

Chapter 8

What Determine Indonesian Commercial News TV Channels' Political News Production and Publication in the Post–Soeharto Regime: A Critical Political Economy Perspective of the Media

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ABSTRACT

This work focuses on structural-systemic factors that have been determining Indonesian commercial news TV Channels' political news production and publication in the Post-Soeharto Regime. A critical political economy perspective of the media and the media behaviours, performance, and content production models were adopted. Articles published in qualified journals, theses and reports released by Indonesian mainstream media related with such issue and in-depth interview derived from five senior editors/journalists of Indonesian commercial news TV channels and interview data collected from Indonesian journalists through online survey were extracted using the qualitative content and thematic analyses. The findings indicate that the following factors systematically determined political news production and publications organized by such private news TV channels. These factors include cartelised political system, party cartelisation, oligarchic media ownership, Pancasila (the Five Principles) as a unitary Indonesian state and government ideology, types and personal characters of the news sources, and religious violence groups.

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of this work come from the following observation. At first, soon after the downfall of Soeharto's New Order regime in 1998s, democratisation of politics took place in Indonesia. It paves the way for the emergence of a democratic media system. Establishment of this media system led to following transformations taking place. Indonesian state-owned TV channel, which is TVRI, has been no longer existing as a primary source of political information, as compared to it was when such regime was in power. The roles of this channel in Indonesian politics instead, has been gradually replaced by the following private news TV channels, which are Metro TV, TV One, Kompas TV and CNN Indonesia that are, respectively, established in 25 October 1999, 14 February 2008, 9 September 2011 and 15 December 2015.

Second, the existing literature indicate the following tendencies. The ways the media in the Western established democratic countries, such as US and the UK, selected, produced and published news and the non-news materials are likely defined by not only 'a hierarchy of concrete historical and material determinants' (Garnham, 1979, p. 125), but also a 'sphere of material production' (Garnham, 2011, p. 42). In such countries, the media performance, behaviour and content production are also likely influenced by some structural factors ranging from individual factors associated with the media worker to the country-related factors (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Reese, 2008; McQuail, 1992, 2010). However, while the structural conditions and factors that defined the powers and roles of news TV channels in the emerging democracy have been under-theorized, a specific research that explore such development has been under-developed. More importantly, whilst such issues remain prevail, we lack knowledge regarding diverse factors that systematically shape up political news productions of news TV channels in Indonesia, more specifically, in the Post-Soeharto regime.

In consideration of such issues, this work selects the Indonesian case and focuses on the following question: structural-systemic factors that have been determining Indonesian commercial news TV Channels' political news production and publication in the Post-Soeharto Regime?

BACKGROUND

Establishment of Democratic Media System and Its Consequences on the Roles of the Media in the Post-Soeharto New Order

Indonesia is one of republican democratic countries in Asia, which followed the presidential government system (Ahmad, 2017a, 2017b). In between 1966s and 1998s, this country has been ruled under authoritarian Soeharto's New Order regime. Since such regime was in power, not only political parties, but also the media have been de-politicized forcefully. The Indonesian mainstream media, as an economic institution thrived substantially (Dhakidae, 1991). However, journalists who worked for these media enjoyed less freedoms to report political issues and events and express political (public) opinions either (Heryanto & Adi, 2001). Such developments kept prevailing within the last decade of this regime (Hidayat and Sendjaja, 2002).

In the early 1998s, dramatic social and political changes took place in this country. This was triggered by massive waves of political protests organized Indonesian students and middle class. Such protests were taking place in not only Jakarta, a capital city of Indonesia, but also some prominent cities of Indonesian provinces. They called for President Soeharto to step down from his presidency and establish a democratic political and election systems either. As such regime failed in handling such protest, power and political legitimacy of Soeharto presidency collapsed dramatically in 21 May 1998.

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