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

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## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

In order to shed light on what happens to the media when a political regime changes from an authoritarian one to a democracy, this book has investigated the biography, and journalistic values and practices of *Kompas* daily newspaper: the largest and oldest national newspaper in Indonesia, with special emphasis on the newspaper's relationship with the power holders across different political administrations. Three main questions are central to this book: *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 of the journalistic values and practices after regime change?*

This book has argued that *Kompas* has developed a polite, indirect and cautious style of journalism that has changed very little after the fall of Indonesia's authoritarian regime, limiting the newspaper's capacity to function as a critical watchdog of the power holders, and preventing it from becoming a mobilizing force in the development of Indonesian democracy. This particular style of journalism developed during the authoritarian period as a result of two different, intertwining factors which shaped the habitus of *Kompas*; these were both cultural and political economy factors. After the regime change, this journalistic style was preserved, because to a considerable degree the same cultural, political and economic forces continued to operate within and upon the newspaper. These general findings will be summarized in this section.

### 8.1 The Development of the Kompas Way During the Authoritarian Period

Tracing the historical trajectory of the newspaper's history, this study has shown that *Kompas* was founded under an authoritarian political regime during the twilight period of the Old Order (1965-1966), and continued to operate in a similar, if not more, authoritarian political setting under the New Order (1966-1998); these periods were the entire first three decades of the newspaper's life. It forced journalists to be submissive and to strive to build close relationships with the regimes, for the sheer purpose of its survival: in order to obtain licenses to operate, and then to avoid being banned by the regimes. Indeed, press bans were frequently applied by the New Order regime, creating a repressive political environment for the media. One of these bans was enforced on *Kompas* in early 1978, when together with other newspapers, it reported on the student protest demanding the President to step down from power. In order to be allowed to operate again, the newspaper was compelled to sign a contract with the political regime, promising that it would operate with an increased degree of cautiousness, and never criticize the President's policies. This experience created fear and historical trauma in the minds of its founders, PK Ojong and Jakob Oetema, and evidence of this submission was discernible in the more cautious political coverage by the newspaper.

Interestingly, despite its political fear, the newspaper enjoyed significant financial support from the authoritarian New Order regime, which helped transform it into a business giant consisting of many subsidiaries: bookstores, printing companies, a radio station, a TV channel, and several hotels and local newspapers. This made the newspaper, to some extent, financially dependent on the state, which in turn, gave the state another instrument with which to control the newspaper. Furthermore, the fact that the daily was initially found at the initiative of the Catholic Party, and that its two founders were both Catholics themselves, has branded the newspaper as a Catholic publication. In the course of its history, this label triggered a series of backlashes from

conservative and radical Muslim groups in Indonesia, who accused the newspaper of intentionally offending them through their coverage. The Chinese roots of the newspaper, (PK Ojong was of Chinese descent), meant it suffered from being a double minority –not only Catholic, but also Chinese, adding another contentious layer its identity. This has resulted in the fear of being a minority, which one of its journalists labeled as having a “minority complex” syndrome, making them continuously seek political protection from the regime. The combination of these economic and political factors forced the newspaper to develop a polite, cautious, and uncritical journalistic style in order to secure economic gain, avoid being banned, and ensure political protection from the regime.

However, these political economy pressures would not have been transformed into editorial policy without the existence of Jakob Oetama, who possessed the habitus of a Javanese man, as well as a Catholic believer, and who acted as the newspaper’s Chief Editor for the first 45 years. As a Javanese, Jakob had been born and raised to embrace Javanese values, such as respect for authority, conflict avoidance and the maintaining of social harmony. These values shaped the journalistic values and practices of Jakob, which in turn very much influenced the newspaper’s editorial policy, providing the incentive for the newspaper to be submissive to the regime. Furthermore, the habitus of Jakob was translated into its distinctive journalistic style: the *Kompas Way*. While this journalistic style is strongly influenced by Javanese values, it should not be seen as a mere materialization of these values; to some extent, this style is also influenced by other aspects of Jakob’s habitus, such as his adherence to the Catholic faith, and his professional media background. It is the merging of this habitus of Jakob with the aforementioned political economy factors, which has shaped the journalistic style of the newspaper.

The influence of Jakob was so strong in the newsroom due to the various kinds of capital he had accumulated, ranging from cultural capital, manifested in his journalistic skill and earned from years of experience working in the media

before founding *Kompas*; to economic capital, materialized in his ownership of the newspaper together with PK Ojong. However, since the beginning, there was a division of labor between these two founders, in which Jakob would act as Chief Editor while Ojong acted as the General Director. The death of Ojong in 1980, who was to some extent more critical of the regime, meant that the influence of Jakob went unchallenged as he became the sole founder and owner. This gave Jacob complete freedom to shape *Kompas*. As many journalists put it, "*Kompas is Jakob Oetama. Jakob Oetama is Kompas.*"

A key element of the *Kompas Way* was the practice of self-censorship by integrating *rasa*. As explained in chapter 4, *Rasa* is a spiritual element in Javanese culture, which literally means 'feeling'. The successful internalization of *rasa* is manifest in the refined behavior of a Javanese person, be it in their body language, or in their oral and written expressions. On the contrary, coarse and impolite behavior or speech reflects one's lack of spiritual strength. With regard to the practice of self-censorship, there is an unwritten rule in the newsroom that journalists must incorporate *rasa* into their journalistic work. This means that it is the journalists themselves who are obliged to report in a polite and refined style in order to avoid offending or angering those they write about, especially those who are in power. This unwritten rule has demanded that journalists always be sensitive and mindful of their *rasa* during the news production process, precisely because there is no explicit articulation or delimitation of this rule. However, one of the easiest ways to know that a story has successfully implemented *rasa* is when there is no protest from the power holders being reported on. If displeased, quite often these agents complained directly to Jakob, who in turn complained to the authors. This compelled *Kompas* journalists to commit to the endless discipline of self-censorship over a long period of time, so much so that it eventually became embodied in them.

## 8.2 The Preservation of the Kompas Way After Suharto

After the fall of both authoritarian regimes, the *Kompas* style of journalism largely persisted despite the radical change in the political environment, and despite the state no longer being able to ban the press, as stipulated by the Indonesian Press Act 1999. The most obvious continuation can be seen in the way the newspaper deals with attacks from Islamic hardliners in reaction to its coverage. As in the old times, where *Kompas* preferred to be submissive to the pressure from Islamic groups, it has continued to do so in the Reformation era. As explained in chapter 4, *Kompas* has preferred to self-censor itself on any issues which could be sensitive to these Islamic groups. This self-censorship is implemented not only after certain coverage has resulted in complaints from Islamic groups, but also even before complaints can arise, on the basis of *rasa*. This means that they strive to be sensitive to any potential issues that might offend the feelings of Islamic believers, and decide not to cover it, or at the least cover it in a polite, respectful and indirect way.

However, it would be misleading to suggest that there is no change at all in *Kompas*' coverage of political issues. To some extent, the change can be seen in its coverage of corruption. During the Reformation era, many more stories on corruption appeared in the newspaper compared to the preceding Suharto era. If during the authoritarian period, there were only some few hundred stories of corruption each year, in the democratic era this figure multiplied to thousands of corruption stories each year. Furthermore, unlike in previous decades, where no stories of corruption directly related to the President and his palace ever appeared, during the democratic era we can see Vice President Boediono headlining in the story about President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyo's involvement in a corruption scandal. Nevertheless, despite the increasing amount of corruption coverage and despite it not being taboo to report on political actors in a corruption story, the cautious and polite style of *Kompas* remains unchanged. In all cases of corruption, *Kompas* has generally presented the incidents in their legal framework, waiting for the official version determined

by the legal apparatus or government officials, before covering the story. As presented in Chapter 5, this preference for the legal and official angle has remained unchanged despite the regime change, and despite the aspirations of some journalists to conduct more investigative reporting.

Another change evident since the Reformation era is in the appearance of the newspaper; the daily reduced the size of its print publication in 2015. As explained in the *Kompas* editorial on June 28, 2005, this redesign was done in order to improve and update the image of the paper, making it fresher, more eye-catching, and more compatible with the new era of technology. What is significant, though, is that this overall smaller size has impacted the size of the newspaper columns, including the editorial column, forcing journalists to write in a relatively more direct manner. However, as also admitted in this editorial, its core values have endured. As explained in Chapter 6, during the newspaper's coverage of the 2014 election campaign, the journalists remained faithful to the principle of conflict avoidance by demonstrating a cautious style of journalism to avoid offending election candidate Prabowo. This feature, central to *Kompas*' journalistic style, was re-emphasized again by Jakob Oetama, when the paper commemorated its golden anniversary on June 28, 2015. Writing a column which became the headline piece of the day, the *Kompas* founder suggested that operating for half a century has taught the paper to always conduct journalism in "*fear and trembling*", especially when covering issues that he believed to be sensitive.

Both cultural and political economy factors combined underlay the preservation of the *Kompas Way* after Suharto. One factor is the still pervasive influence of Jakob Oetama and his habitus, which has been institutionalized in the hierarchical structure and the pyramidal distribution of power within the *Kompas* newsroom. Despite no longer acting as Chief Editor of the newsroom since 2006, or eight years after the fall of Suharto, his legacy in the form of the *Kompas Way* has been preserved in the newsroom through a process of



socialization among *Kompas* journalists across generations. This socialization occurred through both formal and informal mechanisms.

Formal socialization was conducted through, first of all, the selection of the Chief Editor, members of the editorial board, as well as the heads of every division by Jakob Oetama himself, in consultation with the newsroom's elites, resulting in the institutionalization of a hierarchical and pyramidal distribution of power. These elites wield considerable power in the newsroom; being at the top, they exert a much stronger influence on the newsroom editorial policy than the ordinary reporters. At *Kompas*, the daily editorial meetings where the day's agenda is set, is only attended by members of the editorial board and the heads of every editorial division. No ordinary reporters are allowed to be involved in the discussion of the editorial policy. Secondly, the formal socialization of Jakob's values was achieved through the daily news editing process, where the editors in the higher position exercise power over ordinary reporters. In this process, the stories written by the journalists through reportage in the field were then sent to, and edited by, the head of division. From there, the story was sent to the managing editors for further edits, before finally appearing in print. In this case, the power of those in the higher positions was absolute, with only the members of the editorial board or Jakob Oetama making decisions. In this regard, some journalists have seen this hierarchical structure as comparable to the Catholic Church or the military. A final aspect of formal socialization is seen in the recruitment process of new journalists, which includes a year of probation time and intensive training and supervision before they are officially accept. In this training, they are exposed to, and have to learn, every single aspect of news production and tailor it to the distinctive *Kompas* journalistic style, namely, the *Kompas Way* as laid out by the journalistic practice of Jakob Oetama. Another aspect they need to learn is the hierarchical structure of the newsroom in which their editor's decision is absolute, and in which they have to obey without any complaints.

The informal socialization of Jakob's values was conducted through everyday informal interactions within the newsroom, in which the Javanese culture has become the ruling etiquette. Younger journalists have to address senior journalists as *Mas* (older brother) or *Mbak* (older sister), and never call them directly by name, which is the Javanese way to show respect to elders. Communication in the newsroom is conducted through a combination of the Indonesian national language: Bahasa Indonesia, and the Javanese language. However, when it comes to debates about a serious matter related to certain news decisions, they adopt Javanese, symbolizing the inherent Javanese values at the core of *Kompas*. It is noteworthy that most *Kompas* journalists who are not of Javanese background have learnt the language from the intensive interaction in the newsroom. The manifestation of Javanese culture also appears in non-verbal communication amongst the journalists, such as the way in which they smile (journalists are expected to smile at each other to show respect); the way they sit (both at the formal and informal gatherings, the young journalists are expected to always sit at the back); and even the way they stand (a Javanese is expected to stand politely with his two palms covering the lower side of his body). These examples illustrate the informal socialization of *Kompas* journalists into Jakob's Javanese values.

As well as these cultural factors, the *Kompas Way* which integrates *rasa* in its practice of self-censorship, and which emphasizes politeness, cautiousness and indirectness in delivering its message, has also been influenced by the following political economy factors: firstly, by the increasing number of intolerant Islamic groups in Indonesia who have used the momentum of democratization to accentuate their ideological views. These groups have quite often attacked *Kompas* and its business subsidiaries, disapproving of their Catholic-ness and Chinese-ness. This has forced the newspaper to remain cautious, especially when covering issues related to Islam to prevent any backlash from these groups. A series of attacks on the newspaper has created a sense of being discriminated against and of being a minority amongst the journalists, and in fact has led many of them to believe that being a Catholic minority is

problematic: “*being Catholic in Indonesia was like having original sin.*” As admitted by Jakob himself, to some degree, it is easier to criticize the political regime than to write about sensitive issues related to Islam. In order to avoid a backlash from radical Islamic groups and to protect itself, *Kompas* has tried to forge a political alliance with more moderate Indonesian Islamic groups such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah. In doing so, *Kompas* is compelled to avoid reporting on any sensitive issues which might offend these Islamic groups. As revealed in chapter 4, *Kompas* avoided any in-depth coverage of the tribunal of 1965, as they believed the investigation would reveal that NU had been involved in the killings of many alleged communist members. This added a further layer of self-censorship when covering Islam, not only to avoid offending radical groups, but also the more moderate Islamic majority.

Another political economy factor that has influenced *Kompas*’ politeness and cautiousness is its desire to serve its economic interest by securing economic and commercial benefits. By providing a stage for the power holders, they could demonstrate to their readers that the paper had symbolic capital, and was the paper of choice for the Indonesian elite: those aspiring to be elite should therefore subscribe to and read this paper. This means that its exclusivity has contributed to its sales. Meanwhile, by not taking sides in the 2014 Presidential election, *Kompas* secured the chance for it to be used as a medium for advertising for both candidates. As demonstrated in chapter 6, both candidates promoted their campaigns in *Kompas*, though to differing degrees: Jokowi advertised much more in the paper. No less importantly, by not presenting a preferred choice of candidate, *Kompas* retained its readership, many of whom were deeply divided and identified as either Jokowi or Prabowo supporters. *Kompas* feared that taking sides would trigger resentment from its own readers, precisely because the rivalries between the two candidates had also triggered fierce political rivalries among its political followers.

Its politeness in playing a watchdog role also secures its economic and commercial interest, having grown into a big conglomerate business made up

of many subsidiaries, under the umbrella of *Kompas Gramedia Group* (KKG). For example, by only covering the cases of corruption under official judicial process, the newspaper prevented being sued by those very elites accused of corruption. As demonstrated in the study of Andres (2016), by avoiding investigating corruption scandals which might involve the President himself, this would safeguard Indonesia from the threat of political instability and economic crisis. Even when the economic crisis did hit, it might have threatened the fate of its overall business groups under KKG if they had not shored up enough political and economic capital. Through its politeness in covering corruption cases, *Kompas* expected that the power holders would remain faithful readers. The politeness in its coverage of Islam also preserved the newspaper from legal subpoenas through the use of libel law, which might have resulted in financial losses, not only in hefty judicial administrative fees, but also in the case of losing such a case. An example of this can be seen in the repeated cases of conflict with conservative Islamic groups, where the extra court trial solution (*penyelesaian secara kekeluargaan*) demanded the newspaper pay enormous amounts of money to the injured parties. In the case of *Monitor weekly*, conflict with a radical group resulted in one of *Kompas'* subsidiaries being closed down by the government. Since *Kompas'* successful expansion as a business group, making it one of the biggest economic giants in Indonesia and making the owner one of the richest people in the country, any mistake committed by any of its business subsidiaries potentially impacts on *Kompas* too, and vice versa.

Finally, the *Kompas Way* has been shaped by the political interests of the newspaper to stay close to the power holders, both for the pragmatic purpose of securing political protection from radical Islamic groups, as well as the more idealistic aim of influencing the government's policy on issues that the journalists believe are vital in securing Indonesian democracy. Using *rasa* in their polite coverage of power holders has consistently been done by *Kompas*, including when covering corruption. The use of *rasa* in covering the wrongdoings of authority figures has resulted in the practice of *polite*

*watchdogging*, meaning that they still cover the case of corruption, but in a polite way (chapter 5). In view of the function of watchdog journalism, *Kompas* journalists believe that acting as a watchdog is an obligation, but that its implementation must not trigger conflict with those in power. This notion is expressed in this unwritten rule, popular amongst *Kompas*: “*ngono yo ngono ning ojo ngono*”, which literally means “*you are free to behave like that, but please behave like this instead.*” In addition, Catholic values have been used to justify the use of *rasa* to some extent, by suggesting that every human should be given the chance to redeem himself, as summarized by one of Jakob’s teaching: “*there is no angel in the world.*”

One of the ways to cover a story about corruption without offending the suspect is by framing the story of corruption within its legal apparatus, which *Kompas* does by mainly covering corruption cases which are already in the judicial process, meaning that such cases have been made official by the government itself. The main sources of these corruption news stories were usually from within the legal apparatus, such as the judge, attorney, legal prosecutor, and lawyer, as well as government officials such as policemen, ministers, as well as legislative members. This study has revealed that across different political regimes, the legal framework has continuously been employed as the central focus of the newspaper’s coverage on corruption. In this regard, *Kompas* journalist have never aspired to engage in investigative journalism, which is seen as the most celebrated form of watchdogging in advanced democratic countries.

The use of *rasa* in covering the political competition among elites in the Presidential election in 2014 resulted in an attempt to establish neutrality, or at least, to not be aligned with either presidential candidate. However, many *Kompas* journalists believed that Jokowi was the better candidate with a better track record, whereas Prabowo was seen as a threat to the future of Indonesian democracy due to his record of human rights violations. In fact, many journalists participated in Jokowi’s presidential campaign in several ways: some

elites provided political advice from behind the scenes, while some ordinary reporters even joined the political gatherings during Jokowi's campaign. From doing a content analysis of the newspaper, it was revealed that the tone of *Kompas'* coverage was more favorable towards Jokowi, and in addition, *Kompas* gave much more space to advertising Jokowi's campaign than to Prabowo's.

Yet, *Kompas'* official position was to remain neutral and not take sides. This policy of neutrality was declared during an editorial meeting and was restated in its published editorial. Furthermore, *Kompas* avoided offending Prabowo and his supporters by not investigating Prabowo's alleged involvement in the human rights abuses in the abduction case of 1998. As explained in chapter 6, *Kompas* implemented self-censorship by not publishing reports by a political journalist who had actually been instructed to investigate Prabowo. The resulting gap between what the journalists said, as stated in the official editorial policy, and what they actually did, could be understood as the newspaper's attempt to stay close to whichever candidate was elected as the next President. In the words of a *Kompas* journalist: "*Regardless of who wins, Kompas must win.*"

By staying close to the power holders, *Kompas* expected to be able to secure political protection when it needed. It had learnt from the past that being close to Sukarno had helped the newspaper to get a publishing license and protected it from the hostile PKI. The name *Kompas* was even bestowed by the President. They also learnt that being close to Suharto had given them protection from hardline Islamic groups, who were protected under New Order policy. Therefore across the different political regimes, *Kompas* learnt that building allies with those in power was crucial to their survival as a newspaper with a double minority status in Indonesia. In addition, by being close to the power holders, *Kompas* also expected to be able to influence the policy-making process, especially in the crucial aspect of promoting democracy. As demonstrated in Chapter 7, during the twilight of the New Order in May 1998, *Kompas* successfully

helped persuade President Suharto to step down from office by presenting this as the demand of the people. Later, in the Reformation era, *Kompas'* consistent pressure on the then President Yudhoyono convinced him to abort his plan to annul the direct election of the local head, as this would go against the will of the people who desired greater political participation. This success was achieved precisely because of *Kompas'* ability to be seen as an ally by the regime. In the words of *Kompas* Chief Editor, as discussed in chapter 7: *"We are heard because we are always kind to them, and demonstrate that we are their friends. So, when our friends criticize us, or reprimand us, which they rarely do, it might mean that something serious is up."*

Indeed, the *Kompas Way* is not solely about pragmatism, as many of its journalists appear committed to democratic ideals. To some extent, the newspaper has been very supportive of democracy and eager to promote democratic values, such as defending the rights of minorities, as well as respecting cultural and religious diversity. As illustrated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, the composition of the journalists working in its newsroom has been a reflection of the diversity of Indonesia both in terms of ethnicity, as well as religion. Indeed, *Kompas* envisages itself as a microcosm of Indonesia (*Indonesia Mini*). Furthermore, it also aims to provide an equal space for dialogue between dominant and minority religious groups, as illustrated in its special edition for its 50-year anniversary. De Jong (1990) argued that the newspaper has indeed become a space where constructive and equal dialogue between religions in Indonesia can take place. Moreover, despite its indirect and polite reporting style, it has consistently covered corruption cases, thereby playing its watchdog role across the different political regimes (Chapter 5). As presented in Chapter 6, some journalists supported Jokowi as they believed that Prabowo has a track record of human rights violations. This was why, despite being neutral in terms of equal coverage space for both electoral candidates, the tone of the coverage was more in support of Jokowi.

In summary, this research has shown that both cultural forces and political economy forces have merged to produce and maintain the journalistic style of *Kompas*, and that this style has endured after each regime change. The evidence has clearly demonstrated that Javanese values, and to a lesser degree, Catholic values, as embodied in the figure of Jakob Oetama as well as *Kompas* journalists, have been used by the newspaper to provide a justification for establishing and preserving their cautious, polite and indirect journalistic style. This was a survival strategy to adapt to political economy pressures, both from within and outside the newsroom, and both from the old authoritarian era and in the recent democratization era. In other words, despite the change of the political regimes, the cultural forces as well as the political economy forces which have shaped the journalistic values and practices of the journalists have remained intact in the newsroom, and this has prevented the newspaper from adopting a more critical watchdog style of journalism, and has constrained its ability to help strengthen Indonesia's democracy.

### **8.3 Jakob's Habitus, Political Economy Factors and the Kompas Way**

This research has highlighted the important role of culture, embodied in the habitus of an influential figure at the newspaper, which has hindered the successful transformation of the role of the newspaper to its new post-authoritarian setting. Jakob Oetama has not only been the owner, but also the Chief Editor of *Kompas* for decades, and he has accumulated significant symbolic and cultural capital. The materialization of this cultural and symbolic capital is the '*Kompas Way*': a specific journalistic style which has been socialized and internalized by the journalists as being the best way to conduct journalistic work. Whilst vulgar interventions from an owner in other media companies might make journalists feel compromised and hesitant, in *Kompas* such interventions tend to be viewed as something good, or even as a virtue. More importantly, as the influence of Jakob is so deeply entrenched at *Kompas*, journalists might not even be aware of it. This can be seen from the self-congratulatory expression frequently heard within the newsroom: "*It is this*



*style of journalism which has made us the largest newspaper in the country.”* With this, the journalists themselves believe that the *Kompas Way* is the best way to conduct journalism.

However, this study has also shown that while culture is an important factor, it only makes up half of the story. The other dimension are the prevalent political economy forces within and outside the media, which have made the newspaper reluctant to undergo significant change. The journalists know that their close relationships with power holders have been one of the main sources of their economic gain, and they might be at risk if they changed their approach towards them. This approach towards the power holders, both the towards the regime as well as the powerful moderate Islamic groups in Indonesia, have secured them political protection from attacks from radical fundamentalists Islamic groups, who have long harbored resentment towards the newspaper. Indeed, the increasing problem of religious intolerance has been one of the characterizing themes of Indonesia’s post-authoritarian era, which puts Catholic and Chinese-orientated media, like *Kompas*, in a vulnerable position.

While the existing theories on journalism in post-authoritarian countries have been colored by a theoretical dichotomy which focuses either on political economy factors, or cultural factors, the story of *Kompas* has clearly demonstrated that these two factors are intertwined. In post-authoritarian Southeast Asian countries such as The Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia, for instance, the theoretical dichotomy is framed in abundant literature that focuses on the role of culture in light of values or essentialist-centered definitions, such as the influence of ‘Asian’ values (Massey & Chang, 2002; Romano, 2005); religious values (Lang, 2016; Pintak and Setiyono, 2001; Tekwani, 2008); or Javanese values in the specific case of Indonesia (Hanitzsch, 2005 & 2006; Romano, 2003). However, they do not adequately illuminate how cultural factors interact and intertwine with political economy factors in shaping journalistic practices. Similarly, there is a vast amount of literature discussing the role of political economy factors in influencing how journalism has operated in these countries, but this does not adequately explain

how such factors might interact with culture (McCargo, 2003; Haryanto, 2011; Heryanto and Hadiz, 2005; Ida, 2011; Lim, 2011 & 2012; Nugroho, Putri and Laksmi, 2012; Tapsell, 2012; Sudibyo and Patria, 2013; Andres, 2016).

In contrast, the literature on South American countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Peru has been convincing in explaining the influence of political economy factors in shaping journalism practices in the region, but hardly discusses the role of culture in the values or essentialist-centered definitions such as “Asian Values” in the case of Southeast Asian countries (Benavidez, 2000; Ferreira, 2006; Fromson, 1996; Hughes and Lawson, 2005; Waisbord, 2000). Even when they discuss cultural aspects to journalism, they categorized it as being “authoritarian journalism culture” or “hybrid journalism culture”, stressing that it was fundamentally political economy factors that shaped journalism culture. While the “authoritarian journalism” refers to journalism culture in the newsroom which was developed during the authoritarian era, “hybrid journalism” refers to the journalism culture in the newsroom after political liberalization, which despite becoming more free and critical, was still very much influenced by the authoritarian culture, and was still cautious and pragmatic. Indeed, in this regard, they consider culture more in the light of an organizational-centered definition (Hughes, 2006; Marquez-Ramirez, 2012; Pinto, 2009).

The case of *Kompas* conforms to the argument of Bourdieu (1998), suggesting that in order to bring about change, there needs to be either a significant political or economic break from outside the media field, or a significant change from within the newsroom. In the case of the evolution of television in France, Bourdieu found that an internal change in the newsroom, whereby a new generation of journalists with a more technical and pragmatic academic background, initiated a shift from an idealistic outlook to a more pragmatic and commercialized one. Regardless of whether this is an expected or unexpected change, the case of France has provided a theory on the evolution of television. *Kompas*' inability to undergo transformation within its newsroom, as well as

the entrenched political economy forces within and outside the paper, both have contributed to the continuation of the *Kompas Way*.

#### **8.4 The Future of Kompas After Jakob Oetama**

Due to the strong, pervasive influence of Jakob, there has been discussion amongst *Kompas* journalists as to what will happen after Jakob dies? Some journalists have even questioned whether the newspaper can survive after his death. Given the fact that the newspaper's founder and owner is now over 86 years old, this discussion is understandable. However, the observation that there is concern that the newspaper will cease to exist once its founder passes away is interesting. On first reflection, it seems surprising and unrealistic to assume that the death of one person could result in the subsequent demise of the entire newspaper. However, this reflects just how important and influential the figure of Jakob is. In this regard, I noticed that the growing concern centered around the newspaper's ability to survive after Jakob was related to two factors: political and economic factors.

Politically, there is a growing concern that in the future, *Kompas* will not be as respected as it is today, whilst Jakob is still alive. This is because Jakob has not prepared a successor to replace him. The fact that he has been in power for such a long time has denied any chance for the cultivation of a figure who could be as equally influential and respected by Indonesian power holders. This is the reason why every politician who pays a visit to *Kompas* always demands to see Jakob for political support, and is not satisfied if they are presented with anyone else. The *Kompas* journalists believe that Indonesian politicians today show such respect and deference towards Jakob because of his longevity: he has witnessed Indonesian presidents come and go from the time of Sukarno, through to Suharto, and now in the Reformation era. Meeting Jakob, who has a deep understanding of Indonesian politics, and gaining his support is considered important for a politician running for president, not only because he will then be able to garner publicity through the newspaper, but more

importantly, he will get *restu* (an Indonesian concept meaning approval, or a combination of permission and support) from a respected figure who wields spiritual power. Indeed, in a country with a strong tradition of mysticism, visiting a respected and influential figure has been a ritual of every politician running for president. It is in this regard that Randu Rahardjo, Chief Editor of *Kompas*, told me one day that the reason Prabowo lost to Jokowi was because he did not meet with Jakob to ask for support. Whether or not this is true is irrelevant; what is significant is that there is no figure in the media as influential and respected as Jakob from the perspective of Indonesian politicians.

The second reason why there is growing concern about the death of Jakob are due to management considerations. Whilst working in the newsroom, I witnessed the technological threat posed by online media, which has brought serious economic consequences to the newspaper. As in other countries where print circulation is reportedly declining, I heard many journalists complaining about the continuously decreasing circulation numbers of *Kompas*. When I first arrived in the newsroom in July 2013, Chief Editor Arif Subangun already shared this concern. Indeed, data shows that while in 2013, *Kompas* still enjoyed a circulation of above 500.000 per day, the number had declined to around 350.000 – 450.000 copies a day by the time I was conducting my research in 2014. More recently, I heard some journalists suggest that the figures are continuing to drop even more sharply. Some were even so pessimistic that they predicted that the newspaper might not survive the next five years. In such critical circumstances, the newspaper needs capable leadership which can win the trust of the journalists and lead *Kompas* through turbulent times. Unfortunately, there is strong doubt about the capabilities of the new Vice Director of the daily, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of *Kompas Gramedia Group*, Lilik Oetama. This is because Lilik, who is the son of Jakob, is believed to have never had any experience as a journalist, nor done any previous work in the media. As explained in Chapter 3, Jakob was a typical Javanese father who never involved his children in his business or work. Both

junior and the seniors journalists alike have never seen Lilik appropriately trained or prepared for the director position.

As this research was taking place, the first sign of the journalists' lack of faith in Lilik was manifested in the ongoing conflict between *Kompas Worker Union* (PKK) and the management of *Kompas Gramedia Group* (KGG) over the cut in housing subsidies for KGG workers, including journalists. As a new CEO, Lilik initiated a policy to annul the newspaper's financial support of giving journalists a zero-interest loan in order to purchase a home. This initiative generated protest from journalists and KGG's workers alike, as it was seen as violating the previous agreement between the workers and management. In this context, people started to see Lilik as a figure who only cares about profit, and began comparing him with Jakob, whom they believed would never have enforced such a policy if he were still in charge. They even speculated that since Lilik only cared about profit and efficiency, it was even possible that he would sell the paper if he thought it would no longer be profitable.

Notwithstanding this concern, there are some journalists who have an optimistic view that *Kompas* will survive after Jakob passes away. However, this optimism is colored by a concern about change, and whether *Kompas* can undergo a cultural transformation from being cautious and polite, to becoming more critical in its coverage. Unfortunately, the more commonly heard view is that the newspaper lacks the ability for such a change. This pessimism is due to the shared understanding among the journalists that the political economy environment surrounding *Kompas* has not changed; nor will it. They have observed that the practice of religious intolerance from Islamic mainstream groups such as MUI, as well as Islamic hardliners such as FPI, has increased significantly during the Reformation era, and is directed at minority groups. Indeed, since the New Order period the newspaper has been repeatedly targeted due to its Catholic-ness. This could encourage journalists to be even more cautious, especially as there will be no Jakob-like figure: someone largely respected by Indonesian politicians and power holders and who could

therefore always protect the newspaper and defend its journalists. Indeed, Jakob is viewed as the “godfather” by *Kompas* journalists.

In light of Bourdieu’s theory on habitus, the situation above has confirmed the notion that habitus is internalized by a person throughout his life, and this shapes his disposition and way of life, making it impossible to immediately dismantle. In the case of *Kompas* journalists, the *Kompas Way* has been socialized among, and internalized by, *Kompas* journalists across generations, making it understandable that this style is very likely to persist after Jakob dies. In this regard, if Bourdieu’s theory is to be applied consistently, then the journalists’ habitus, along with the political economy factors surrounding the newspaper, have interacted and intertwined so thoroughly with each other, resulting in the preservation of the *Kompas Way*.

### **8.5 Kompas, Journalism and the Future of Indonesian Democracy**

What is surprising about this discussion about the future of the newspaper after Jakob is that it mainly addresses the issue of the economic survival of the newspaper, as well as its close relationship with, and influence on, the power holders. There is hardly any serious discussion among the journalists as to how they could conduct a more bold and investigative style of journalism to help accelerate the consolidation of Indonesian democratization. In a country which faces the serious problems of economic disparity, widespread political corruption, and increasing religious intolerance, this question is equally important, if not more so. As a media source that is seen as the flagship of the nation, the newspaper has a responsibility to address these questions, especially at a time when online media, social media and other alternative forms of medias in Indonesia have flooded the stage, resulting in unreliable news, visible seething hatred, and the rise of far right populism. All of these can seriously threaten the nation (George, 2016; Lim, 2017).

For *Kompas*, which is cast as being a Catholic minority group with high economic standing, this question is even more pressing. *Kompas* journalists

have been a constant target of envy from poor Islamic hardliners, resulting quite often in a series of attacks on the newspaper. Many scholars believe that the increasing practice of religious intolerance in Indonesia is linked to the perception of economic inequality. Therefore, these problems might be addressed if *Kompas* could pressure the Indonesian government to seriously focus on bridging the economic gap to bring about more economic equality to its citizens. Furthermore, many studies have suggested that such examples of economic inequality are closely connected to a high degree of political corruption in a country, and this has been very much the case with the current Indonesian system of democracy. Therefore, an increasing role in promoting corruption eradication through adopting a critical watchdog role in the form of investigative journalism is necessary. When an outspoken journalist demanded that the paper conduct more investigative journalism, the newspaper replied coldly by saying: *“Why should we conduct investigative journalism, while we already lead by being what we are?”* (Interview with Pipih Anugerah, November 6, 2017) This elite might have to reconsider his unapologetic and somewhat selfish answer if he wishes to help eradicate the massive problems of corruption and help secure the future of Indonesian democracy.

However, if the newspaper does decide to conduct a more critical style of watchdog journalism, there will be a price to pay. It may lose its close relationship with the power holders or other powerful groups in Indonesia, whom so far have provided the newspaper with comfort and protection from the thing it fears most: the attacks from Islamic hardliners, due to its perceived Catholic-ness. Indeed, *Kompas* journalists have to make an extremely difficult decision between fear and power. So far, with Jakob still in charge, the newspaper has decided to listen more to its fear. In this regard, the hierarchical organizational structure in the newsroom, in which a top-down model of decision-making has been an integral part of its operation, has prevented the newspaper from undergoing significant change in terms of its editorial policy.

As has been apparent in the *Kompas* newsroom, however, there are generations of younger journalists who had been more eager to embrace a “progressive” journalistic vision. Some are more courageous to implement investigative journalism practices, regardless of the political risks it might bring, and many were enthusiastic supporters of the principle, before being restrained and subdued by the elites. They were also more courageous to risk attacks from Islamic hardliners by refusing to give in to the demands of these intolerant groups. In the last case of an attack by the FPI for instance, instead of apologizing and agreeing to drop the controversial story which had been the subject of the FPI’s complaint, many young journalists actually suggested fighting back and bringing the problem to a court. In their view, the threat from the FPI was a threat to the freedom of the press generally, a right which is protected under the freedom of expression as stipulated in the Indonesian Constitution. However, while these young journalists may be brave in challenging the FPI, they remain powerless when confronted with the newspaper elites, supported by Jakob Oetama. If the newspaper wishes to undergo a significant change, transforming the culture within the newsroom by giving more space to the younger journalists to participate in the making of newspaper editorial policy is necessary.

Contemplating these conditions, will this mean that *Kompas* after Jakob will undergo a change towards a more bold and critical journalistic style? Will the absence of Jakob lead to the cultural transformation of the newsroom, in which young journalists have more of a role to play? To investigate how the newspaper adapts after Jakob will be the challenge of future research. Another potential avenue of research is illuminated when considering a current limitation of this research: the limited scope of my case study, which informed the main approach. Even though *Kompas* is the oldest and largest newspaper in Indonesia and has served as a reference for most other media outlets in the country, this study never claimed that it represented *all* Indonesian journalism. Therefore, a further study



comparing *Kompas* with other newspapers in Indonesia, or other countries, would be worth undertaking to deepen our understanding of journalism in post-authoritarian settings.