as well as 58 other mass organizations, are conveying their intention to ask that the government to liquidate PKI... The statement was triggered by the involvement of PKI members in the stockpiling of rice and corruption in a public plantation company to the amount of 700 million rupiahs. (Kompas, October 27, 1965)

Similar to the CSO's movement theme, 8.3% of the coverage focuses on the guilty man theme. This means that the story portrays the corruption suspect as a criminal or as someone who is guilty in a corruption case. It can be seen in this following article:

M.H. Lukman Embezzled 250 million of People's Money

Another piece of evidence has been found on how low the mentality of the Communist party (PKI) leader is. They always point their fingers to others as counter revolutionaries, feudalists, capitalist bureaucrats, but they actually are all of these things themselves. This can be seen in the case of PKI housing scandal, involving the minister, as well as Vice Chairman of the parliament, MH Lukman, from the PKI. On August 31, 1963, a house owner in Gondangdia street gave up his house to MH Lukman to be made as his private house. (Kompas, November 23, 1965)

Meanwhile, 33.33% of the articles use anti-corruption themes, where the coverage of corruption does not focus on the legal process of a certain corruption case or corruption suspect, but rather, conveys an anti-corruption discourse. An example follows:

Economic Robbery (Pentjolongan Ekonomi)

The problem of economic robbery is now being discussed again. It is discussed again because it has been often discussed before. What the people wait for now is not just talk about it, but concrete action: grab them, prosecute them, punish them, hang them, shoot them!

Some issues need to be raised here: is there really an economic robbery underway? Yes, there is. The press often covers it. Let's say the press is being partisan because it has a vested interest; nevertheless, the fact is that economic robbery does indeed exist. Evidence is also seen in the phenomena in this capital city of Indonesia: Jakarta, where a small number of people live in luxury and become increasingly richer, whilst those who are poor are suffering more. Those luxuries mostly come from economic robbery. (Kompas, September 14, 1965)

5.4 Coverage on Corruption in the New Order

The Selected Years

The second period of the content analysis is the authoritarian New Order under Suharto's presidency, since the time Suharto was granted the mandate through Supersemar on 11 March 1966 until the time when he was forced to step down because of the People Power protest in May 1998. Therefore, the period of time to be analyzed spans 32 years. Although the New Order lasted more than three decades under President Suharto, some scholars argue that the character of the Suharto regime changed over time.

According to Mackie and MacIntyre (1994: 5), the New Order can be divided into three periods: 1965-74, 1974-1984 and 1984-1990. In the first period, the government was weak, but getting stronger as economic growth increased revenues and control over resources. In this first phase, the political climate was open, marked by high political participation and there was relative

freedom of expression. There was, however, an exception for those who were seen as affiliated to the communists. In the second period which spanned from 1974 until 1984, the state became increasingly strong and autonomous as oil revenues soared. Unfortunately, society participation as well as freedom of the press became increasingly limited. The third period was marked by a strong and highly autonomous state, despite the falling oil revenues. There was only little popular participation in politics as well as much tighter control on the media during this period, as the regime became more authoritarian in its character. Even though the two scholars did not theorize about the period from 1990 until 1998 when Suharto was forced to resign from his Presidency, this study believes that the character of the regime at that time was very much the same as the characteristic of the third period.

Interestingly, the theorization by Mackie and MacIntyre (1994) which analyzed the New Order regime solely from a political economy perspective, found a parallel with the life of the Indonesian media in general, and the situation of media freedom specifically. Indonesian journalists as well as Indonesian media scholars believe that the dawn of the New Order from 1967 until 1974 was the period in which the Indonesian media enjoyed the most freedom. The previously banned newspapers under the Sukarno period, such as *Indonesia Raya*, were allowed to publish again. The media in general could freely write critical pieces of the power holders. This bred hope that the new regime would be supportive of the freedom of the Indonesian media, and this period was popularly named the “Indian Summer” of the Indonesian press. However, this freedom lessened after the 1971 election, when the regime got stronger after winning the election.

Furthermore, as the state became stronger politically, buoyed by the election as well as economic improvements due to the rise of oil revenue from 1974-1984, the regime began to reduce political participation and clamped down on media freedom. As explained in chapter 2, there was a series of press bans in 1974 affecting six Jakarta dailies (Harian KAMMI, Indonesia Raya, Nusantara,

Abadi, Pedomandan the Jakarta Times), two regional dailies (Suluh Berita in Surabaya and Indonesia Pos in Ujung Pandang) and four weeklies (Mahasiswa Indonesia, Mingguan Wenag, Pemuda Indonesia and Ekspres). Except for two: Abadi and Jakarta Times, all other newspapers were closed permanently, and many journalists were thrown in jail.

Another significant press ban happened in 1978. As a response to emerging criticism of government development policies, Chinese financiers, the role of foreign investors and government officials, as well as direct criticism by university students, the government closed a further seven Jakarta-based newspapers, including *Kompas* and *Sinar harapan* for two weeks. It also closed seven student newspapers and arrested more than 200 students, and the university campuses were even occupied by the military. As explained in chapter 2, the 1980s saw further media bans. Newspapers and magazines such as *Tempo*, *Jurnal Ekuin* (Economy, Finance and Industry Journal), *Expo* magazine, *Topik* and *Fokus* magazine were all banned temporarily or permanently for publishing items deemed controversial or critical of the state. Therefore, in the third period theorized by Mackie and MacIntyre above, and arguably until the end of the New Order in 1998, the regime was seen as growing in strength and became even more restricting of mass participation and the mass media.

In the 90s, even though this period was expected to be more free as Suharto's presidency approached its end, a series of press bans occurred again. On June 21, 1994, the Minister Information, Harmoko, withdrew the publication license of three major weeklies: the highly prestigious and widely read *Tempo* magazine (with estimated sales of 187,000), the critical political tabloid of the 1990s *Detik* (with estimated sales of 200,000) and the weekly magazine *Editor* (with sales of 80,000). The ban was triggered by the coverage of these media on a dispute within the government over an agreement to buy thirty-nine second hand warships from the former East Germany. The dispute was between the Minister of Research and Technology, BJ Habibie, and the Minister

of Finance, Marie Muhammad, as well as some military officials in the navy. Both the Finance Minister and the navy officials considered that Habibie had overstepped his authority, and should have consulted them. A few days after the coverage, President Suharto made a speech accusing the media of having provoked controversy and disturbed national stability (Steele, 2005: 234). These bans triggered a wave of protests from Indonesian journalists and political activists, which was believed to be the foundation for the widespread civil protests in 1998.

Considering the big amount of data, the study focuses only on significant periods in the New Order era as presented by Mackie and MacIntyre (1994), and to capture the dynamics of this period, this study will pick six different years of the New Order to be analyzed: 1967, 1971, 1974, 1978, 1983 and 1994. 1967 was chosen as this represents the beginning of the New Order regime. This is the year when Suharto formally declared himself as President; while in 1966 he was already in power as a caretaker (*pemegang jabatan sementara*) surrounding the coup d'état of Sukarno. The year 1971 was chosen because, as explained in Chapter 2, it is in this year that *Kompas* began to self-censor by dropping one of its popular columns: *Kompasiana*. It can be seen that the regime's restriction of the media began in this year. The year 1974 was chosen because, as argued by Hill (1990) above, this was the beginning of widespread media bans during the New Order. This wave of bans occurred in 1978, 1983 and 1994, and provides the reason for the selection of these three years. Meanwhile, 1998 was chosen because, despite Suharto having stepped down from power earlier that year, the authoritarian law regulating and restricting the press remained in place (number 11/1966). It was not until 1999 that Indonesia implemented a new press act (number 40/1999) which promised more freedom for the press. Considering that each year there are 12 issues to be sampled, there are therefore 84 articles on corruption which are analyzed in this section.

The Findings

From these 84 selected issues of *Kompas* newspaper during the New Order, the coverage on corruption is as follows:

Table 3
Sources of the Corruption's Coverage in the New Order

Num (1)	News Sources (2)	Number in percent							Total Average (10)
		1967 (3)	1971 (4)	1974 (5)	1978 (6)	1983 (7)	1994 (8)	1998 (9)	
1	Legal apparatus	22.2	70	52.1	95	74.2	46.1	40	57.1
2	Government official	23.3	15	17.3		5.7	30.7	33.3	17.9
3	Corruption suspect	11.1	15	26.1	5	17.1		6.6	11.5
4	Civil Society activists	33.3		4.3			23.1	20	11.5
5	Whistleblower					2.8			0.4
6	Document	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	Observation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	Unclear	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	N	9	20	23	20	35	26	15	148

From column number 10 of table 3 above, it can be seen that the highest number of sources cited during the New Order period are official sources, consisting of legal apparatus, government officials and the statements of corruption suspects on trial, which together provide 86.5% of the sources. A far lower percentage of sources cited are civil society activists with 11.5%, and the lowest number of cited sources are those who provide the element for investigative journalism, namely whistleblowers, documents and journalist observations, which only provide 0.4% of the total cited sources.

It is interesting to note that civil society activists are cited the most during the first year of Suharto's presidency in 1967, with 33.3% (row number 4). The period in which the New Order regime was approaching its twilight in 1994 (23.0%) and 1998 (20%) provide the second and third rank in terms of citing civil society activist sources. Contrastingly, in these three distinctive years, official sources are the lowest cited in comparison to other years. In the year 1967 the official sources provide 66.6% of the sources, while in 1994 and 1998, they provide 76.8% and 83.9% of the sources. This is significantly lower than in 1971, where official sources made up 100% of the news sources, and also in 1974 (95.1%), 1978 (100%) and 1983 (97%), where they made up nearly all the news sources.

There are clear parallels between *Kompas'* coverage on corruption and the observations made by Mackie and MacIntyre (1994) on the media in Indonesia. As suggested by these scholars, in the period between 1974 until 1984, *Kompas'* coverage on corruption relied more on official sources compared with other years. Following their argument, this was indeed the period when the political regime was increasingly powerful and media freedom was increasingly limited. In fact, it was in the year of 1978 that *Kompas* was closed down by the regime. However, there are divergences. In 1971, which Mackie and MacIntyre characterize as a period in which the media was still relatively free, it is interesting to see that the newspaper had acted cautiously by relying 100% on official sources. It was only in the earliest period of the regime, in 1967, where the newspaper was courageous enough to give relatively more space to unofficial sources.

The tendency to rely on official sources as illustrated in table 3 above also had implications on the content of the coverage of corruption under the New Order. In column number 10 of table 4 below, it can be seen that most of the stories were framed in the legal theme (65.4%). In sharp contrast, articles framed in the civil society movement against corruption only occupied 8.3%, and the theme of anti-corruption only framed 26.15% of the news stories.

Table 4
Theme of Corruption Coverage during the New Order³¹

Num (1)	News Sources (2)	Number in percent							Total Average (10)
		1967 (3)	1971 (4)	1974 (5)	1978 (6)	1983 (7)	1994 (8)	1998 (9)	
1	Legal	16.6	66.6	66.6	100	100	58.3	50	65.4
2	Civil Society Movement	8.3	33.3				8.3	8.3	8.3
3	Guilty Man								
4	Whistleblower								
5	Anti- corruption	75		33.3			33.3	41.6	26.1
N		12	12	12	12	12	12	12	84

An interesting parallel can be inferred with regard to the anti-corruption theme. In row number 5 of table 4 above, it can be seen that in the weakest period of the regime, 1967, the frame of anti-corruption in the coverage is the strongest (75%); this was a transition year when Suharto had just taken over the presidency. There was also an increase in anti-corruption news items in the year 1998, which was the demise of the New Order. In both these periods, there was a promise of more freedom for the press, which chimes with the demand for corruption eradication.

³¹ For coding, please see tables 2-8, appendix 2.

5.5 Corruption Coverage in the Reformation Era

The Selected Years

In terms of freedom of the press, this study argues that the Indonesian Reformation era did not begin until the government enacted the Press Act number 40/1999. Under this new law, the state was no longer allowed to close down press offices, and government permits to establish a media company were no longer needed. This research selected four different years which fall under different presidents in the Reformation era, and can be seen to be representative of this era up till 2015. The years selected are 2000, 2003, 2009, and 2015. The justification for selecting these particular years is that each of them fell under a different Indonesian president: 2000 was the time when BJ Habibie and Abdurrahman Wahid governed the country; 2003 was the time of the Megawati's presidency; 2009 was the period of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono; while 2015 falls under the period of the current president, Joko Widodo. Despite the changes in presidency, all of these presidents have governed an Indonesia characterized by a more democratic and open political system; an extremely different political environment than in the previous two eras. As with the previous eras to be analyzed, there are 12 articles for each of the four years to be analyzed, therefore there are 48 articles in total.

The Findings

From the 48 articles analyzed, it can be found that despite the regime change, the sources of news on corruption still rely heavily on the official sources. This can be seen as follows:

Table 5
Sources of Corruption Coverage in the Reformation Era

Num (1)	News Sources (2)	Number in percent				Total Average (7)
		2000 (3)	2003 (4)	2009 (5)	2015 (6)	
1	Legal apparatus	36.8	27.7	60	40	41.1
2	Government officials	26.3	44.5	20	40	32.7
3	Corruption suspect	-	-	6.6	5	2.9
4	Civil Society activists	36.8	27.7	13.3	15	23.2
5	Whistleblowers	-	-	-	-	-
6	Documents	-	-	-	-	-
7	Observations	-	-	-	-	-
8	Unclear	-	-	-	-	-
N		19	18	15	20	72

In column 7 of the table 5 above, we can see that the use of official sources in the coverage on corruption in the selected samples is as much as 76.7%. This percentage comes from the legal apparatus (41.1%), government officials (32.7%) and corruption suspects (2.9%). This is lower than the official sources cited in the Old Order era (83.2%) as well in the New Order (85.5%). However, this is still a high number, especially if we contrast it to the complete lack of non-official sources, such as documents, journalist observations, as well as whistleblowers, reflecting that any journalistic initiative to expose is lacking. This is even lower than in the New Order era, where 1.1% of the sources reflected non-official journalistic sources. However, it is similar to the situation during the Old Order.

During the Reformation era, the use of civil society activists as news sources is significantly higher (23.2%) than during both the New Order (11.5%), and the Old Order period (11.8%). This means that together with the decrease in the

use of official sources, there is also an increase in the use of unofficial sources from civilians. This does not necessarily mean that exposure journalism is being implemented, but rather that the newspaper started to follow the anti-corruption agenda initiated by civil society. This might be an example of a shift towards democratization and greater press freedom in the way corruption is covered in the reformation era.

In parallel to the high reliance on official sources, the framing of articles on corruption is dominated by the legal theme (59.6%) as illustrated in the table 6 below.

Table 6
Theme of Corruption Coverage in the Reformation Era³²

Num (1)	Theme (2)	Number in percent				Total Average (7)
		2000 (3)	2003 (4)	2009 (5)	2015 (6)	
1	Legal	50	33.3	75	80	59.6
2	Civil Society Movement	8.3	-	-	-	2.1
3	Guilty Man	-	-	-	-	-
4	Whistleblower	-	-	-	-	-
5	Anti-corruption	41.6	66.7	25	20	38.3
	N	12	12	12	12	48

From the table above, we can see that the second highest percentage is the anti-corruption theme with 38.3%, and the civil society movement theme only occupies 2.1% of the coverage on corruption.

³² For coding, please see tables 9-12, appendix 2.

5.6 The Coverage Across Different Political Regimes

From the coverage on corruption across different political periods, *Kompas'* news sources on corruption are as follows:

Table 7
Sources of Corruption Coverage Across Different Political Regimes

Num	News Source	The Old Order	The New Order	The Reform Era
1	Legal Apparatus	47.1%	57.1%	41.1%
2	Government Officials	17.6%	17.9%	32.7%
3	Corruption Suspect	17.6%	11.5%	2.9%
4	Civil Society Activists	11.8%	11.5%	23.2%
5	Whistleblower	-	0.4%	-
6	Document	-	-	-
7	Observation	-	-	-
8	Unclear Sources	5.8%	-	-
	N	17	148	72

From the table above, it can be seen that in every period, most of the news sources for the stories of corruption are official sources, which consist of: legal apparatus, government officials and corruption suspect. While in the Old Order, official sources make up 82.3% of the total news source, during the New Order it increased slightly to 86.5%. This strong reliance on official sources was understandable in both periods, as Indonesia was under an authoritarian regime. By using predominantly official sources, the newspaper positioned itself as the mouthpiece of the government and avoided the risk of offending those in power. However, there is a surprising finding in the table above: 76.7% of the news sources are official sources in the Reformation era, indicating that

the preference for official sources was continuously maintained after the fall of the authoritarian regimes, when the media now enjoyed much more freedom.

In terms of the themes of these articles, corruption coverage across different political regimes is displayed below:

Table 8
Theme of Corruption Across Different Political Regimes

Num	Theme	The Old Order	The New Order	The Reform Era
1	Legal	50%	65.4%	59.6%
2	Civil Society Movement	8.3%	8.3%	2.1%
3	Guilty Man	8.3%	-	-
4	Whistleblower	-	-	-
5	Anti-Corruption	33.3%	26.1%	38.3%
	N	12	84	48

From the table above, it can be seen that in every period, the dominant theme has always been the legal one. While during the Old Order, 50% of the articles were framed by a legal theme, during the New Order it sharply increased to 65.4%. This focus on a legal theme reflects how articles published on corruption were framed as a legal process officially conducted by the legal apparatus. By following the lead of the official process, the newspaper prevented itself from covering a story that was not anticipated by the regime. Therefore, it also reflected how the newspaper wanted to protect itself by avoiding the risk of being banned by the authoritarian regime. While such a theme is understandable during the authoritarian periods, it is surprising that after the regime changes in 1998, stories on corruption continued to be framed mainly in the same legal theme (59.6%). Therefore, despite the regime change, the

editorial preference to frame stories on corruption in terms of the legal proceedings has not changed.

This overall consistency in terms of news sources and the themes of coverage, as well as in the orientation of the coverage on corruption, is noteworthy. In all of the 12 selected years from 1965 to 2015, the tone or orientation of the coverage on corruption cases are always unfavorable and presented in a negative light (please see appendix). Therefore, to some extent, *Kompas* can be seen to have taken an adversarial position to those suspected of corruption or corruption practices. This adversarial position is one of the elements of a watchdog function. However, this research shows that *Kompas* does not meet the requirement of factors number 1 and number 2, which are exposing cases of corruption and reporting incidents of corruption based on its own initiative.

5.7 Some Changes

Despite the continuities in the way the newspaper covered corruption across different regimes as presented above, it would be misleading to assume that there have been no changes at all. To some extent, after the fall Suharto in May 1998, there were at least two obvious aspects that changed: the amount of coverage given to corruption, and the content of this coverage. As can be seen in table 9 below, there was a significant increase in the amount of articles on corruption in the newspaper since 1998.

Table 9
Number of Corruption Coverage
Across Different Political Regimes

Year	Number of Corruption Articles
1965	43
1967	240
1971	151
1974	111
1978	193
1983	371
1994	721
1998	2189
2000	2464
2003	2245
2009	3110
2015	3397

Whilst before 1998, the amount of corruption coverage each year numbered only a few hundred articles, it rose to thousands of articles per year since 1998. This reflects the change in the political climate in Indonesia, where one of the main agendas of the People Power movement in 1998 was the eradication of corruption, as well as the downfall of corrupt politicians, including President Suharto.

The second apparent change in the corruption coverage after the fall of this authoritarian regime relates to corruption suspects: the type of people who could be the subject of a corruption story. During the previous authoritarian regimes, presidents, vice presidents, and the president's close friends and

families could never be the subject of a corruption story in *Kompas*. As explained in chapter 2, this is because *Kompas* had agreed to never cover such stories, having been banned in 1978. However, during the Reformation era, the President and Vice President could both be the subject of corruption investigations. As explained in chapter 4, for instance, Boediono appeared at the center of an article about corruption in the Century Bank scandal (*Kompas*, March 7, 2014). Much earlier, even President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono himself was the subject of a corruption allegation. This can be seen in the article dated December 2, 2009, entitled: “*President Denies Again, The House of Representative Agrees to Use the Right to Question on the Century Bank Scandal*”. The article describes this as follows:

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono again expressed concern because of the growing news about the flow of Century Bank bailout funds to his campaign during the last presidential election. The president called it slander that contains no truth....The President reiterated his denial in the commemoration of National Teachers' Day 2009 and the 64th Birthday of the Teachers' Union of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta, Tuesday (1/12). Previously, the president had condemned the growth of the news in a special statement on 23 November....The President mentioned that it was a hoax, defamation, and character assassination that he and his family have to endure, and that it potentially undermines democracy. "If the politics we hope for is to be more dignified as a reflection of a more mature democracy, and then it is suddenly filled with intrigue, slander, I must point out, justice can be trampled, democracy can be damaged, and civilization can be polluted," he said. (Kompas, December 2, 2009)

A news headline and content which specifically addressed the possibility of a president's involvement in a corruption case could never have appeared when Suharto or Sukarno were in power in the previous authoritarian eras.

However, despite these changes, the way a corruption story was presented remains unchanged when seen in terms of a watchdog function. As illustrated above, the newspaper had avoided conducting any investigative reporting which initially exposed the wrongdoings of the power holders. This is because even in the Reformation era, the newspaper still relied on official sources. In the case of Boediono, as explained in chapter 4, the news sources are the statements of the prosecutors during legal proceedings. Meanwhile, in the case of President Yudhoyono, the news sources were the President himself, who expressed denial about his involvement. *Kompas* did not investigate the scandal itself by using whistleblowers or documents to reveal or determine who was actually responsible.

5.8 Constructing News on Corruption

How is the news on corruption as presented above manufactured at *Kompas*? How does the daily routine of making the news operate in the newsroom? In the findings above where the coverage on corruption does not reflect the idea of investigative journalism, does the manufacturing of the news on corruption also undermine the idea of exposure journalism? As I consider these questions, my mind travels back to the night of February 14, 2014. This was the first time I accompanied a journalist into the field, as he was kind enough to give me permission to shadow him as he did his job.

His name was Syamsudin; but his journalistic name was Slamet. He was a man in his 30s with a strong Javanese accent, and he worked as a journalist of the political and law division, which is responsible for covering all the political as well as legal events in Indonesia. But Slamet had a special, specific task: to write about the latest incidents of corruption. At *Kompas*, this meant that he has to be “headquartered” in the office of the Indonesian Commission on Corruption Eradication (KPK) located in Kuningan street. It is from this office that the latest cases of corruption involving important politicians are released. On one day, a politician from parliament could be caught and brought to the KPK office, whilst on another an important minister could be identified as a new corruption

suspect. For those who closely follow the cases of corruption in Indonesia, they will be very familiar with this unit's commission.

For Slamet, the KPK was his second office as he visited it almost every day. So, on that Valentine's day, I found myself sitting behind Slamet on his motorbike, on our way to Kuningan street. As we reached the KPK, there were already many journalists sitting in the lobby. Bill introduced me to some of them. From the way they talked to him, I realized that these other journalists greatly respected *Mas Slamet*. As the evening progressed, I became aware that this was not any ordinary night: there was reason why the office was flooded with so many journalists. On that night, a suspect who had close ties with a powerful politician from Serang was brought to the commission for investigation. Once this man had arrived, the KPK's spokesperson, Johan Budi, made an announcement through a conference to all of the journalists present. These journalists call these Friday nights "*Jumat Keramat*", a Javanese phrase which means "Sacred Friday." This is because on this day, KPK usually announces new cases of corruption.

To my surprise, Slamet did not go home after the press conference. He said he was not satisfied with the conference's session, nor with the question and answer session that came afterwards. Approaching midnight, his cellular phone rang. The call was from the KPK spokesperson himself, who asked Slamet to come upstairs to his office. The security officers, evidently were familiar with the journalist, easily gave him permission to enter with me. We took the elevator to reach Johan's room on the top floor. In there, the three of us spent one or two hours smoking and casually talking about the recent case, though the conversation also touched on almost every other topic, just like a conversation between old friends.

On my journey back to the *Kompas* office with Slamet, he explained that this was the way he approached his source. "*It takes much effort and militancy to build trust with your sources. I guess it's just like you with your research.*" He explained further, claiming that he has a special relationship with Johan, and

that it is only he who has the privilege to be invited to the office of the KPK spokesperson at midnight, allowing him to write more stories than any other journalist. He believed it is for this reason that *Kompas* has become the most comprehensive newspaper in its corruption coverage, as he could share information that other journalists did not have because his source gave him exclusive access to information.

Hearing the story of Slamet above, it soon becomes obvious that the newspaper relied highly on official sources. Johan Budi is, with all due respect, a person of authority and part of the establishment. He is not a whistleblower. He is the spokesperson of the KPK. His job is to make sure that the works of the commission appear in the media. Therefore, despite Slamet's pride, it is in Johan's interest to build a close relationship with all journalists. Furthermore, given the large circulation as well as the influence of *Kompas*, Johan knows that he needs to treat this newspaper's journalists differently to that of other newspapers. The way in which Slamet focused solely on getting quotes and information from KPK illustrates that *Kompas'* coverage of corruption relies heavily on official sources, and Slamet does not spend much time uncovering new cases of corruption. With regard to the principle of investigative journalism, this is not the way journalists should work.

When I put this to Slamet, he admitted that he did not do investigative journalism. He believed that investigative journalism was not fitting for a newspaper which has to inform the public on a daily basis. He suggested that investigative journalism is more suitable for a weekly magazine such as *Tempo*. He also mentioned, however, that there are constraints from the newsroom. He had often experienced a situation in which when he came to writing the critical part of the story involving a corruption scandal, his article was dropped by the editor. In other words, Slamet was suggesting that it is not the policy of the newsroom to engage in exposure journalism when covering corruption.

This statement of Slamet is no exaggeration. Just a day before my trip with him, as I was in the newsroom interviewing *Kompas* Chief Editor, Arif Subangun, I

found confirmation of Slamet's statement. According to Arif, investigative journalism is not among their policy:

What is important for now is not to find a new name that is involved in a corruption scandal, it is to encourage the legal process for the already revealed cases.... Is there any solution? This is not just about exposure. Kompas supports the existing cases of corruption scandals to be prosecuted. That is the policy of Kompas. (Personal communication with Arif Subangun, February 13, 2014)

This view of the *Kompas* Chief Editor above was manifest in the dynamics inside the newsroom. As I was attending the editorial meetings of the politics and law division (*Desk Politik dan Hukum/Polhuk*), I noticed that the news on corruption was delegated mainly to two journalists. One of them was Slamet who was "headquartered" in the KPK office. The second was Fajar, who was "headquartered" in the Special Court for Corruption Trials (*Pengadilan Tindak Pidana Korupsi/Pengadilan Tipikor*), which was part of KPK. While the first post was a special position to gather the new names of corruption suspects announced by KPK, the second was tasked to write about the court trials of those named. This desk, *Polhuk*, is responsible for filling pages two to five of the newspaper, where readers can expect to read the news on corruption. In some instances when the corruption story involves the political elite, we can also read about it on the front page of the newspaper. The corruption trial involving Vice President Boediono, as explained in Chapter 4 on self-censorship, is one such example. Apart from these two roles, there has never been a special investigation desk to investigate the misconduct of the power holders. Needless to say, with this kind of media setup, it is difficult for journalists to pursue or uncover new cases of corruption.

This reluctance to engage in exposure journalism is, in fact, nothing new for *Kompas*. In an interview with a retired journalist who worked under the New Order period, Bambang Wisudho, it is clear that investigative journalism was not implemented during his time. He explained that there are cultural

constraints from within the newsroom when it comes to exposing scandals on corruption. He even experienced a situation in which his article was dropped by the editors, because its in-depth coverage would unintentionally reveal the names of the people involved in corruption at the Department of Education. (Personal communication with Bambang Wisudo, June 12, 2014) This practice was confirmed by other journalist elites, which I will elaborate on in the following section.

5.9 Some Underlying Forces

After a month of waiting curiously, the meeting of the ombudsman on investigative journalism - the follow up to the previous meeting colored by the protest of Faisal Basri - was finally held. As is clear from the introduction of this chapter, the motivation for the meeting was a demand for more investigative journalism. As I was sitting amid the board members and *Kompas* journalists that Friday, 22 August 2014, the demand was once again articulated. The ombudsman believed that *Kompas* should be more courageous in its journalism by implementing investigative reporting on corruption. They believed that there was no longer any reason to be cautious. On the other hand, tight competition and the increasing decline of newspaper circulation had forced the daily to come up with something new for the readers. In his concluding remarks, Daniel Dhakidae, the Chairman of the board, ended his recommendation speech with a big question: *"The world out there has already changed; are we going to remain the same?"*

This question triggered reactions from all the journalists in the room. These reactions, however, were not always expressed straightforwardly, as we could expect in any *Kompas* meeting and discussion. Some young journalists rather hesitantly agreed with the suggestion of the ombudsman -that *Kompas* should be more courageous. Nevertheless, considering that many of their seniors were present in the room, they still avoided arguing directly or too forcefully that more investigative reporting should be undertaken. Interestingly, some senior journalists who were not part of the editorial board supported the idea without

hesitation. They shared the same view with those members of the board, and insisted that *Kompas* should implement such a policy. Answering this demand with a smile on his face, Daniel explained that the power to make such decisions did not lie in their hands, as the job of the ombudsman board is simply to make recommendations.

All of those in the room knew that the only person who could answer the question was Randu Rahardjo. He was the Vice Chief Editor of the paper, and the only editorial member who had joined the meeting. Therefore, as Daniel's eyes fixed on the face of Randu who sat on the other side of the table, all eyes in the room were also drawn to him, and the *Kompas* Chief Editor knew that there is no way to escape. Before anyone posed a further question, he responded quickly by saying: "If the question is directed at me, I could only respond like this." The answer drew laughter from everyone, followed as it was by a gesture of obeisance, with Randu's two palms meeting in front of his chest. The journalists all knew that this was the favored gesture of Jakob Oetama.

After the laughter died down and a brief period of silence, Randu elaborated on his statement. The Vice Chief Editor suggested that the paper needed to refer to Jakob if they were to implement such a new editorial policy. He believed that it was not possible in that moment, however, to realize such a change, as Jakob would not agree. In a speech under the gaze of everyone in the room, he explained his view as follows:

If we talk about Pak Jakob, I have hardly heard him mention the words "investigative reporting." Never once have I heard "investigative reporting" from him. Instead, he always uses the term "in-depth reporting". To give meaning to an event. To provide comprehensive reporting. I have never heard him ask: "this one needs to be investigated."... From Pak Jakob, we have never heard that this or that needs investigating, and now over time this has become our culture. (Randu Rahardjo, August 22, 2014)

A year later, on June 28, 2015, when the paper celebrated its 50-year anniversary, Budiman's statement above was confirmed by Jakob Oetama. On the front page of the newspaper, the old man - a living legend at *Kompas*, wrote:

*The classical formula of watchdog can't be delivered in black or white. The representation needs to come with tolerance (**tenggang rasa**) and self-awareness (**tahu diri**). Critics with understanding, which can be translated as both straightforward (**tegas**) at one time, as well as indirect (**miyar miyur**) at another time, shows our wisdom. It is a wisdom of a teacher who never forces (**memaksa**) but suggests. *Kompas* is in the middle with **ngono yo ngono ning ojo ngono, apike ngene bae** (you are free to behave like that, but behave like this instead), including in distinguishing its dependency and independency. (Oetama, *Keep the Voice amid Noise, Kompas, 28 June 2015*)*

In the writing above, we can see how the *Kompas* founder emphasizes the importance of carrying out the role of watchdog, but not in a strict sense. In his words, the watchdog function "can't be delivered in black or white." Those who do not understand Javanese culture cannot immediately grasp Jakob's intention in the statement above. But for *Kompas* journalists, the message was clear: the founder of the newspaper emphasized the importance of carrying out a watchdog function with a sense of politeness, which was accentuated in words such as: *tenggang rasa* (tolerance), *tahu diri* (self-awareness), and more importantly, *ngono yo ngono ning ojo ngono, apike ngene bae* (you may behave that way but please don't, it's better this way).

From Jakob's words above, it is obvious that while the journalists admit that they do not carry out any investigative journalism, they believe that they still function as a watchdog of the power holders. It is for this reason that this study theorizes the *Kompas Way* of functioning as a watchdog of the power holders as being a 'polite watchdog'. The emphasis on politeness when covering the misconduct of the power holders was also expressed in many of Jakob's teachings, and developed into catchy expressions in the newsroom: "*Sebisa*

mungkin jangan menyakiti perasaan orang lain (Try your best not to hurt other people's feelings), *"Tak ada malaikan di muka bumi ini* (There is no angel in this world)," *"Njiwit ning ojo lara* (Pinching without hurting)" as well as *"Jangan memukul orang sampai jatuh* (Don't beat people till they fall)".

When I introduced my term "polite watchdog" as a way to describe the implementation of the watchdog function at the newspaper at my occasional meetings with *Kompas* journalists, they all agreed with it. The journalists believed that the concept perfectly captured their idea of watchdog journalism, which has been adapted to Indonesian culture. Sularto, a senior journalist who acted as the Vice Director of the newspaper, personally thanked me for introducing the term to him, and cited it in the introduction of his book. Randu Rahardjo concurred with the term in my meeting with him on September 8, 2016. Previously, at a lunch together with Sutta Dharmasaputra, the Vice Executive Editor of the newspaper on 30 July 30, 2016, he also praised the term as fitting well with *Kompas'* values. Having known all these people for years, I have no doubt that they are being sincere when expressing their opinion.

The sense of politeness of the newspaper is not just the claim of journalists themselves, as their readers also share the same view. In the newspaper's special edition where *Kompas* invited Indonesian elites to write in with their impression of the newspaper, 'polite' was seen as one of the dominant characteristics of the newspaper. Out of 44 writers, 17 of them (38.6%) have written that the newspaper has been polite in their writing. They express it using these following words and phrases: humble, good language, refined, indirect, cautious, critical but with understanding, Javanese way. In a piece by Abu Rizal Bakrie, a political elite from the Golkar party, the newspaper is described as follows:

Kompas has always been the same: very polite and comforting. The heart of the Reformation era has almost never been able to touch the politeness and cautiousness of Kompas, which has been a feature

since the newspaper since the beginning. (Bakrie, Kompas, June 28, 2015)

Nevertheless, despite the strong influence of Jakob Oetama behind the idea of polite reporting, the politeness of the newspaper does not merely come from the Javanese background of the *Kompas* founder.

Rather, it was forced by political circumstances during both authoritarian eras, where the newspaper had to deliver critique of the regimes in such a way as to avoid a press ban. In an article entitled “*Talking Out Loud Among the Crowd*”, Jakob admitted that the experience of the newspaper ban by Suharto in 1978 had very much influenced the culture of politeness in the writing style of the newspaper. Writing on June 28, 2015 on the front page of the newspaper, Jakob said as follows:

The experience of being banned on 20 January 1978 until 5 February 1978 has been a great lesson for Kompas. We answer the call to be more aware of our position, explicitly agree to commit to good intentions, and conduct ourselves in a good way, without prejudice.

The findings of the content analysis also reflect Jakob’s view above. Despite the fact that *Kompas* has never conducted investigative journalism, there were fluctuations in the use of unofficial sources. The percentage of civil society sources in the year of 1967, 1994, and 1998 during the New Order were relatively higher than in any other year (see table 3). As explained in the earlier part of this chapter, those years correspond to the dawn and the twilight of Suharto’s regime, when it was still weak and undeveloped, or else weakening. In addition, the use of civilian sources is increasingly higher in the Reformation era, when Indonesia no longer lives under an autocracy.

However, while the press ban on *Kompas* occurred in 1978, the way the paper has carried out watchdog journalism has remained consistent throughout. As revealed in the content analysis of their coverage on corruption, the news

sources and the theme of the content in the Old Order era do not differ significantly with the coverage during the New Order. Accordingly, the use of civilian sources is relatively low. This indicates how the authoritarian political environment has influenced the newspaper throughout its history.

Surprisingly, as explained earlier, the idea and practice of “polite watchdog” journalism has continued in the current Reformation era at *Kompas*. One of the reasons is because the practice of polite watchdogging in the past has created a journalistic culture that does not automatically disappear alongside the disappearance of political autocracy. In the words of Randu:

From Pak Jakob we have never heard the instructions for conducting investigative journalism. It has eventually become our culture... Every time we have a conflict, every time we get sued (by corruption suspects), he always suggested a solution away from the courts.... Please, step back brother. Please, step back... Because he didn't want it. I read it as a sign that he prefers to establish harmony (and avoid conflict)... You may behave that way but please don't... This provides cultural obstacles for investigative journalism to flourish. (Randu Rahardjo, Kompas meeting, August 22, 2014)

From the quote above, however, we can observe that besides the cultural legacy of journalistic practice at *Kompas*, there is another constraint in the form of the judicial system in Indonesia. The journalists at *Kompas* have learned, based on many experiences involving legal cases in the past, that it is very unlikely for them to win at a trial. At the very least, they will suffer tremendous material loss. They believe that the legal system in Indonesia is not yet fully supportive of the implementation of media freedom, and more specifically, investigative journalism. This view supports other studies into the Indonesian legal system, which suggests that despite the Press Act supporting media freedom, there are many other laws that still constrain it. Some of them are the absence of laws on the protection of whistleblowers, as well as the

maintenance of the law on defamation (Lateef and Sherlock, 2003 and Wiratraman, 2014).

If we put the findings above in the context of journalism practices around the globe, the *Kompas* case interestingly resonates with the studies done by Waisbord (2000) and Pinto (2009) on journalism in a number of South American countries. These scholars believe that the idea of exposure journalism, which characterizes the investigative journalism model, does not suit countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Peru, which labor under an authoritarian legacy. The threat from the authoritarian regimes has fostered a tradition of playing a watchdog role without being investigative. They also believe that the absence of the rule of law supporting press freedom compounds this. Furthermore, investigative reporting needs a huge investment in terms of time and money, which acts as another deterrent to investigative journalism. They did admit, however, that there were some cases where investigative journalism was carried out, and it is becoming increasingly popular, but not in the same way as the muckraking journalism evident in the US or some other advanced democratic countries.

The same situation is also found in some Southeast Asian countries, as demonstrated in the study of Hanitzsch (2005) in the case of Indonesia and in the study of Adibah et al. (2014) in the case Malaysia. They share the same perspective about the existence of different kinds of watchdog journalism, which differ from the western democracy model. However, even though both studies examine Southeast Asian countries, they attribute different factors for the practice. Adibah et al. (2014) argue that like in Latin American countries, the authoritarian political environment has made the press serve more as a lap dog to the power holders. Hanitzsch, however, downplays this factor and suggests that cultural factors are very influential: "The cultural background of the journalists' socialization seems to play, to some extent and under certain circumstances, a role in defining their professional role in society." (Hanitzsch, 2005: 506).

While admitting the important role of culture as argued by Hanitzsch, this study suggests that the political regimes under which journalists work significantly influences the extent the journalists conduct their watchdog role. As explained in chapter 2 on the history of *Kompas*, since the very beginning the authoritarian regimes have not only influenced the way the watchdog role was carried out, but also determined the acceptable kind of watchdogging. Experiences of being banned in the Sukarno era (due to Ojong's previous publication before he established *Kompas*) compelled the *Kompas* founders to always act cautiously. Furthermore, the *Kompas* ban in 1978, in which the regime forced the media owners to sign a letter agreeing not to cover any sensitive issues related to the president and his family, has directly constrained the freedom of the journalists to write their stories. Therefore, the political regime has provided an environment for the practice of polite watchdogging to flourish inside the newsroom.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter started with a simple question as to whether *Kompas* newspaper lived up to the ideal of watchdog journalism in their coverage on the misconduct of the power holders, as well as in their manufacturing process. Examining the implementation of this idea using a western conception of watchdogging, which is synonymous with investigative reporting, this study suggests that *Kompas* tells a rather different story. While investigative journalism requires initiative from the journalists to expose the wrongdoings of, as well as adopt an adversarial position towards, the power holders, this chapter clearly demonstrated that *Kompas* journalists did not aspire to this. Content analysis of their coverage on corruption in the current Reformation era reveals that they still rely heavily on official sources. Consequently, when the coverage is analyzed in terms of their themes, they are mainly framed in a legal theme. This means that they simply tell the story of the corruption according to the version of the authorities, without any attempt to discover new cases of corruption based on their own initiative. Interestingly, the result of the content

analysis is consistent across different political regimes, from the twilight of the authoritarian Old Order (1965-1966) to the rise and fall of the authoritarian New Order (1966-1998) and under the current Reformation era, when Indonesia is no longer an authoritarian state.

Meanwhile, the study also found that the manufacturing process of the stories on corruption in the newsroom reflect more or less the same tendency. Ethnographic observation, as well as in-depth interviews with current as well as retired journalists of the newspaper, suggest that an attempt to conduct investigative reporting has never been made in the newsroom. In the Reformation era, the media routine for covering news on corruption is set according to the agenda determined by the authorities. The placement of some journalists in state office such as in the Commission on Corruption Eradication (KPK) as well the Special Court on Corruption Trial (*Pengadilan Tipikor*) is one example of this system. Indeed, many of the *Kompas* journalists themselves admit that investigative journalism has never been their aspiration. Instead, they favor more the idea of in-depth or comprehensive reporting as proposed by the founder, General Director, as well as owner of the newspaper, Jakob Oetama, who also acted as Chief Editor of the newspaper for 45 years, from 1965 until 2000.

It is from Jakob Oetama that these journalists learnt to apply the wisdom from Javanese culture in conducting their watchdog function. The journalists believe that it is important to hold public officials to account, but they equally believe it is important to play this role in a polite way. Underlying this politeness is an intention to avoid conflict with those in power in order to maintain harmony. While this view is indeed rooted in the Javanese culture, the implementation into practice was forced by political as well as economic considerations. During the authoritarian regimes, this polite style of watchdogging was internalized in the newsroom as a strategy to avoid being banned. However, the habitus of polite journalism has not automatically disappeared with the fall of the authoritarian regimes.

Besides the cultural legacy of the old period, some other factors have provided the reason for the absence of exposure journalism. The rule of law that does not support the implementation of investigative watchdogging is among one of the main factors. Experiences in the past where *Kompas* lost in a court trial or suffered a big amount of financial loss has deterred the editorial board from initiating a special investigative desk in the newsroom. Obviously, it is also in the interest of the *Kompas* owner, Jakob Oetama, to prevent his newspaper from suffering such economic loss. Many journalists also believe that they always need to remain close to the power holders in order to secure political patronage due to their Catholic and Chinese background. This is an additional reason to nurture a polite reporting style into the misconduct of power holders.

However, despite the dominant polite watchdogging culture in the newsroom, this practice does not go without challenge. As demonstrated in the introduction of this chapter, the ombudsman board of the newspaper strongly encouraged the daily to start more investigative reporting. However, this board does not have the power to force their recommendations onto the elites of the newspaper's editorial board. There is also growing disappointment from the younger generation of journalists at the paper, who see the newsroom as being too cautious. In the words of Asep, a young editor who was also the head of the political desk: *"We have stepped back, even before we punch!"* Indeed, they believe that in many cases, the newspaper very often retreats before even attempting a step that puts the powerful under scrutiny. On the other hand, the continuously decreasing circulation (see chapter 8) of the print newspaper due to the explosion of online media is an incentive to provide something new for the readers. Some of the journalists believe that more critical watchdog journalism might be the answer. Would these factors be sufficient to be able to change the dominant culture inside the *Kompas* newsroom?

This study suggests that if such a shift could happen, we will not see it in the near future. Whilst this chapter has described how the attempts to cultivate close relations with the power holders is conducted through the way the

Chapter 5

newspaper covers stories on corruption, the next chapter will explain how *Kompas* positioned itself amid fierce political competition between elites during the 2014 presidential election in such a way that they maintained close ties with whoever won. Chapter 6 will also elaborate on the challenges to maintain such a position from within the newsroom.