



## The Development of Indonesian Press Freedom in the Period of Old Order (1950-1965)

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### A B S T R A C T

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Freedom of the press is a basic principle that affirms that communication and expression through various channels, including publications, must be seen as a right that can be exercised without restrictions. However, during the Old Order period (1950-1965), the condition of the press in Indonesia fluctuated. This research aims to explore more deeply about press freedom in the Old Order era. The method used in this study is a historical method with a qualitative approach. In 1950-1956, the Indonesian press enjoyed a significant degree of freedom, where they could criticize the government through the print media. However, starting in 1956, signs of a decline in press freedom began to be seen, caused by the Old Order government's discomfort with criticism made by the press. In 1958, the government began to control the press by requiring a Printing Permit. When President Soekarno consolidated his power and began the era of guided democracy (1959-1965), press freedom in Indonesia effectively ended. This resulted in the press being under the control of Sukarno's power, although the press succeeded in overthrowing the power after the G30S incident in 1965.

## Introduction

The Old Order in the context of Indonesian history refers to the period of Soekarno's reign which lasted from 1950 to 1965 (Mulyawan, 2015). Press freedom in Indonesia has experienced significant dynamics during two important periods in Indonesian political history, namely the Liberal Democracy Period (1950-1959) and the Guided Democracy Period (1959-1965) (Hanafie & Suryani, 2011). During the period of liberal democracy, press freedom flourished. Various newspapers, magazines, and other print media have sprung up, creating space for diverse voices, whether from political parties, social groups, or individuals (Anggara, 2013). Print media became a platform for political discussions, criticism of the government, and the delivery of people's aspirations. However, while press freedom has progressed, challenges remain. Political instability, competition between parties, and social conflicts affect the climate of press freedom in period of liberal democracy (Schwarz, 1994). The government in the Liberal Democracy period sometimes carried out censorship and restrictions on the media that were considered to threaten political stability. However, this period is still considered a golden age for the press in Indonesia, where the media plays an active role in shaping public opinion (Rowa, 2015).

A significant change occurred when Soekarno announced the implementation of Guided Democracy. In this situation, press freedom is subject to quite strict restrictions. The media is strictly regulated and media that are contrary to government policies or perceived as threatening political stability are often subject to censorship, intimidation, or even shutdown. The Soekarno government carried the ideology of "Nasakom," which sought to combine nationalism, religion, and communism. In this context, the media tends to function as a means of propaganda, supporting the agenda of the Soekarno government, and reducing criticism of Soekarno's power. Although there are still some independent media, the space for freedom of expression is shrinking (Suryana et al., 2022).

Different forms of government in the period 1950-1965 (Old Order) had a significant impact on the life and development of the press in Indonesia. The press serves as a reflection and witness to history at that time. In addition to reporting various events that are considered important, the press also provides views and attitudes towards the phenomena that occur. In this context, the term "press" includes not only newspapers, radio, and news agencies, but also television which

began to be introduced in Indonesia in the early 1960s. The press is one of the crucial social institutions, playing a role in conveying news and opinions to the public and the government. Therefore, the press institution is often considered the fourth democratic force, side by side with the executive, legislative, and judicial institutions (Hohenberg, 1968).

Although theoretically the triangular relationship between the press, the government, and the public can be seen as a dynamic as well as ideal framework of relations. However, in reality, it is the relationship between the press and the government that affects the pattern of life as well as freedom of the press in a country more. In the context of Indonesia, which had just achieved full independence at that time, it was important to understand and analyze the interaction between the press as well as the government as state administrators, considering its long-term impact that would contribute to the pattern of life and freedom of the press in the country, especially in the period 1950-1965 in Indonesia (Oetoma, 1987). Ironically, the struggle to achieve press freedom during 1950-1965 is still an agenda that journalists must fight for. This is due to the fact that press freedom is not fully recognized as a proper right, but rather highly dependent on the policies of the ruling rulers. Press freedom in Indonesia in 1950-1965 often operates on the principle of “opening and closing”, where the space for openness given to journalists often depends on the “mood” of the ruler who leads the country (Hanazaki, 1998).

Previous research on the development of the press and communication during the Old Order period has been discussed by a number of researchers, including: (1) *The Emergence and Development of the People’s Mind Newspaper until the Beginning of the New Order in Bandung (1950-1974)* which was researched by Ramdhan Budi Prastowo (2017); *An Analysis of Political Advertising Ethics in the Soekarno Era (1945-1967)* which was researched by Mohamad Faiq Rizkiansyah Yusuf, Muhamad Gibraltar Kamil, and Daniel Handoko (2024), as well as; *The Role of the Press Media in the Formation of Public Opinion in the Liberal and Guided Democracy Period* researched by Dewi Naila Farichatul Izza (2024). However, the three studies have not provided a comprehensive analysis of press freedom in Indonesia, especially during the Old Order, with a limited focus on newspapers as well as less attention paid to other mass media such as radio, television, and film. This study offers a more comprehensive historical approach to understanding the

development of press freedom in the changing political context during the Old Order. Through chronological analysis, this study seeks to identify significant events that affect press freedom, including government policies and media responses to these policies during the Old Order. Thus, the purpose of this study is to analyze the development of press freedom during the Old Order period, as well as the factors that influenced the government's policy towards the media and how the media responded to these policies. Therefore, the researcher formulated the title of this study, namely the Development of Indonesian Press Freedom in the Old Order Period (1950-1965).

The preparation method for the research entitled "The Development of Indonesian Press Freedom in the Old Order Period (1950-1965)" began with the application of in-depth historical methods to understand the context of past events. This research focuses attention on certain aspects, such as important events and the impact of Indonesian government policies during the Old Order era on the media. The techniques used in this study include a qualitative approach, which allows for an in-depth analysis of people's experiences, as well as a case study approach to explore specific phenomena (Creswell, 2012). In addition, historical and mass media analysis is applied to understand changes in press freedom over time, such as the liberal democracy period (1950-1959) and the guided democracy period (1960-1965) in Indonesia. Using data triangulation, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of press freedom during the period, resulting in significant and relevant findings.

## **Method**

The qualitative approach is a research approach that emphasizes a deep understanding of social phenomena through descriptive and interpretive data collection (Lune & Berg, 2017). The data analysis process is carried out inductively, where the researcher seeks to find patterns and themes that emerge from the data that has been collected, while considering the subjectivity that may affect the results of the research (Martin, 2023). The qualitative approach provides flexibility that allows researchers to adapt the methods used to the situation at hand, resulting in deeper and richer insights into the complexity of human behavior as well as its social context (Creswell, 2012). One of the methods used in the qualitative approach is the historical method (Gorman, 1992).

The historical method is a research approach that aims to understand and analyze events that occurred in the past through the process of collecting, criticizing, and interpreting historical sources (Kuntowijoyo, 2018). Sartono Kartodirdjo (1992) identifies four stages in the historical method, namely: (1) heuristic, (2) source criticism, (3) interpretation, and (4) historiography. The process of historical research generally begins with the collection of historical sources known as heuristics. Furthermore, the researcher criticized the historical source to assess its reliability and relevance. Afterwards, researchers continue with data interpretation, attempting to explain as well as give meaning to the events studied, often by considering various perspectives and the social, political, and cultural contexts behind them. The last stage is historiography, which includes writing history based on sources that have been collected, assessed, selected, criticized, and reflects the success of the researcher in the research process. By applying this method, researchers can compile historiography that not only presents facts, but also explores the meaning and significance of events in social, political, and cultural contexts (Gorman, 1992). The ultimate goal of the historical method is to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of change and continuity in society over time, including the development of press freedom in Indonesia during the Old Order period (1950-1965).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Freedom of Press or Limits of Ethics in Liberal Democracy Period (1950-1957)**

The early 1950 can be considered a period of “optimism” in an effort to realize “democracy” in Indonesia, considering that previously, after the proclamation of independence, the future prospects of democracy still seemed unclear (Ali, 1993). After the recognition of sovereignty at the end of 1949, the Indonesian people felt the spirit of euphoria related to the meaning of the victory of independence. The new Indonesian government, including the president, vice president, political party elites, and the army, along with the press, felt the atmosphere marked by attitudes, actions, feelings, as well as optimistic outlook on the future. Especially for the press, which is an integral part of society, the democratic atmosphere at that time was responded to by expressing freedom and articulating interests according to their respective orientations. This “democratic-liberal” attitude and

view of the press, in the end, is often confronted by the political interests of the rulers who want effective government management without much interference, especially from the press (Suwirta, 2008).

Life in the period of Liberal Democracy in Indonesia (1950-1959) was marked by the freedom for journalists to publish the media. It can be said that anyone with financial resources, regardless of social background or political ideology, can publish the media, especially newspapers, without the need for permission from any party. On the other hand, the Indonesian government at that time also actively supported media publishing by providing capital assistance, subsidies for paper, printing equipment, and subscriptions for every newspaper published (Sjahril & Sjureich, 1971). The Indonesian government support is closely related to the need to obtain information and perspectives that support the interests as well as political policies of the Indonesian government, in the midst of the dominance of the Dutch press and the Chinese press, each of which has its own voice and political orientation (Suwirta, 2008).

Precise quantitative data on the press in the 1950 have not yet been fully revealed. However, in general it can be concluded that at the beginning of the decade, there were between 75 and 104 newspapers in operation, with a circulation ranging from 400,000 to 630,000 copies. More than half of the newspapers are in Indonesian and regional languages, such as Javanese and Sundanese, while the rest are published in Dutch and Chinese (Smith, 1986). With Indonesia's population exceeding 70,000,000 people, most of whom live in Java, the condition of the press, especially newspapers, is still classified as a limited medium, which can only be accessed and utilized by the upper middle class, whose number is also relatively small in the social structure of Indonesian society. Nevertheless, the role of the press as a source of information and social control for the government and society makes it still important in the context of the life of the nation and state (Sjahril & Sjureich, 1971).

The condition of the Indonesian press during the liberal democratic period was mostly a continuation of the media that emerged during the Indonesian revolution before the 1950s, while others were new media that emerged in the 1950s. Some of them have even existed since the colonial era, for example, newspapers such as: Merdeka, Berita Indonesia, Pedoman, and Indonesia Raya published in Jakarta; Kedaulatan Rakjat and Harian Nasional in Yogyakarta; Suara Rakjat and Djawa Post in Surabaya; Waspada in Medan; Haluan in Padang; and the Pedoman Rakjat



in Makassar are examples of media published during the Indonesian revolution, before 1950s. On the other hand, the media that emerged in the 1950s included newspapers, such as: *Pikiran Rakjat* in Bandung; *Suara Merdeka* in Semarang; and *Surabaya Post* in Surabaya. Some of the media from the colonial era that were still operating in the 1950s include: *Pemandangan* and *Antara* in Jakarta; *Sipatahun* in Bandung, as well as; *Suara Umum* in Surabaya. The combination of continuity from the past and the experience of the Indonesian revolution, as well as the democratic atmosphere of the time, made a significant contribution to the dynamic and free life as well as perspective of the press in the 1950s (Soebagijo, 1977).

Another striking phenomenon in the world of the press in the period 1950-1957 was the emergence of newspapers that functioned as a means of communication for various political forces. Indonesia in the era of liberal democracy, the life of the press was marked by the presence of various political forces originating from nationalist, religious, communist, and military groups. Each of these political forces has a media that is used for their own interests, such as newspapers *Suluh Indonesia* owned by PNI (Partai Nasional Indonesia); *Harian Abadi* managed by Masyumi (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia); *Duta Masyarakat* which belongs to NU (Nahdatul Ulama), as well as; *Harian Rakjat* and *Warta Bhakti* owned by PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia). In addition, in early 1959, the TNI-AD (Tentara Nasional Indonesia-Angkatan Darat) also publishes newspapers, such as *Angkatan Bersendjata* and *Berita Yudha*. In this context, the news and opinions presented by the press can be seen as an extension of the policies and programs carried out by the political forces that support them. The rivalry and dynamics between the various political forces of the 1950s were also seen in the “pen wars and voice wars” that took place among the newspapers they owned (Asrun et al., 2021).

There is also a press that tends to be independent, which means that it is not formally tied to a certain political force. In this press category, the term personal journalism emerges, namely journalism that clearly expresses the voice and attitude that is in line with the thoughts, views, and ideals of the editor-in-chief (Suwirta, 2004). For example, newspapers *Merdeka*, *Indonesia Raya*, and *Pedoman* published in Jakarta in the 1950s cannot be separated from the vision and policies carried out by figures, such as Burhanuddin Muhammad Diah, Mochtar Lubis, and Rosihan Anwar (Atmakusumah, 1992). The same applies to newspapers in other major cities in Java, such as *Pikiran Rakjat* (Bandung), *Suara*

Merdeka (Semarang), Kedauletan Rakjat (Yogyakarta), as well as Surabaya Post (Surabaya), who are clearly connected with figures such as Djamal Ali, Mohamad Hetami, Madikin Wonohito, and Abdul Azis (Soebagijo, 1981). This phenomenon is also seen in the press published outside Java, such as the Waspada newspaper (Medan), Haluan (Padang), and Pedoman Rakjat (Makassar), which in many ways reflects the views and interests of Mohamad Said, Ani Idrus, Kasuma, as well as Lazarus Edward Manuhua (Sjahril & Sjureich, 1971). Although it does not ignore the contributions of other editorial members, the role of the editor-in-chief in the newspaper is very important, since he functions as the captain responsible for the direction and journey of the media. The direction taken and the way to achieve the desired goals must remain within the policy framework as well as views of the editor-in-chief (Gani, 1978).

Regarding newspaper sales in Indonesia in the period 1950-1959, accurate data still seems to be difficult to obtain. The year 1957 is often considered the peak of press violence in Indonesia, caused by several factors, including nationalization and the seizure of Dutch-language newspapers. During that period, there were 96 Indonesian-language newspapers with a total circulation of 1.022.000 copies. In addition, there are 17 Chinese-language newspapers with a circulation of 130.000 copies. Several English-language newspapers, such as the Indonesian Observer led by Herawati Diah and the Times of Indonesia led by Charles Tambu, also came with a circulation of around 25.000 copies (Smith, 1986). Below is a table showing the conditions of the press that were considered significant during 1950-1959, including the estimated number of copies, which have been summarized from various sources by researchers.

Newspaper Name	Venue and Start of Publication	Estimated Amount of Copy
Merdeka	Jakarta, 1 October 1945	20.000 copy
Berita Indonesia	Jakarta, 29 September 1945	10.000 copy
Pedoman	Jakarta, 29 November 1945	48.000 copy
Indonesia Raya	Jakarta, 29 December 1945	47.500 copy
Indonesian Observer	Jakarta, 1 October 1954	7.500 copy
Times of Indonesia	Jakarta, 1952	5.000 copy
Keng Po	Jakarta, 1923	39.000 copy
Harian Abadi	Jakarta, 2 January 1950	34.000 copy
Suluh Indonesia	Jakarta, 1 October 1953	40.000 copy



Duta Masjarakat	Jakarta, 2 January 1954	15.000 copy
Harian Rakjat	Jakarta, 31 January 1951	55.000 copy
Pikiran Rakjat	Bandung, 1 June 1950	16.000 copy
Sipatahunan	Bandung, 20 April 1923	15.000 copy
Suara Merdeka	Semarang, 11 February 1950	5.000 copy
Kedaulatan Rakjat	Yogyakarta, 27 September 1945	15.000 copy
Harian Nasional	Yogyakarta, 15 November 1946	7.500 copy
Surabaya Post	Surabaya, 1 April 1953	15.000 copy
Suara Rakjat	Surabaya, 1 October 1945	14.000 copy
Waspada	Medan, 11 January 1947	10.000 copy
Haluan	Padang, 1 January 1948	7.500 copy
Kalimantan Berdjuang	Banjarmasin, 1 November 1946	5.000 copy
Pedoman Rakjat	Makassar, 1 March 1947	5.000 copy

Table 1. The number of newspaper tires during 1950-1959 in Indonesia based on the source:

(Soebagijo, 1977), (Smith, 1986), (Said, 1988), (Harsono, 1997), (Iskantini, 2002).

From the table presented, it can be seen that the average number of newspapers in Indonesia in the period 1950-1959 was below 100.000 copies. However, it is important to note that the habit of reading newspapers among Indonesian people is collective. A single copy of a newspaper is usually read by more than two people. Therefore, if a newspaper has as many as 50,000 copies, it is likely to have been read by about 200,000 individuals. In addition, the press is still considered important by the Indonesian government and people, because it presents factual news and opinions contained in editorial columns, caricatures, and other rubrics. In this context, it is understood that the views of journalists who use pens are often sharper than those of military power. However, it should be noted that editors-in-chief often increase their newspaper's claims of copy in the hope that the higher the copy figure, the greater the capital support, and paper subsidies from the Indonesian government (Siahaan & Purnomo, 1993).

To understand press freedom in Indonesia during the period of liberal democracy (1950-1959), it is necessary to consider several factors. First, the Indonesian press often identifies itself as a "struggle press" that shows a critical and advocacy attitude towards the abuse of power as well as unhealthy democratic practices. Second, the relationship between the press and the government at that time was still in the process of finding an agreement, where there was a desire to

abolish various rules that restricted the press, while on the other hand, a stable and authoritative government also wanted to be enforced. Finally, editors-in-chief were generally born in the 1910s and 1920s, so in the 1950s they were around 30 to 40 years old. In this context, editors-in-chief who are 30-40 years old feel unpressured and have the courage to criticize and remind government officials, who generally come from the older generation, born in the 1900s. The atmosphere in Indonesia during the liberal democracy, in which independence had just been achieved in a respectable manner, further strengthened the aspiration to realize a democratic and egalitarian government, including in the life of the press, which is an undeniable social expectation (Ritonga, 2014).

Freedom of the press is constitutionally regulated in the 1950 Constitution, specifically in article 19 which states that “Everyone has the right to freedom to have and express opinions” (Nasution, 1995). On March 17, 1950, the Indonesian government, together with the press and academics, agreed to establish a Press Council. The Press Council has several tasks, including: (1) Replacing the press law inherited from the Dutch colonial era; (2) Provide solid socio-economic support for the Indonesian press, including access to credit and assistance from the government; (3) Improving the quality of journalism in Indonesia, as well as; (4) Regulating the social and legal position of Indonesian journalists, including aspects of welfare, salary, legal protection, and journalistic ethics (Smith, 1986). In 1954, the Indonesian government took steps to revoke the *Persbreidel Ordonnantie*, a regulation restricting press freedom that had been in place since September 7, 1931 during the Dutch East Indies. This regulation includes the closure of publications that are considered to interfere with the smooth running of the government (Surjomihardjo, 2002).

In general, the Indonesian press showed support for government policies and programs during the Liberal Democracy period, which was seen in several important events, such as: (1) The Asian-African Conference in Bandung (April 18-24, 1955); (2) 1955 General Election; (3) Suppression of the DI/TII (Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia) movement in West Java, Aceh, and South Sulawesi, as well as; (4) Efforts to return West Irian to Indonesia. This support arises because the Indonesian press considers the government’s policy as a step that is beneficial to the national interest, increases the nation’s pride and authority, and strengthens national unity. Meanwhile, the Dutch press in Indonesia tended to be neutral or

even refused to support the political policies of the Indonesian government in the 1950s and 1960s. This has serious implications, where after the Indonesian government took steps to nationalize foreign companies in 1956-1957, a number of Dutch newspapers, such as: (1) *De Java Bode*, *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, and *De Nieuwsgier* (Jakarta); (2) *A.I.D. de Preanger Bode* (Bandung); (3) *De Locomotief* (Semarang), as well as; (4) *De Vrije Pers* and *Nieuw Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* (Surabaya) are prohibited from publication in Indonesia (Syafriadi, 2023).

However, for the press in Indonesia, behind the news and supporting opinions, there is a critical attitude towards events or policies of the Indonesian government that are considered detrimental to the public interest and are not in line with democratic ethics. As an institution, the main function of the press is not only limited to the provision of information, but also includes social supervision of the government and society. Therefore, issues related to cases in Indonesia during the Liberal Democracy period, such as: (1) The Mutual Security Act (MSA) involving economic and military assistance from the United States to the Sukiman Cabinet; (2) The October 17, 1952 incident when the Indonesian military urged President Soekarno to dissolve Parliament during the Wilopo Cabinet; (3) President Soekarno's polygamy with Hartini in 1954; (4) The case of prostitution disguised by the Friendly Committee at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955; (5) Corruption scandals among state officials and military officers, as well as; (6) The uprising in several regions (Sumatra and Sulawesi) against the central government authorities (Jakarta) in 1957, was covered deeply and sharply by the Indonesian press. Each media outlet with its own style and approach will report as well as provide a response, both in the form of opinions and criticisms, to each case that its editor-in-chief deems important (Suwirta, 2008).

Criticism of the abuse of power by the media was reflected in the *Merdeka* Newspaper in Jakarta in 1952. Under the leadership of Burhanuddin Mohammad Diah, the newspaper accused the Minister of Economy, Dr. Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, who served during the Sukiman Cabinet, of involvement in the sale of scrap metal that was a remnant of World War II in Morotai, Maluku, without clear accountability. The caricature published by the *Merdeka* Newspaper with the title "Treasure of Morotai" (*Harta Karun Marotai*) is considered to have degraded and defamed Dr. Sumitro Djojohadikusumo (Sjahril & Sjureich, 1971). In response, Dr. Sumitro Djojohadikusumo filed a lawsuit at the Jakarta District

Court and referred to the Merdeka Newspaper as the “yellow press”, referring to the sensational, cheap, and unobjective nature of the news and opinions presented. In response to the allegations, Burhanuddin Mohammad Diah also filed a lawsuit, affirming that the Merdeka Newspaper is a credible and respected media since the time of the Indonesian revolution. Although the outcome of this case is unclear until the change of cabinet, the relationship between the Indonesian press and the Indonesian government can still be established through mutually agreed legal channels as well as regulations (Suwirta, 2008).



Figure 1. Merdeka Newspaper about Morotai Island which was published in February 1953 (Source: Perpustakaan Nasional Salemba).





Figure 2. The Importantia Nusantara newspaper criticized Sukiman's cabinet in 1952 regarding Indonesia's foreign policy, namely free and active politics (Source: Gudang Warsip)

The fall of the Sukiman Cabinet in the period from April 27, 1951 to February 23, 1952 was influenced by various factors, including sharp criticism from the mass media (Feith, 1962). The important role of newspapers, such as Indonesia Raya led

by Mochtar Lubis, Harian Abadi led by Suardi Tasrif, and Pedoman led by Rosihan Anwar cannot be ignored. One of the causes of the collapse of this cabinet was the policy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Subardjo Djojoadisuryo, who signed the MSA (Mutual Security Act) which provided economic and military assistance from the United States to Indonesia (Gardner, 1999). This policy is considered by the Indonesian press media as a deviation from the principle of the foreign policy of the Republic of Indonesia which prioritizes a free-active policy (Hatta, 1988). When this issue came into the public spotlight and was discussed in parliament, the Sukiman Cabinet decided to resign. In this context, the Pedoman Newspaper published a headline welcoming the fall of the Sukiman Cabinet with the title “Victory for the Press” (Kemenangan bagi Pers) (Suwirta, 2008).

The events that occurred on October 17, 1952 attracted great attention from the Indonesian mass media. In this context, the Merdeka newspaper led by Burhanuddin Mohammad Diah strongly criticized the political actions of the Army officers, especially from the Siliwangi Division, who tried to urge President Soekarno to dissolve Parliament. This incident became one of the factors that led to the fall of the Wilopo Cabinet, which was in power from April 1, 1952 to June 2, 1953 (Sophiaan, 1979). In response to the incident, the Merdeka newspaper in its editorial praised President Soekarno’s courage and leadership, despite being under pressure from mass demonstrations and threats from panzer weapons heading towards the National Palace. On the other hand, the newspaper also criticized the authoritarian and undemocratic actions carried out by the military, including the destruction of the Parliament building (Maulana & Santosa, 2019). When Merdeka and Berita Indonesia, both of which were owned by Burhanuddin Mohammad Diah, experiencing anger from the military which led to the destruction of the editorial office and its closure on October 18-19, 1952, the two newspapers firmly refused. To commemorate this sad event, namely the arbitrary act of the military that closed the publication of the Merdeka press office and Berita Indonesia, Merdeka the following year, precisely on October 17, 1953, published a corner note entitled (Hari Berkabung) “Mourn Day” (Zulianto et al., 2016).

Other problems that were highlighted by the Indonesian press at that time were: (1) The polygamy scandal involving Presidents Soekarno and Hartini in 1954; (2) The case of prostitution disguised by the Hospitality Committee at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955, as well as; (3) The issue



of corruption and collusion among the bureaucracy and the military in 1956. These various issues are widely discussed by newspapers such as *Indonesia Raya*, *Harian Abadi*, *Merdeka*, and *Pedoman*. In particular, *Indonesia Raya* is known as a controversial newspaper because of its courage in criticizing openly, firmly, and even vulgarly against those who are considered to violate moral and ethical norms in democratic life (Haryanto, 1996). Sharp editorials are often written by Mochtar Lubis, accompanied by caricatures containing social criticism, as well as corner notes columns full of humor and sarcasm, which are characteristic of *Indonesia Raya*. Because of its courage and steadfastness in delivering social criticism, the newspaper is often dubbed the “jihadist press” (Atmakusumah, 1992). Mochtar Lubis himself is often considered the editor-in-chief of *Indonesia Raya* who is independent, courageous, and stubborn. Mochtar Lubis often sees the world around him with a very black-and-white gaze. This kind of view is considered unstrategic for the sustainability of a healthy press in the future (Oetoma, 1992).

Uncovering personal scandals, such as hidden polygamy and prostitution, as well as issues of corruption and collusion among state officials, including smuggling by the military, in the context of a newly independent Indonesia that is still learning to manage the government, often triggers dissatisfaction and negative reactions from those who are the object of media criticism. Generally, state and military officials show displeasure and anger when faced with criticism from the press. This also applies to President Soekarno, who feels disturbed and angry at the “liberal press” because he feels humiliated and cornered in front of the international public (Adams, 1966). On the other hand, Roeslan Abdulgani, an official accused of supporting the practice of hidden prostitution at the Asian-African Conference guest welcome event in Bandung in 1955 and involved in corruption and collusion with Chinese businessmen in 1956, argued that the media was too biased and sensational in presenting its news and views. Nevertheless, the attitude of state and military officials at the time was still able to refrain from silencing sharp criticism of the press, at least until the end of 1959 (Suwirta, 2008).

The *Pedoman* and *Harian Abadi* newspapers have an important role in voicing the need for a more democratic life, as well as encouraging the central government in Jakarta to pay attention to the aspirations and demands that arise in the regions. Rosihan Anwar, as the editor-in-chief of the *Pedoman*, although claiming to be an independent journalist, is often considered to represent the

political views of the Indonesian Socialist Party led by Sutan Sjahrir (Anwar, 1981). The same applies to *Harian Abadi*, which belongs to the Masyumi (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia) political party and is led by Suardi Tasrif. This newspaper cannot be separated from the influence of Masyumi (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia) figures, such as Mohammad Natsir, Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, Burhanuddin Harahap, and Mohamad Roem. Since the time of the Indonesian revolution, these figures have had a close relationship with Sutan Sjahrir and are known as the “religious socialism” group in Masyumi (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia) (Noer, 1987). These two newspapers, *Pedoman* and *Harian Abadi*, would eventually disappear from circulation during the era of guided democracy around 1959, along with the decline in the political influence of the Indonesian Socialist Party and Masyumi (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia) (Suwirta, 2008).

In 1956-1957, there were tensions in areas that opposed the central government of Jakarta, which was marked by the formation of the Central Leadership Council, such as the Elephant Council in North Sumatra, the Bull Council in Central Sumatra, and the Garuda Council in South Sumatra. Many mass media have reminded the Indonesian government of the importance of continuing to operate within the framework of a democratic and fair life. Signs of complexity in political life became increasingly visible in 1956. The 1955 General Election did not produce a dominant political party. President Soekarno began to propose the need for a guided democratic system as a substitute for a liberal parliamentary democratic system. Vice President Mohamad Hatta, who felt that it was not in line with the vision of centralized government carried out by Soekarno, resigned from his position at the end of 1956 (Noer, 1990).

All significant and relevant political events during the era of liberal democracy (1950-1959) received intense attention, reported as news, as well as responded critically and freely by the mass media. In this context, various newspapers published in Jakarta between 1950-1957, such as *Pedoman*, *Indonesia Raya*, *Harian Abadi*, and *Times of Indonesia*, as well as regional media, such as *Haluan* (Padang) and *Waspada* (Medan), shows great concern for the dynamics of upheaval in these regions. On the other hand, newspapers such as *Merdeka*, *Suluh Indonesia*, *Duta Masyarakat*, and *Harian Rakjat* generally provide support to the central government in Jakarta, including President Soekarno, the Prime Minister, and the Army, to take firm action against any efforts that have the potential to

disrupt national unity. When the National Conference was held in 1957 between the central government and army commanders in the tense areas, which was also attended by Mohamad Hatta, the mass media showed great concern and hope for the outcome of the meeting, hoping that the issue of national leadership could be resolved soon. However, when the media conveyed views and news without going through an official spokesperson from the National Consultative Committee, the government and the military responded with repressive measures, including the closure of several newspaper publications. This action marked the beginning of a serious challenge to press freedom in Indonesia at the end of the liberal democratic period (Smith, 1986).

### **There Began to be A Storm Against Press Freedom at the End of the Liberal Democratic Period (1957-1959)**

The year 1957 is often considered the beginning of a dark period for democracy in Indonesia, including in terms of press freedom. The heyday of political life and freedom in the era of Liberal Democracy soon ended and was replaced by a more authoritarian as well as centralized political system. Internal tensions among the Army, especially among mid-level officers who eventually took power in various regions, further worsened the political situation in Indonesia. Under the pretext of maintaining security and order, the Indonesian National Army, which was supported by the government (Prime Minister Djuanda) and had the approval of President Soekarno, implemented a state of emergency or *Staat van Oorlog en Beleg* in 1957. The legal framework regarding the state of emergency is a legacy of colonial law, which gives enormous power to the Indonesian government and military, including in regulating and controlling press life in the country (Surjomihardjo, 2002).

The Serikat Perusahaan Surat kabar (SPS), an organization representing press publishing established during the Indonesian revolution (June 8, 1946), considers the policy of the Penguasa Perang Daerah (PEPERDA) Jakarta Raya as an indication of the loss of press freedom in Indonesia. Newspapers that are still in operation are required to comply with the wishes of the authorities, as there is a possibility that the Printing License can be revoked at any time by the authorities. Indonesian journalists are also unable to carry out their duties freely,



Figure 3. The caricature of the newspaper Indonesia Raya, led by Mochtar Lubis, July 30, 1957, which spoke out the boldest in criticizing President Soekarno's political behavior which was considered undemocratic (Source: Atmakusumah, 1992)

because they are always threatened by the possibility of revoking the Printing License. During the Dutch colonial period, despite strict supervision of the press, publication permits were not enforced. The experience of Japanese military rule in Indonesia (1942-1945) shows that all media must be fully controlled by the



government for the sake of propaganda and the achievement of the goals set by the rulers. Therefore, since October 1, 1958, the press in Indonesia no longer functions as an institution that supports the democratization process, but only as a tool to justify the political actions of the rulers or at least not criticize the actions of the rulers (Sjahril & Sjureich, 1971).

### **Freedom of Press Under Authoritarian Power During Guided Democracy (1959-1965)**

Policy the Penguasa Perang Daerah (PEPERDA) Jakarta Raya then applied by PEPERTI (Penguasa Perang Tertinggi) throughout Indonesia in 1959. This marked the beginning of a period known as the “guided press”, which followed the political system of Guided Democracy introduced by President Soekarno through his decree on July 5, 1959. During this period, the freedom to criticize the rulers, including the President, state officials, and the military, was eliminated. Furthermore, various regulations to control the press continued to be enforced in the following years. For example, in 1960, the government issued a new regulation requiring the press to apply for a Printing License, by signing the “19 Statements” declaring loyalty, support, defense, obedience, compliance, and not containing sensational news that insulted state officials (Said, 1988).

For the media that rejects the regulation and dominance of the Guided Democracy political system, the choice to stop publishing is a step taken, as is the case with newspapers *Harian Abadi* owned by Masyumi (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia). In his editorial entitled “Pamitan” (Farewell) on October 31, 1960, *Harian Abadi* stated the decision to “say goodbye” to its readers, given that the climate for expressing opinions in Indonesia, which is a fundamental aspect of Human Rights, has been lost. On the other hand, several other newspapers chose to survive by complying with government regulations and were willing to sign the “19 Statements” as a form of loyalty to Soekarno. Newspaper case *Pedoman* led by Rosihan Anwar is interesting to observe. Although the newspaper’s leadership also signed the statement, which sparked a polemic between Rosihan Anwar and Mochtar Lubis, in the end the *Pedoman* Newspaper forced to stop publishing on January 7, 1961. This is due to the character of the news and critical views that are considered to be destabilizing by the authorities, as well as are associated

with the political forces that have been dissolved by the government, namely the Indonesian Socialist Party led by Sutan Sjahrir (Suwirta, 2008).

In the 1960s, pressure on press freedom in Indonesia was increasing. In the context of Guided Democracy, the dominant political force consists of three main elements, namely President Soekarno, the TNI-AD (Indonesian National Army), and the Indonesian Communist Party (Feith, 1995). President Soekarno, with his charisma and strong influence, often delivered impressive speeches and created acronyms for famous slogans, such as MANIPOL-USDEK (Undang-Undang Dasar 1945, Sosialisme Indonesia, Demokrasi Terpimpin, Ekonomi Terpimpin, dan Kepribadian Indonesia), NASAKOM (Nasionalisme, Agama, dan Komunisme), TRIKORA (Tri Komando Rakyat), RESOPIM (Revolusi–Sosialisme Indonesia–Pimpinan Nasional), BERDIKARI (Berdiri di Atas Kaki Sendiri), TAVIP (Tahun Vivere Pericoloso), GANEFO (Games of the New Emerging Forces), and OLDEFO (Old Established Forces). For foreign press, these acronyms are often confusing and require special explanations to understand. Meanwhile, for the Indonesian press, especially MANIPOL-USDEK, it is considered a guideline that must be accepted without criticism, according to the wishes of the rulers. For Soekarno's supporters, MANIPOL-USDEK is seen as an undeniable Manifest of Destiny, while for its opponents, it is considered a Manifold Irony because it is considered illogical, contradictory, and full of slogans. Soekarno was indeed at the peak of his power and tried to solve various problems of the nation through symbols, slogans, and passionate speeches (Smith, 1986).

The Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI), which was established during the Indonesian revolution in September 1945, had a very significant role in broadcasting President Soekarno's speeches. The event was broadcast through national stations in Jakarta and then forwarded by regional stations in Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Padang, Medan, and Makassar. The Indonesian people who wanted to listen to the speech were willing to stand for hours with attention and enthusiasm, following the rhythm and typical delivery style of President Soekarno (Hidayat, 2003). These long speeches from President Soekarno were then taken and made headlines by various newspapers at the national level. Thus, in addition to newspapers, the Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI), in the 1960s, it also functioned as a national government news broadcasting media, in addition to presenting regional cultural news and entertainment (Proesponegoro & Notosusanto, 1984).



Roeslan Abdulgani, known as a state official in the 1960s, often acted as a spokesman for MANIPOL-USDEK, conveying the government's position regarding the media. He emphasized that the media must function as a tool for the unfinished revolution, and for the media that does not support MANIPOL-USDEK, it is better to retreat or it will be eroded by the current of the revolution itself. The government's firm stance towards the media was also stated directly by President Soekarno. At the inauguration of the head of the Antara news agency in Jakarta in October 1962, President Soekarno stated that, "The Antara news agency must play a positive role in the revolution. [...] I don't want objective news reports, but they must clearly support our revolution and attack the enemies of the revolution." (Soebagijo & Soendoro, 1978). According to Soekarno, the enemies of the revolution are capitalism and imperialism and their minions, the Indonesian media that supports the government should support the revolution. In this context, newspapers such as *Harian Rakjat*, *Warta Bhakti*, and *Bintang Timur* owned by the Indonesian Communist Party are very active in supporting the government's political policies. The same applies to the newspaper *Suluh Indonesia* owned by the Indonesian National Party (*Partai Nasional Indonesia*) and *Duta Masyarakat* owned by *Nahdlatul Ulama* (Said, 1988).

The absence of a critical and independent press in Jakarta, as seen in *Indonesia Raya*, *Times of Indonesia*, *Nusantara*, *Harian Abadi*, as well as *Pedoman*, caused the press in the 1960s to generally regress in views and ideas. Some newspapers, which represent a wide range of political parties and ideologies, have been forced to allocate most of their pages, which range from 4 to 8 pages, to contain the government's ideological statements that tend to be repetitive, rather than discussing more realistic policies and programs. There is little room left for the stories covered by their own journalists (Feith, 1995). This tendency shows that the press competes to claim themselves as the most revolutionary and most loyal to President Soekarno as the Great Leader of the Revolution (*Pemimpin Besar Revolusi*). In this context, the press has actually been co-opted and subjected to a process of "manipulation and nasakomization," which has the effect of losing open and direct social criticism of the government (Suwirta, 2008).

In the context of strict government control of the media, 1962 marked the establishment of the *Televisi Republik Indonesia* (TVRI) which is in the spotlight of the Indonesian people. The *Televisi Republik Indonesia* (TVRI) fully established

and supervised by the government, carried out its first broadcast in August 1962 to celebrate the 17th Independence Day of the Republic of Indonesia and broadcast more than a week of the Asian Games taking place in Jakarta. Early coverage was extroverted, populist, and showed confidence, as well as placing Indonesia as a modern and active nation in regional issues. On the contrary, the second coverage tends to be introverted, trying to keep a distance from the outside world, and building an identity based on the affirmation of national culture in a distinctive cultural context (Kitley, 2001).

In the 1960s, along with President Soekarno's megalomaniacal leadership style, the press owned by the Indonesian Communist Party gained a very dominant position in the Indonesian political arena. Media such as *Harian Rakjat*, *Bintang Timur*, and *Warta Bhakti* have increasingly strengthened their voices, especially in attacking political opponents. For example, editorial columns, corner notes, and caricatures in *Harian Rakjat* are often involved in polemics and criticisms of the *Merdeka* and *Berita Indonesia* newspapers managed by Burhanuddin Mohammad Diah (Chaniago, 1987). In addition, when a group of writers, journalists, artists, and scholars who opposed the Indonesian Communist Party formulated and signed the "Cultural Manifest" (Manikebu) (Manifesto Kebudayaan), which emphasized the importance of freedom of expression and work. The Indonesian Communist Party press responded with ridicule, calling it Manikebo (Buffalo sperm), which has a negative and degrading connotation. The government also banned "Manikebu" because it was considered too much emphasis on individualism, selfishness, and liberalism. The writers, journalists, artists, and scholars involved in "Manikebu" were then subjected to suspicion, interrogated, and labeled as counter-revolutionaries (Moeljanto & Ismail, 1995).

One indication that press freedom did not exist in the 1960s was the desire of Information Minister R. Maladi to remove the "corner notes" column from newspapers. This column is one of the characteristics of mass media in Indonesia, located in the corner of the newspaper page and contains short articles rich in social criticism, humor, and sarcasm (Makah, 1977). The names of the authors of these columns are usually taken from popular names. For example, the newspapers *Merdeka*, *Indonesia Raya*, *Pedoman*, *Duta Masyarakat*, and *Harian Rakjat* in Jakarta are known for the names of the writers of the corner notes column such as "Notes: Dr. Clenik", "Di Pinggir Jalan: Mas Kluyur", "Kili-kili", "Bang Dul", and





Figure 4. The caricature published in the June 20, 1964 edition of the Berita Indonesia (Jakarta) newspaper, owned by B.M. Diah, contained a polemic with the Harian Rakjat newspaper which belonged to the Indonesian Communist Party. In the caricature, the Indonesian Communist Party's plan to take over government power in Indonesia is described (Source: Smith, 1986).

“Cabe Rawit: Wong Cilik”. In the regions, newspapers also have unique column names, such as “Ole-ole: Si Kabayan” in Pikiran Rakjat (Bandung), “Berabe” in Kedaulatan Rakjat (Yogyakarta), and “Beta” in Surabaya Post (Surabaya). In the view of government and military officials, the contents of the corner notes are considered only as a criticism of the situation without offering a solution, as well

as giving the author the freedom to avoid direct responsibility. This column also serves as a means to mock the difficulties of others, so that officials who are the target of criticism feel pressured and lose their honor. According to Information Minister R. Maladi, the ban on corner notes is due to the nature of criticism that degrades, divisive, denounces, and blames others without paying attention to the norms of politeness (Smith, 1986).

Efforts to free President Soekarno from the influence of the dominance of the Indonesian Communist Party faced various challenges. In 1963, Sajuti Melik published an article entitled “Beladjar Memahami Soekarno-ism” which was published in the anti-communist mass media. Initiated by Burhanuddin Mohammad Diah of the Merdeka newspaper, together with Adam Malik and Sumantoro from the Partai Musyawarah Rakyat Banyak and Antara news agency, the journalists agreed to establish the Badan Pendukung Soekarnoisme (BPS). However, President Soekarno seems to be more inclined towards the Indonesian Communist Party, as he sees communist groups as a more effective force in strengthening his position than other groups. On the grounds that the Badan Pendukung Soekarnoisme (BPS) was an attempt to destroy Soekarno through Soekarnoism and was supported by the United States. This made the Indonesian Communist Party succeed in influencing President Soekarno’s decision. Consequently, the Badan Pendukung Soekarnoisme (BPS) was dissolved in December 1964, and more than 20 newspapers supported the Badan Pendukung Soekarnoisme (BPS) experienced mass deportations in February-March 1965. The threat to press freedom in Indonesia in the 1960s not only came from the military and the government, but now also from the communists who are a serious threat to press freedom (Suwirta, 2008).

The Indonesian government’s policy in controlling Indonesian media can be carried out through various steps. The reasons for taking action against Indonesian media often depend on the government’s preferences and interpretations of news and opinion content that is considered detrimental to the government’s reputation, disrupting public tranquility, security, and order, and threatening the safety of the country. Indonesian media are not given the right or opportunity to defend themselves in court. The Indonesian government’s actions against Indonesian media can include warnings, summonses, detentions, interrogations, violence, vandalism, imprisonment, fines or compensation, and decriminalization (Hanazaki,

1998). Edward C. Smith (1986), quantitatively record the number of government actions against the media between 1952-1965, including Indonesian media, Chinese media, Dutch media, and other foreign media in the following table.

Year	Indonesian Press	Chinese Press	Dutch Press	Other Foreign Press	American Press	Sum Action
1952	5	4	3	1	1	14
1953	9	4	1	-	-	9
1954	5	2	1	-	-	8
1955	9	-	1	-	3	13
1956	22	-	-	6	4	32
1957	91	10	8	9	7	125
1958	58	20	6	8	3	95
1959	59	5	1	2	6	73
1960	74	8	-	2	9	93
1961	47	1	-	1	3	52
1962	9	2	-	3	2	16
1963	3	-	-	-	3	6
1964	4	-	-	6	-	10
1965	8	-	-	-	2	10

Table 2. Indonesian government actions against the press in 1952-1965  
based on sources Edward C. Smith (1986).

The dominance of the Indonesian Communist Party's press prompted other forces to try to balance it. In this context, the Tentara Nasional Indonesia-Angkatan Darat (Indonesian National Army) plays an active role in encouraging and protecting the publication of anti-communist media. The publication of the Berita Yudha and Angkatan Bersendjata newspapers in 1965 was a strategic step to balance the influence of the Indonesian Communist Party's press. The Angkatan Bersendjata newspaper, for example, expanded its reach by publishing editions in various regions, such as the Angkatan Bersendjata Edisi Djawa Barat and Angkatan Bersendjata Edisi Djawa Timur. In addition, in June 1965, a group of Catholic Christians led by Frans Seda, Petrus Kanisius Ojong, and Jakob Oetama founded the newspaper Kompas, which at first was often dubbed as Kom-ando Pas-tor (Pastor Command). This nickname arose not only because of the background



of its founder who came from the Catholic community, but also because this newspaper was widely read by priests. Over time, the Kompas has developed into one of the largest and influential media in Indonesia to this day (Adam, 2002).

The years 1965 and 1966 were very important periods for Indonesia. The confrontation with Malaysia, which began in 1963, is still ongoing. The economic situation is getting worse, with inflation as one of the main challenges that President Soekarno is unable to overcome. Inflation has been steadily increasing since the beginning of 1960 and peaked in 1966, with a figure of more than 600 percent (Nasution, 1983). An observer gives a clear picture, where the cost-of-living index in 1958 was recorded at 100, then increased to 180 in 1961, 470 in 1962, and by the end of 1965 it jumped to 36.347 (Pauker, 1967). The gloomy political and economic atmosphere at the end of Soekarno's reign in 1965 was vividly described by Mochtar Lubis in his famous literary work, *Dusk in Jakarta* (Senja di Jakarta). This impasse in politics and economics seems to be solved by the event that changed everything, namely the G30S (Gerakan 30 September) 1965, which is still a mystery and has sparked many debates to be understood objectively and accurately (Abdullah, 1999).

The G30S incident that occurred in 1965 shows that the perpetrators are well aware of the importance of the role of mass communication media. By the morning of October 1, 1965, they had managed to control the RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) and telecommunication buildings in Jakarta. Under the pretext of saving the revolution and protecting President Soekarno, they announced through the RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) regarding the purpose of the movement, the program of action, and the disappearance of the Army Generals. Meanwhile, the public is in a state of confusion and full of questions about the major events that occurred in Jakarta, considering that the RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) is the only source of information available. On the same day, newspapers in Jakarta were banned from being published by Penguasa Perang Daerah (PEPERDA) Jakarta Raya. The public also witnessed the strangeness that happened to the media owned by the Indonesian Communist Party in Jakarta. The *Warta Bhakti* newspaper, published in the afternoon, carried headlines and analysis in favor of the G30S under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Untung (Said, 1988).

In the afternoon and evening of October 1, 1965, the movement was quickly broken by the Commander of KOSTRAD (Komando Cadangan Strategis Angkatan



Darat), Major General Suharto. Troops loyal to KOSTRAD managed to recapture the RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) and the telecommunication building. In an announcement broadcast through the RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia), Major General Suharto stated that those who call themselves the G30S are counter-revolutionaries, in the name of the revolution and President Soekarno. However, on October 2 and 3, 1965, the *Harian Rakjat* newspaper seemed to be deliberately left to publish headlines, headlines, corner notes, and caricatures in favor of the G30S. This situation gave the TNI-AD (Indonesian National Army) a strong reason to accuse that the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) was behind the events that came to be known as the G30S/PKI in 1965 (Yuwono & Basara, 2024).

The 1965 G30S incident resulted in full control of the press media by the TNI-AD (Indonesian National Army). Newspapers owned by the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party), such as *Harian Rakjat*, *Bintang Timur*, and *Warta Bhakti*, were permanently banned. Journalists who worked in the media, as well as at the Antara and RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) news agencies that were considered “leftist” and supported the G30S, were fired, detained, and imprisoned by the TNI-AD. Under the leadership of Major General Soeharto, the TNI-AD used the media for its political interests. When the TVRI (Televisi Republik Indonesia) broadcast live the exhumation of the bodies of the Generals in Lubang Buaya and a brief interview with Major General Suharto about the G30S, there was psychological hysteria directed to condemn the atrocities of the Indonesian Communist Party and question the attitude of other groups, including President Soekarno, towards the event. Newspapers managed by the TNI-AD, such as *Berita Yudha* and *Angkatan Bersendjata*, continuously displayed news and opinions that were detrimental to the PKI and President Soekarno. In this context, the role of the mass media is very significant in arousing the spirit of revenge against the PKI and individuals accused of being communists, which led to mass killings in Java and Bali (Cribb, 1990).

President Soekarno’s control over the press ultimately functions as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, when he was at the height of his power, he was able to regulate and control the media effectively. But on the other hand, when the control shifted to an outside party, in this case the TNI-AD (Indonesian National Army), it became the target of press criticism without the opportunity to defend itself. Soekarno’s fear of the possibility of the press being “exposing his

disgrace and making it a spectacle in the eyes of the world” proved real. After the events of the G30S, Soekarno became the object of sharp criticism, ridicule, and sarcasm regarding his leadership and lifestyle that was considered authoritarian and morally questionable. Soekarno’s authority was shattered when his aides, including ministers deemed by the TNI-AD to support the G30S/PKI, were arrested and tried as if to expose moral depravity, personal scandals, corruption, and unethical political practices. The hearings, which were widely covered by the media, including the RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia) and TNI-AD newspapers, ultimately contributed to the reduction of President Soekarno’s authority. At the end of 1965, the era of Soekarno’s leadership seemed to be coming to an end, with his aura of power dimming due to the influence of the press. A new era is about to begin, marked by the political dominance of the TNI-AD under the leadership of Major General Soeharto, which also managed to gain support from the press, namely the New Order.

## Conclusion

During the old order period, the mass media has played a relevant role as a witness to various important events that occurred between 1950 and 1965. Initially, the media in Indonesia gave full support to government policies, including the Asian-African Conference held in Bandung in 1955, the 1955 General Election, the handling of the Darul Islam/Indonesian Islamic Army movement (1949-1962), and the effort to liberate West Irian to join Indonesia (1961-1962). The period 1950-1956 can be considered a golden age for the Indonesian press, where the media had the freedom to criticize the government through various formats, such as headlines, analysis, editorials, corner notes, and caricatures. However, after 1956, the media situation in Indonesia underwent significant changes, as the government began to see the press as a threat to government stability, considering that the criticism conveyed was not accompanied by a constructive solution.

Signs of a decline in press freedom in Indonesia began to be seen after 1956. The successive changes in the parliamentary government cabinet, the absence of dominant political forces in the 1955 general election, and the turmoil in the regions that opposed the central government in 1957, prompted the government, the military, and President Soekarno to implement a state of emergency or *Staat van Oorlog en Beleg*. In this context, press freedom in Indonesia is restricted. In 1958,

control over the press became stricter, where the media was required to obtain a Printing License (Surat Izin Cetak) from the government and the military. When President Soekarno succeeded in consolidating his power in the period of guided democracy (1959-1965), press freedom was effectively over, as the media only functioned as an official tool and voice for government policy. However, the press, which was previously under Soekarno's control, also played a role in overthrowing his power. The fall of President Soekarno, which began with the G30S event in 1965, was largely caused by the press although it was initially controllable, then turned to attack and erode Soekarno's power. Since October 1965, the media has been under military control, particularly the TNI-AD (Indonesian National Army), which contributed to the reduction of the political influence of the Indonesian Communist Party and weakened the authority of President Soekarno, as well as supporting the new power under the leadership of Major General Suharto, who was later elected President of the Republic of Indonesia after the Soekarno era.

This research is expected to provide new insights into press freedom in Indonesia, especially through the analysis of newspapers, television, and radio. However, there are some limitations in this study that can affect the results, where most of the sources used come from the works of researchers such as Edward C. Smith, Mochtar Lubis, Soebagijo Ilham Notodidjojo, and Andi Suwirta. The focus of this research is on the general overview of press life during the period of Liberal Democracy (1950-1959) and Guided Democracy (1959-1965), but it lacks the important role of Mochtar Lubis, Burhanuddin Mohammad Diah, the Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI), and the Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI). Therefore, the researcher encourages further research that explores the contributions of Mochtar Lubis, Burhanuddin Mohammad Diah, the Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI), and the Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI). in the context of the Old Order (1950-1965). Thus, the results of this study can be used as a reference to enrich the complexity of further studies.

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