

The Jakarta Post's Reporting of Terrorism in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to describe modern terrorism that has been formed and produced through the integration between mass media and global communication systems. This study uses a qualitative content analysis method to analyze the report in The Jakarta Post on the issue of terrorism in the context of Indonesia. The result, media representations of terrorism in Indonesia related to the complex communication process generated by cultural factors, patterns of economic and political organization. Mass media and terrorism cannot be separated. Terrorism can be regarded as a phase in which the 'drama' politics is done for specific audiences, (national or international public, interest groups or individuals, or political elites). In this context, the media plays an important role in distributing the message to an audience. At the same time, the way the media represent the issues affected by the economic and social conditions of political culture in which political violence is being played. In particular, this study emphasizes the role of the media, and news reporting in particular, in order to support the civil freedom of expression, democracy, and the function of the fourth pillar of the press. This study concluded that the news publication, The Jakarta Post is very involved in issues that could potentially divisive as terrorism. The media play an important role in the process of information and public debate.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan terorisme modern yang telah dibentuk dan dihasilkan melalui integrasi antara media massa dan sistem komunikasi global. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode analisis isi kualitatif untuk menganalisis laporan *The Jakarta Post* tentang isu terorisme dalam konteks Indonesia. Hasilnya, representasi terorisme di media Indonesia terkait dengan proses komunikasi yang kompleks yang dihasilkan melalui faktor-faktor budaya, pola ekonomi dan organisasi politik. Media massa dan isu terorisme tidak dapat dipisahkan. Terorisme dapat dianggap sebagai tahap di mana 'drama' politik ini dilakukan untuk khalayak yang spesifik, (publik nasional atau internasional, kelompok kepentingan tertentu atau individu, atau elit politik). Dalam konteks ini, media memainkan peran penting dalam mendistribusikan pesan kepada audiens. Pada saat yang sama, cara media merepresentasikan isu dipengaruhi oleh kondisi ekonomi dan sosial budaya politik di mana kekerasan politik sedang dimainkan. Secara khusus, penelitian ini menekankan pada peran media, dan pelaporan berita pada khususnya, dalam tatanan sipil yang mendukung kebebasan berekspresi, demokrasi, dan fungsi pilar keempat pers. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa publikasi berita *The Jakarta Post* sangat terlibat dalam isu-isu yang berpotensi memecah-belah seperti terorisme. Media berita memainkan peran penting dalam proses informasi dan debat publik.

Keywords: Indonesian press, terrorism, and Islam

Introduction

News media works through the dissemination of messages to public. In countries where democratic values are upheld and people have the right to seek, own, and disseminate information, the responsibility to inform the public has enabled the press to freely inform news without fear of being banned by the government. This condition, coupled with the fact that news media is chiefly an economic institution, has contributed to the significant presence of terrorism-based stories in the news media. While the media seeks to inform its publics and provide the sort of democratic Fourth Estate functions described by Thomas Carlyle, it has also been subject to the interests of cultural and political contentions.

Within Indonesia this transformation to a 'free media culture' is patchy, as indeed is the country's political and social transformations. Within this context, 'Islamic' based terrorism is particularly important as it is situated within these complex transformations. Thus, while Islam is a very varied and multiply articulated religion in Indonesia, its extreme expression in modes of political violence terrorism is enmeshed within these transformative effects. It is not simply that one group's terrorist is another group's freedom fighter; it is also that the very acts of violence are to be articulated within an uneven and highly diverse Indonesian media sphere. The different media outlets and organisations' approach to the representation of these terrorist attacks illustrates this point very well.

Terrorism, thereby, is a particularly important issue in Indonesia as it is a symptom of cultural and political diversity, but also a symptom of precarious social transformation. Moreover, and as numerous commentators have observed (see Lewis, 2005; Lewis and Lewis, 2009), terrorism is a communicational event which is used by militants to attract attention to their cause. Terrorist groups in Indonesia have taken this advantage to bring their acts of terror to a higher level by emerging threats and terror toward government through the conduit of the news media.

The development of Indonesian mass media in the reformation era experiences an interesting significant moment where the press no longer need a publication permit from the government and

is freer to report news that is critical toward the government. Nevertheless, as politically Indonesia is still in the transition process toward a more democratic, 'civil' state; there are times where the press must also pay attention to issues that are either too critical or sensitive toward government or other interest groups within society. This is exemplified in the case of JawaPos (Java Post) daily in 2002 when supporters of President Wahid occupied office of the *Post* for publishing a cartoon that was considered insulting to the President. In another case, in 2003 the Minister of Manpower who was one of PDI Perjuangan leaders threatened the *Rakyat Merdeka* (People Freedom) daily for not insulting President Megawati. The Indonesian press then must incorporate all these factors in constructing news reporting on terrorism. They have an obligation to report the news to the public; at the same time, however, news organizations must account for government policies, organizational policies, and pressure from other interest groups must be taken into account in producing news. News media coverage of an issue is principally a journalistic work that cannot be separated from various influences such as the state, culture, editorial policy, and the mission of media institutions. Media institutions need to consider all of these factors if their reporting is to represent the events accurately.

Research Method

The essential aim of this research is to examine the interplay of various factors historical, cultural, and political in the reporting of specific terrorist events in Indonesia. As an expansive and transdisciplinary framework, Cultural Studies encourages such examinations as it seeks to explore the complexity of textual meaning making. The significant advantage of a Cultural Studies approach for this study is that it provides a range of heuristic options. Textual analysis situates a text and its meanings within an historical, cultural and political context. While such analyses must rely on a series of what Fredric Jameson (in Kellner & Homer, 2004) calls 'secondary texts' that is the literature that surrounds and describes these contexts researchers also have an opportunity to conduct primary research with media professionals. Thus,

this research employs historical, in-depth interview and textual analysis stratagem for this research in order to expose the complex lineage of factors that contribute to the representation and meaning of terrorism as generated through these three news publications.

Using this system of textual analysis of news items, I analysed how the Indonesian news media represented the issue of terrorist attacks and to what extent the Indonesian news media had the willingness to portray the seriousness of the government in managing the event as part of the 'fourth estate' role of the press through the interplay of cultural, political and organisational factors. Emphasis was given to headlines and text of news items that were considered important. Though only some part of the news items analysed were presented, principally the analysis covered the whole texts of the news items to extract stronger evidence.

Thus, both the historical and interview research contributes to our understanding of the various factors that contribute to the formation of texts and textual meanings. Context helps to build a better understanding of the text. Contextualism refers to how to locate the phenomenon it is studying within the wider social, political and even global context (Saukko, 2003). There are two conditions that help to capture the context of phenomenon analysed. The first is sensitivity to the social context. This refers to the duty of scholarship to carefully analyse, for example, historical events, statistics and developments, social structures, using and comparing different resources and views. Thus within the context of my research, since the perpetrators of most of the recent terrorist attacks in Indonesia have adopted Islamic values to legitimize their action, understanding the root of Islam and the concept of *Jihad* in Islam to better understand radicalism in Islam that may relate to terrorism becomes crucial. The second is awareness of historicity. This condition refers to the ability of research to understand its own historicity. This means that social science and its object, historical society, cannot be separated, and analysing the social context also enables research to become aware of, and be able to critically evaluate, its role in it. The detail for how to do textual analysis, for

instance, was developed by Utah Valley State College Writing Centre (*online*).

The Jakarta Post: News Policies

The reform era had brought significant changes to the practice of the press. Along with the democratisation of social and political life during Habibie's transitional government, there has been a change in the role of the press as it became free from any pressure or threat whilst conducting journalistic tasks. The press was also able to do its own news gathering, editing and presenting.

Nonetheless, there are some challenges to the freedom of the press in this era of reform that may affect the way the press reports news. The representation of the issue of terrorism involving radical Islamic groups in Indonesia may become another challenge for news media institutions. It is possible that news media institutions face a dilemma in reporting the issue.

Like the other two news outlets analysed in this thesis, *The Jakarta Post* has a distinctive cultural, political and institutional-professional history all of which contribute to the ways in which the newspaper reports and represents news events. Popularly known as '*The Post*', this newspaper plays a significant role in the history of Indonesian news media. First published on 25 April 1983, the new English daily is unique, not only in its goals, which is to improve the standard of English language media in Indonesia, but also in bringing together four competing media publishers (*Suara Karya*, *Kompas*, *SinarHarapan* and *Tempo*) into producing a quality newspaper with an Indonesian perspective. Ten percent of equity (later increased to 20 percent) was provided as a collective share of all employees (http://www.thejakartapost.com/online_media_kit).

The objective of the news publication is to cater for the fast growing foreign community in Indonesia with English language. The objective is also to present to the public a newspaper of the highest quality that would provide its readers with all the news that was not only fit to print, but that would deepen their insight into the very workings of this vast archipelago, its people and its government, as members of the great family of nations.

According to its own public pronouncements, this newspaper employs the highest standards of professional journalism, seeking to influence public opinion within and outside Indonesia.

In particular, *The Jakarta Post* seeks to provide an Indonesian perspective to counter the highly unbalanced western-dominated global traffic of news and views. In 1994, *The Post* became the first Indonesian news publications to go global. Three global companies providing database services from three different parts of the world signed agreements with *The Post* to make the paper accessible 24 hours a day to tens of thousands of their subscribers around the world (http://www.thejakartapost.com/online_media_kit).

Under the arrangements, *The Post* is transmitted every morning in digitalized format via modem to three main computers in New York in USA, London in the UK and Palo Alto in California, USA, each owned by *Chamber World Network*, *Reuters* and *Dialog*, making the paper the first in this country to go international without the heavy burden of transportation costs. It stands up to the expectation raised by the commitment of *The Post* to become 'The Journal of Indonesia Today'. *The Post* management has employed some foreign journalists to provide different insights in its reporting.

According to its 2006 media kit, total daily average paid circulation of *The Jakarta Post* is around 35,000 copies. Meanwhile, the educational background of its readers shows that it is dominated by readers with postgraduate (45.6 percent) and undergraduate (35.9 percent). As of 5 nationalities that read *The Post*, Indonesian occupies the first rank with 45.2 percent, followed by European (21 percent); whereas Australian is the lowest with 4.2 percent.

Going online has become a necessity for media businesses, as it connects the outlet to wider audiences and advertising revenues. Recent developments in Indonesia show that the Web is the future of news and information as evidenced by the increasing number of media publications available over the Internet. As the largest English newspaper in Indonesia, *The Jakarta Post* has anticipated this trend and provided the online version of the newspaper *thejakartapost.com* as more

than just an extension of *The Jakarta Post* daily newspaper. As the name suggests, it also offers breaking news and a wealth of information on Indonesia. By providing up-to-date, in-depth accurate information and analyses, *thejakartapost.com* aspires to be a one-stop reference point on Indonesia that will serve both local and international audiences.

The Journal is a special, free-of-charge version of *The Jakarta Post*. Having in mind an international audience interested in events taking place in Indonesia, this online version of the newspaper – *thejakartapost.com* – carries local stories that appear in the printed edition, and more. To meet public demand for real-time news, *thejakartapost.com* has news flashes which are updated as each story develops.

As cited above, the relationship between news media and terrorism in Indonesia is both compelling and unique, as Indonesia has a long tradition of Islamic radicalism and militancy. Through the period of the New Order, these radical groups continued to fester and develop, unleashing themselves in violent attacks in the post-Suharto period. The development of the issue of terrorism in Indonesia has been associated with some radical groups that have adopted Islamic values to justify their acts of political violence. They had taken advantage of unstable political conditions following the fall of the New Order regime and the transition to reform period.

At the same time, Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country in the world and therefore the issue of terrorism associated with Islam has been very sensitive as well as divisive within the country. On the other hand, the Indonesian press has entered into a never-before-imagined condition where the press are now free to report any issues without being afraid of government control over the press. The euphoria of reform in Indonesia has led some social groups within society to take the law into their own hands. This situation may have become a threat-among other threats-to the freedom of the press. This is caused by their misunderstanding of the freedom of expression. Undoubtedly, news media institutions face a dilemma when they have to report issue of terrorism that may involve radical religious groups. What role

did news media play in reporting the issue of terrorism? What were their policies in dealing with this issue?

Principally, *The Jakarta Post* daily played the role as storyteller in representing the issue of terrorism. It was done by implementing the 5W+H formula, up-side-down pyramid, news values and worthiness as part of the professional journalistic standard. Nonetheless, the representation of sensitive issues such as terrorism requires more news media consideration. The facts of events were written as information based on a set of frameworks which state that the news reported should not mislead its readers or condemn people or parties involved in the matter. It should hold the presumption of innocence, place the matter in the way it really stands, involve the choice of relevant and balanced news sources, and always confirm the information gathered. Thus, as Cultural Studies proposes, the news media institutions cannot ignore the interplay of various levels of influence of organisational as well as cultural and political influences.

The condition of the freedom of the press in the era of reform can be seen from the reportage of the recent terrorist attacks. When the events occurred, all news media under analysis reported the events as their main stories. *The Jakarta Post* daily, for instance, placed the news for several weeks on the front page. Interestingly, the press dared to report the issue explicitly, considering the facts that the perpetrators claimed to have launched the attack in the name of religion which was a sensitive as well as divisive issue. This condition would have been unlikely to happen during the New Order era.

Despite playing the role as the storyteller, different vision, mission, and contexts of the three news media had resulted in the different editorial policies in representing the issue of terrorism. *The Jakarta Post*, as an English edition daily and posits itself as the reading for foreign readers in Indonesia, commits itself to stand for all and stays neutral from any parties in times of conflict. Its establishment by four competing media publishers (*Suara Karya, Kompas, SinarHarapan* and *Tempo*) has made it easy for *The Post's* editorial board to set its own editorial policies. As Managing Editor of *The Post* states,

We have a strong editorial stand. We are taking no sides except in terms of our primary principle which is to present news based on professional journalistic standards. Although the acts of terrorism were conducted by radical groups who proclaimed their acts in the name of Islam and there were some Islamic groups who disagreed with some western news media reportage that tended to put Islam on the corner, *The Post* professionally reported the events without having any intention to discredit any particular groups or religions.

To do so, we reported the events by interviewing some Islamic leaders and asked their opinions of the claims of some perpetrators' acts of terror that what they did was part of jihad. We don't use the word 'Islamic terrorist'. To us, terrorists are terrorists! We have to consider how the reportage of the events may bring some impacts to society. For instance, the acts of terror have violated human rights of other people. Thus, we cannot ignore the development within society as the press is principally the representation of society (*The Jakarta Post Interview, 2006*).

In playing its social and political role, *The Jakarta Post* daily reported how the government, police and intelligence agencies' responded to the terrorist events. These were done by quoting the statements of the officials and then contrasting them with statements from other social and political observers. In other words, *The Post* adopted a posture of 'balanced reporting', allowing the readers to judge the different perspectives that were presented. Moreover, besides reporting the events, the news media also criticized the way the government agencies dealt with the events through the 'checks and balances' principle. *The Jakarta Post's* reporting of the issue reflects the freedom of the press within the context of Indonesia.

The Jakarta Post Representation of Terrorism

Principally there is a strong interconnectedness between terrorism and the news media. The perpetrators of acts of terror need news media to amplify their threat and convey their mes-

sages to government; the news media functions to both inform the public and maintain its commercial viability through the re-telling of dramatic events in an engaging and forceful way. In this way, the media is both a servant and director of information and its public. This situation is described by Miller as follows,

Terrorism and the media are entwined in an almost inexorable, symbiotic relationship. Terrorism is capable of writing any drama-no matter how terrible-to compel the media's attention... Terrorism, like an ill-mannered enfant terrible, is the media's stepchild, a stepchild which the media, unfortunately, can neither completely ignore nor deny (Geissman, cited in Tuman, 2003, p.115).

Reporting terrorism whether the destruction of 9/11, the Bali bombing, the explosion of JW Marriott Hotel, or the attack on the Australian Embassy, raises significant questions as to what extent news media can represent the events based on the journalistic standards of 'balance', 'truth', and 'objectivity'. This section analyses the representation of the three terrorist attacks in *The Jakarta Post* daily within the cultural, political, and organisational contexts.

The representation of the three terrorist events in *The Jakarta Post* daily is interesting in relation to the political as well as organisational conditions. The three terrorist events had high news values as they occurred within the country and brought significant impacts to the life of society. The blasts that claimed the lives of not only Indonesians but also foreign citizens had made these terrorist events become the international highlights. The Bali bombing can be classified as the biggest terrorist attack since the 9/11 tragedy in the United States, whereas the other two terrorist events involved foreign interests (America and Australia) in Indonesia. Thus, *The Jakarta Post* felt it was necessary to report the issue as part of its responsibility to the public.

The Jakarta Post tended to report the issue from a political perspective. Within this perspective, it gave significant attention to several issues: (i) *government policies on terrorism and national security*, (ii) *how the Indonesian government managed the acts of terror*, and (iii)

how the Indonesian society accepted the facts that terrorism did exist in Indonesia. In particular, *The Post* focused on how the government, police, military and intelligent agencies investigated the events and discovered the perpetrators of the acts of terror. This is signified by the intense reporting of all the issues above. The choice of this perspective is strongly related to *The Post's* objective as a newspaper of the highest quality that became the main print news media for foreigners who lived in Indonesia and to provide an Indonesian perspective to what *The Post* and other people in Indonesia regard as the western-centric reading of Indonesia generated through western-based news outlets. The analysis of the representation of the issues above is divided into sub headings to make it easier to understand.

Government Policies on Terrorism and National Security

The issue of terrorism and national security has become a big concern to some governments following the 9/11 attack in the United States. In Indonesia, this situation did not really become a crucial issue until the attack on the tourist island, Bali. The business of some political elites to gain power at the governmental level in the early phase of the reform era had created a political turbulence and unstable condition. This situation had been seen as an advantage for some radical groups to launch their acts of terror. Undoubtedly, it was not until the attack in Bali that the government started to deal with policies on terrorism and national security. Thus, it is important to examine whether *The Post's* reporting of these events supported or was critical of government politicization of terrorism. The representation of government policies on terrorism and national security appeared as follows,

The government issued two government regulations in lieu of law late on Friday that it says the country needs to crack down on terrorism following the Bali carnage.

President Megawati Soekarnoputri signed the unprecedented regulations just before midnight, implying heated debate within her Cabinet in the process. The announcement was

rescheduled at least twice, with officials saying certain changes had to be made to the original drafts.

Opposition to the regulations is precisely based on this principle of retroactivity, which goes against both general legal principles and the amended 1945 Constitution. Critics also fear human rights violations resulting from the enforcement of the new regulations... (*RI issues regulations to fight terrorism, The Jakarta Post*, 19/10/02).

Similar representation also appeared in the following excerpts

Kusnanto Anggoro, a political analyst with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), said the adoption of a draconian Singaporean- or Malaysian-style ISA was not the right way to wipe out terrorism in the country.

"I think the problem is not whether we have an ISA or not, but the fact that we don't have a comprehensive counterterrorism policy," he said on the sidelines of a seminar on human rights protection...

Ichlasul Amal expressed his deep concern that the adoption of an ISA would instead lead to human rights violations (*RI issues regulations to fight terrorism, The Jakarta Post*, 13/08/03).

Through these forms of reportage, *The Post* tended to combine its representation of how serious the Indonesian government dealt with terrorism and national security. Government policy on terrorism and national security appeared in the 2002, 2003 and 2004 news coverage. From the two news items above, *The Post* explicitly highlighted two aspects on this issue. The first was the issuance of regulations to deal with terrorism; and the second was the opposition to the regulations due to anxiety over the possibility of this regulations being used to capture Islamic activists without any proof. The placement of the two news items at the front page and the use of straightforward English writing style indicate how *The Post* perceived these issues as pertinent for Indonesians and foreigners to know.

The representation of the issuance of regulations to combat terrorism indicates *The Post's*

support to and at the same time critical attitude toward the government's seriousness to fight terrorism. Terrorism has become a global issue. Moreover, the Southeast Asia region has been accused of becoming the hot bed for terrorists. The capture of some of radical Islamists suspected of being connected with terrorist activities in some Asian countries—Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia—and the fact that Muslims are dominant in the region has attracted global attention to the region. Therefore, how the governments of the Southeast Asian countries deal with the issue of terrorism will automatically become an international focus.

Through this representation, *The Post* wanted to show to its readers how the Indonesian government dealt with terrorism and national security following the Bali bombing and some terror attacks afterward. Nonetheless, this may imply the government's reactive approach instead of a preemptive one. In other words, the implied meaning of this representation is the unreadiness of President Megawati Sukarnoputri's government in preventing the acts of terror from occurring. The statement of Vice President Hamzah Haz in some occasions before the bombing that there were no terrorists in Indonesia indicates this. The reporting of his statement had somehow influenced public opinion as to whether terrorists really existed in Indonesia (Azra, 2006). Even until the Australian Embassy bombing in 2004, news media still reported the debate over the issue.

Apart from the representation of the issuance of the regulations, as described above, *The Post* also reported the debate surrounding the regulations. *The Jakarta Post* reported the views of a number of public commentators who were concerned that the new legislation would impinge on the rights of citizens and breach the spirit of the Indonesian Constitution. According to some academics, political analysts and Islamic activists, the regulations would allow the police to arrest people—Islamic activists in particular—accused of having links to terrorism. This issue had also attracted serious attention from *Sabili* news magazine as discussed in the next chapter. Thus, *The Post* warned the government to be careful in implementing the regulations, cautioning specifically against the breach of human rights and the assumed

innocence of non-violent Islamic activists. Moreover, *The Post* warned that the statement of Minister of Defence Matori Abdul Jalil that the Internal Security Act (ISA) could be used to prevent future terrorist attacks may invite conflict within the country. The issue above drew *The Post's* serious attention through the publishing of an editorial entitled *TNI and war on terrorism* (20/08/2003). The last two paragraphs of the editorial, which can be classified as the representation of *The Post* editorial stand, read as follows—

Terrorism has become a dangerous threat to the country's existence. Concerted efforts to eradicate its roots must be taken, but the threat of terrorism should not make us permissive regarding human rights abuses or undemocratic values, just because we are in a panic. The eradication of terrorism does not and should not justify human rights abuses. The eradication of terrorism does not and should not go against the creation of a more humane, civil society. The two are not mutually exclusive.

It is still strong in the public's mind how the New Order authoritarian regime, through its military agencies—*Kopkamtib* and *Kopasus*—had masterminded some kidnappings of political activists considered as threats to the regime (Bhakti et al., 2001). Some of them are even still considered missing until today.

The above representation can be classified to have adopted fair and balanced coverage as part of *The Post's* role as a professional news media and a watchdog of the state. The principle of fairness appeared through not only the support of the issuance of the regulations, but also the warning given to government agencies of the consequences of the implementation of the regulations. According to the National Editor of *The Jakarta Post*, who preferred to appear anonymous in this study, when asked about *The Post* policy in reporting the issue above—

We hold on to the journalistic ethical code and exercise caution not to write news that may play one party off against another. We employ the checks and balances principle. We report the news in such a way not because of pressure from any particular group, but because of part of professionalism and freedom

of the press that was gained through a long struggle (*The Jakarta Post* Interview, 2006b).

The two news items also indicate how the press is now free to report an issue that is basically criticizing the government. The strong editorial stand also appeared through the separation between the capital owner of *The Jakarta Post* institution and the editorial board to assure the high quality of news reporting. Within this new political atmosphere, *The Post* claimed that it was able to play its ideal role as the press, despite the fact that there may be some obstacles from other parties.

The Indonesian Authorities' Role in Managing Acts of Terror

The second issue that relates to the political perspective is how the government, through the police, military and intelligence agencies, managed the acts of terrorism. This issue had gained close attention from *The Post*. In every reporting of the three events, there were always several news items that specifically dealt with the issue. In fact, *The Post* issued editorials that principally blamed intelligence agencies for not acting as an early warning system. Through these representations, *The Post* intended to warn the government and related agencies that the acts of terror kept happening due to lack of coordination among government agencies responsible for national security. It also described what the government had done in managing the terrorist acts. News items and editorials exhibiting the issue of lack of coordination, for instance, appeared in the 2002 and 2004 reporting as follows—

...The first and foremost problem that comes to mind is that priority must be given to the collection and selecting of the available intelligence data in a coordinated manner...

Understandably, after President Suharto's resignation in mid 1998, gradually the elaborate security and intelligence system fell into disarray. To complicate the matter, President Suharto's successors, President B. J. Habibie and President Abdurrahman Wahid, kept changing the senior intelligence officers, within the military and at the national level, according to their own personal liking or their respective ideological slant. The separation of

the National Police from the Indonesian Military (TNI) further slackened cooperation in intelligence gathering its evaluation between the two.

It is not too farfetched to imagine that feelings of hurt pride and envy have developed within the ranks of the TNI on seeing that the National Police are now in charge of domestic security, a domain of which until quite recently the TNI had a major share. So, again, it is not too farfetched to imagine that intelligence data obtained by the military intelligence directorate pertaining to terrorist activities in Indonesia is not readily shared with their colleagues at National Police headquarters... (*Intelligence Failure, The Jakarta Post* editorial, 15/10/02)

The Post also wanted to show its readers, who are mostly international expatriates, what the Indonesian government had done in managing terrorism and the terrorist attacks. The representation of government's attempts to manage the terrorist acts appeared as follow,

A number of districts in West Java, believed to be home to extremists advocating sharia (Islamic law), are now under tight surveillance to prevent the possibility of further terrorist attacks, says provincial police chief Insp. Gen. Dadang S. Garnida.

"The regions in West Java that we are monitoring are those where Muslims are overly fanatic. We are conducting surveillance in those areas," Dadang said on Saturday while accompanying President Megawati Soekarnoputri's husband Taufik Kiemas who visited fishermen in Gebangmekar village, Cirebon regency, West Java (*Police to watch militants, The Jakarta Post*, 25/08/03).

Based on the news items above, *The Post* criticized the Indonesian intelligence authorities, who in *The Post's* perspective, had failed to anticipate acts of terrorism. One of the reasons was lack of coordination among government agencies responsible for intelligence. In particular, *The Post* argued that the division between the Police and the military (TNI) had contributed to the poor intelligence and counter-terrorism skills. Since intelligence acquisition and processing had been a function of the military before its separation from

the police, the latter organisation had been bereft of skills and capabilities in intelligence gathering. Consequently, although formal responsibility for internal security had rightly been allocated to the police, there was no transfer of intelligence knowledge that was previously handled by the military; the police capacity was undoubtedly weak in this area. Some terrorist attacks that occurred even until 2005 —the second Bali bombing— were evidence of this. To complicate the issue, there are "grey areas", such as counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency, where the roles between the police and the military are poorly defined. The complexity of this issue was notified by the International Crisis Group in its report,

Intelligence is a difficult area, particularly in light of Indonesia's terrorism problem. The intelligence functions of the police, military, and National Intelligence Agency (BIN) overlap, and coordination is not smooth. The government needs to work out an appropriate division of labour, probably through legislation, but in a way that ensures that all three maintain political neutrality, are subject to civilian oversight, and do not acquire powers beyond what is acceptable in a democratic society (ICG Asia Report No. 90, 2004).

Further, even in areas that are exclusively police responsibility, such as upholding law and order, police again evinced its weak capacity. This fact of divisional issue was clearly stated in one of *The Post's* news items entitled *Military 'knows' the bombers, police don't* (25/10/2002) and its editorial *TNI and war on terrorism* (20/08/2003). In its editorial, *The Post* wrote its perspective of the issue as follows,

After announcing in 1999 the adoption of a new approach whereby the military would supposedly concentrate only on defence affairs, thus allowing the police to handle internal security and order, the TNI generals now realize their "mistake" in relinquishing their influential political functions. They also argue that the country's problems are too huge to be entrusted only to the police. Whereas in the past TNI complained about limited personnel in numerical terms compared with that of the archipelago, TNI is now complaining it is underutilized, in the words of Coordinating

Minister for Political and Security Affairs Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono...

We strongly supported TNI's move to quit politics because the country needed a strong military force to defend its sovereignty. Soeharto misused the military to maintain his 32-year rule. To convince the nation of its strong political will, then military chief Gen. Wiranto changed in 1999 the name of the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) to TNI, and the police were separated from TNI...

We strongly suggest TNI fully assists Police in boosting their effectiveness by sharing its know-how, including its intelligence networks and capacity, because in this field the police are left far behind the military. It is for the interest of all, including the military, that we have a strong and effective police, although in the short term it may affect the military's dominant role...(*The Jakarta Post*, 20/08/2003).

Through the editorial column, which is essentially the news media's opinion on an issue reported in the corresponding edition of the newspaper, the way *The Post* criticized government intelligence agencies was by reporting opinions of news sources relevant to the issue, such as political analysts, academics, and legislators. This reporting technique was very popular during the New Order era as one of the ways to criticize the authoritarian regime without afraid of being banned (see Oetama, 2001; Prayudi, 2004).

The Post's reporting of terrorism and the government's handling of the terrorist events demonstrates a clear social division between reporting during the pre- and post-Suharto periods. The capacity of *The Post* to report on terrorism in such a free and frank way is evidence of the *Reformasi's* provision for the freedom of the press. *The Post* clearly demonstrates a Fourth Estate function in its representation of terrorism: not only is terrorism a criminal act, it is an issue of social policy. Governments are now scrutinized for their actions, their agencies and their policies. Terrorism becomes a social issue for news outlets like *The Post* which can now speak as a form of civil and social protector against the excesses of criminality on the one hand and government deficiencies on the other.

It is noteworthy that *The Post* dared to criticize the government agencies' incompetency

in managing terrorism. During the authoritarian New Order regime, the use of covered, polite and euphemistic reportage style and the dominant use of government news sources had become the characteristics of the Indonesian press; whereas during the reform era, more open and free reporting style are new characteristics of the Indonesian press as part of democracy. According to the editorial secretary of *The Jakarta Post*,

We employ professional journalism practice by taking no sides to any parties. Our duty as a press institution is to educate society to realize which is right and which is wrong. And in relation to terrorism, the press plays a crucial role to show to the public what the authorities have done to assure this thing won't happen again in the future" (*The Jakarta Post* Interview, 2006a).

The condition that the Indonesian press faced in this reformation era as shown by *The Jakarta Post* is similar to Stuart Hall (1999, p.4) statement in his book *News Culture* as follows,

Press freedom is part of the realization of the democratic function...by fostering a public engagement with the issue of the day, they are regarded as helping to underwrite a consensual (albeit informal) process of surveillance whereby the activities of the state and corporate sectors are made more responsive to the dictates of public opinion.

Thus, *The Post* strictly represented the lack of coordination among government agencies, exhorting the government itself to take more seriously its role in human security and public protection. Within the aegis of this criticism, *The Post* argued that the government sought to excuse itself on the grounds that it was in transition; in effect, however, the new democratic government could not abdicate its role as community protector and would need to work hard to prevent further attacks.

Nonetheless, *The Post* also reported the investigation process undertaken by the Indonesian police in coordination with the help of investigators from Australia and other countries to uncover the perpetrators of the terror attacks. This was done through the reporting of interviews with the police as well as press conferences that were frequently held by the police media centre. Most

of *The Post* headlines on this issue are statements made by the police such as *RI, Australia form joint team to probe Bali attack* (17/10/02), *Police announce breakthrough in Bali probe* (01/11/02), (the Bali bombing);, *Jl linked with Marriott blast* (09/08/03), *Police confirm Asmar's Jl ties* (the JW Marriott hotel bombing); *10 suicide bombers at large: Police* (12/09/04), *Police release photos of bombing suspects* (16/09/04), *Police arrest eight over embassy bombing* (17/09/04) (the Australian embassy bombing). News items exhibiting current situation and the progress of police investigation, for instance, are as follows,

Police say the ongoing investigation into the JW Marriot Hotel bomb attack is pointing towards the involvement of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) regional terrorist network.

National Police chief Gen. Da'i Bachtiar said on Friday that police had a list and photographs of suspects linked to JI, the Islamic-based network believed responsible for the devastating Bali bombings.

Da'i, speaking prior to meeting the House of Representatives' Commission I on defence, pointed to similarities between the Marriott and Bali bombings.

The similarities included the explosives used, the fact that the bomb was triggered by a mobile phone and that the terrorists had removed the engine and chassis numbers from the car used as a bomb, as they had done in Bali... (*Jl linked with Marriott blast, The Jakarta Post*, 09/08/03)

The National Police announced on Thursday that they had arrested at least eight people allegedly linked to last week's deadly blast outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, which killed 10 people and injured over 180 others.

National Police chief of detectives Comr. Suyitno Landung Sudjono confirmed the arrests of only seven suspects in East Java, while a police source said another one was nabbed in Jakarta.

"This is part of our efforts to establish a link between terror suspects in West, Central and East Java. We hope we can capture both Azahari bin Husin and Noordin Moh. Top,

once we trace their network," said Suyitno.

The source and Suyitno said the police also arrested three people in Sidoarjo, three others in Madiun and two others in Magetan... (*Police arrest eight over embassy bombing, The Jakarta Post*, 17/09/04)

The Post constantly reported the progress of the investigation process of the three bombing attacks. Within *The Post's* perspective, the representation of the police investigation is as important as the representation of lack of coordination among government authorities so that its readers could be well-informed of the progress. Through this representation *The Post* expected its readers to be aware and critical of the investigation progress so that the police seriously handled the bomb attacks. It is this kind of reporting that *The Post* claimed to have operated within a principle of fair and balanced reporting based on the professional standard of journalism, as stated by its national editor (*The Jakarta Post Interview*, 2006b).

Another implied meaning of the news representation above is that the readers were expected to become aware of the fact that terrorism did exist within the country and the perpetrators had lived among society. Further, this issue would increase society's caution toward any suspicious things that may lead to acts of terror. The disclosure of some facts where the perpetrators had rented houses in villages and urban areas and made them the base from which they develop their terror plan indicates how the perpetrators attempted to use society as the cover up for the acts of terror.

Representing the Views of the Broader Indonesian Citizenry

Despite the fact that the perpetrators of acts of terror claimed their acts in the name of religion, *The Post* had a perspective that no religions in the world should use terror. This is an ideological and moral perspective that distinguishes *The Post*—its policy framework, editorial and alignment with government and international legal frameworks. This understanding is another representation that *The Post* attempted to bring to the surface. This news media institution felt it was necessary to stress this issue in its reporting as a good

deal of the international western-based media had, deliberately or otherwise, equated Islam with terrorism (see Lewis, 2005). By representing the Indonesian opinion of the terrorist attacks, *The Post* expected its readers, some of whom are foreigners and expatriates, to be aware of the notion that principally Islam has nothing to do with terrorism. It is part of the news media role to educate the public (Mc Quail, 2000). By presenting Indonesian citizens' perspectives and views on the terrorist attacks and terrorism more generally, *The Post* provided a voice for Islamic Indonesians, in particular, against the prevailing views of some areas of the international media. This was especially important for countering the view that equated Indonesia's Islamic community with terrorism.

The Post disagreed with some western news media that had shown bias in their reporting. Jerry D. Gray (2006), a former US Air Force and *Metro TV* and *CNBC Asia* Reporter, in his book entitled *Dosa-Dosa Media America (Sins of American Media)* uncovers some facts of how some American media institutions had changed from news media that report actual events to propaganda machine that supported the American president and his government, whether rightly or wrongly.

The perspective above was strongly stated by *The Post* editor-in-chief, editorial secretary and national editor that I interviewed. This empirical part of my research was used to support my analysis of *The Post's* representation as can be seen below. In reporting news that contained potentially sensitive and divisive issues like terrorism that had been launched by radical groups in the name of Islam, *The Post* editor claimed to stay neutral so that news media can professionally report the event (interview held in Jakarta, August 2006). Thus, *The Post* felt it was its obligation to convey the news fairly so that its readers can see the facts more objectively. News items exhibiting the views of the broader Indonesian citizenry read as follow,

Leaders from different religions, calling themselves *Gerakan Moral Nasional* or *GMN* (National Moral Movement) pleaded on Monday for all people to refrain from linking the deadly Bali bombing with any religion, particularly Islam. *GMN* spokesman Hasyim

Muzadi told journalists after *GMN* meeting at the *Nahdlatul Ulama* office here that the bombing in Bali was a crime against humanity, which no religion condoned.

Muhammadiyah chairman Ahmad Syafii Maarif issued a separate statement on Friday from his office in Yogyakarta, calling on the government and its security forces to take swift action to find the motives behind the bombing.

The moderate Muslim group, however, urged all parties, particularly the police, not to jump to any conclusions about the motive or the perpetrators of the bombing without providing credible evidence arrived at after a long investigation (*Don't link deadly Bali bombing with religion: leaders, The Jakarta Post, 15/10/02*).

Similar representation had also been shown by *The Post* in the 2003 and 2004 bombing attacks which are evident in the following news items,

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and *Muhammadiyah*, the country's two largest Muslim organisations, led a chorus of condemnation against the bomb attack on JW Marriott Hotel and called on people to remain calm.

They called on people to remain calm and ignore provocation and speculation about the tragedy. Both figures demanded the government "uncover the case and the terrorist network behind the incident immediately, professionally and transparently".

Both Hasyim and Syafii agreed that the Marriott bombing had nothing to do with Islam... (*Muslim groups condemn blast, say Islam not to blame, The Jakarta Post, 07 August 2003*).

Thursday's bombing at the Australian Embassy, which killed at least seven people, drew strong nationwide condemnation, with many saying the latest terror attack would further tarnish the predominantly Muslim country's image.

Muslim leaders and leaders from different faiths extended their deep condolences to the families and relatives of the dead and the at least 161 wounded victims, while urging the nation to unite to fight and root out terrorism.

(*Religious leaders condemn bombing, call for unity, The Jakarta Post*, 10 September 2004)

The importance of this representation to *The Post* can be seen from the news items that can be categorised as long news (more than 12 paragraphs) and the inclusion of some news sources, mostly Islamic leaders and scholars that strictly and specifically emphasized that Islam was not a religion of terror or violence. By representing statements from religious leaders, *The Post* expected its readers to be aware that there was no intention of *The Post* to equate Islam with terrorism nor that Islam is identical with radicalism or violence. This is especially important for a news outlet whose readership includes foreign, English speaking ex-patriots living in Indonesia. As a broadsheet newspaper committed to balanced reporting, *The Post* gave voice to a more reasoned and thoughtful understanding of Islam and the ways in which radicalism differed from most Indonesian Muslims. Within the perspective of *The Post*, as stated in the press policies section earlier in this chapter, people don't have to be Muslims to be radical (see Barton, 2004). The representation of this issue is also strongly related to *The Post's* vision to develop understanding within a pluralist society. Consequently, as stated by Managing Editor of *The Jakarta Post*,

We refuse those who commit crime in the name of religion. As a free and independent news institution, we need to report news that would benefit society. Thus, in reporting news on terrorism we carefully use the words like 'Islamic terrorist, fundamentalist, *Jemaah Islamiyah*' as these words can be misleading (*The Jakarta Post Interview*, 2006).

Through this representation, the public (Muslims) was also expected to remain calm as every time an act of terror occurred, there are always attempts to put Islam on the corner because the perpetrators of acts of terror claimed their acts in the name of Islam. The shout of *Allahu Akbar* (God is Great) by the Bali bombing perpetrators, Amrozi and Imam Samudra, in front of global television networks during their trial represented as if what they did was part of *jihad* and legalised in Islam. The global context at that time where the radical Islamic group Al-Qaeda led by Osama bin

Laden had been accused of having master minded the terror attacks on the United States had contributed to the formation of global opinion of Islam. Thus, it was important to *The Post* as part of its role as social control medium within society and to assure that no high tension would appear within society as the consequence of the terror events. This policy is similar to the 'social responsibility' theory of the press, which developed in the USA in the twentieth century (Siebert et al., 1956). Within the theory of social responsibility, the freedom of the press (rights) is complemented by its responsibility towards society (plights). It can also mean that the press must foster the feeling of trust that would lead to a democratic and open society with positive interaction mechanisms between the press, state and society.

The representation of this issue is also pertinent within the global political atmosphere as the consequence of pressure from the international world and the accusation that Southeast Asia region in general and Indonesia in particular had become the terrorist haven (Ramakhrisna & Tan, 2003). The religious leaders worried that this pressure and the terrorist events would legitimize the action taken by the police to capture religious activists. Further, under the same issue, it was possible that foreign governments can foster their interests in Indonesia through various security or aid programs, which may endanger national political stability and sovereignty. The capture of Abu Bakar Ba'syir in Surakarta following the Bali bombing and his eventual trial for violation of immigration law instead of involvement in terrorism indicated how the government authorities acted without sufficient proof (<http://www.arsip.net/id/link.php>).

It is this kind of government action that had worried religious leaders and activists. Nonetheless, the religious leaders strongly supported the government's attempt to discover those behind the acts of terror, as it is through this way that Indonesia, which is regarded as the most populous Muslim country in the world, can regain its reputation in the international world.

Interestingly, religious leaders also suggested western countries to examine their foreign policies toward Muslim or Islamic countries as shown in the news item *Religious leaders con-*

demn bombing, call for unity which read as follows—

It asked the United States, Australia, Britain and other countries, which are often targeted by terrorist, to exercise “introspection” as regards the possibility that their global policies could be misplaced.

“Feeling oneself to have a monopoly on truth and power will benefit no one except the terrorists,” said the statement signed by acting NU chairman MasdarFaridMas’udi (*The Jakarta Post*, 10 September 2004).

This statement relates to the fact that the three terrorist attacks had chosen western interests as their targets of acts of terror. By representing this issue, *The Post* attempted to warn western governments to carefully examine their policies that sometimes had marginalised the role of Islamic countries in the global world.

At the same time, through other news item entitled *Public discourse best way to excise fundamentalism* (15/08/2003), *The Post* also brought to the surface the issue of fundamentalism in Islam that sometimes had been misinterpreted by some radical Islamists, as in the case of *Jemaah Islamiyah*, to be the basis for their acts of terror. Through the reporting of this issue, *The Post* wanted to remind its readers that there were some groups who had radical understanding of religion. This radical understanding must be fought through dialog. To construct the representation of this issue, *The Post* quoted news source of a Muslim scholar and gave more space for the news source to share his opinion. News item exhibiting this issue is described as follows,

Public discourse best way to excise fundamentalism

... Young Muslim scholar Ulil Abshar Abdalla said the teachings and beliefs of fundamentalist organisations like *Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)* that condone murder in the name of religion must be fought through an open public discourse.

Members of fundamentalist groups must be allowed to speak their minds so moderate groups can counter their arguments, allowing the people to see that fundamentalism is wrong, he said.

“If we open a public discourse, we can show them and also the public that fundamentalist ideas are wrong,” he said at a discussion on a proposed draconian security law.

He said Indonesia would lose if it chose to fight extremist groups using a draconian law like Singapore or Malaysia’s Internal Security Act (ISA). With a draconian law like the ISA, fundamentalist teachings and beliefs would go underground, he said.

... Ulil, nevertheless, warned that opening a public discourse on fundamentalism did not mean fundamentalist groups were free to commit crimes. “When a fundamentalist commits a crime, security officers must take legal action,” Ulil said (*The Jakarta Post*, 15 August 2003).

Through this news item, *The Post* also emphasized the importance of dialogue to solve misunderstanding or to avoid conflict. However, it has to remember that within the perspective of some radical Islamic groups like *Jemaah Islamiyah*, the idea to establish an Islamic state and *khi-lafah Islamiyah* in the Southeast Asia region was its ultimate objective. *Shari’a* law was to govern the region. This Islamic Caliphate would stretch from southern Thailand, through the Malay Peninsula across the Indonesian Archipelago and into southern Philippines (ICG Asia Report No 43, 2002). And they were determined to achieve this objective through the use of violence. In their radical teaching, those who were not members of this group were considered non-Muslims (*kafir*) and therefore robbing or killing them is allowed. They refused to abide by the law of a secular government. Thus, although the activities of *Jemaah Islamiyah* had been seized by the governments of Southeast Asian countries and some of its leaders had been in custody, the threat remained strong as this organisation had a regeneration process that enabled young members of *Ji* to become its future leaders (ICG Asia Report No. 63, 2003).

Apart from the representation above, *The Post’s* attempt to report the issue of fundamentalism and Islam was crucial in relation to the news media’s role to educate society. Before and even after some terrorist events occurred in Indonesia, the debate over whether terrorist groups existed

in Indonesia and claimed their acts in the name of Islam remained strong. Thus, within the perspective of this news media institution, it is important to open a dialogue on this issue so that Indonesian Muslims, within their moderate perspective of Islam, could understand that there were Muslims with a narrow understanding of the teachings of Islam who lived among them. According to *The Post* Managing Editor,

It is one of the ways to show our responsibility to society. We represent the issue because it is based on the facts, and those facts are important for the society to know. In our understanding, once we have been able to show our responsibility to the public, then the role and function of the news media become stronger (*The Jakarta Post* Interview, 2006c).

Thus, it can be concluded that the representation of the third issue was *The Jakarta Post's* attempt to play its role as the news media where it did not only portray how the government dealt with issue of terrorism, but also portrayed the fact that terrorism existed in Indonesia. Through this representation, *The Post* wanted to educate society to become aware of the existence of radical groups that had misused Islamic teachings to justify their acts of terror.

Conclusion

As the news media institution published by four competing media publishers, *The Jakarta Post* has turned into a quality, broadsheet newspaper with a distinctive Indonesian perspective to counter the highly unbalanced western dominated global traffic of news and views. In relation to the representation of terrorism, the Post carefully reported the issue. With strong editorial stand, the Post had taken no sides and presented a balanced perspective in accordance with its editorial policy and the standards of the Fourth Estate. For *The Post*, terrorism represented a significant political and social crime that needed to be punished in accordance with rule of law and the new standards of social and legal responsibility emerging out of the Reformasi.

In accordance with these perspectives, *The Post* sought to unhinge the connection between

terrorism and Islam that had been propagated through specific areas of the western media, a perspective to which *The Post's* readership would have been certainly exposed.

The news representation of three terrorist events in *The Jakarta Post* had been constructed mostly around a distinctive, secular and democratic political profile. This can be seen from the representation of government policy on terrorism and national security, how the Indonesian government managed the acts of terror and how the Indonesian society accepted the facts that terrorism did exist in Indonesia. In general, *The Post* showed its support toward the issue of regulations to combat terrorism, but at the same time warned the government to carefully implement the regulations as these may against human rights and the 1945 Constitutions. On another issue, *The Post* criticized a lack of intelligence coordination among government authority agencies that had lead to the acts of terror to occur. Conflict of intelligence and counter-terrorism roles between the police and the military (*TNI*) became the main focus of *The Post's* criticisms. Meanwhile, the last representation of the issue indicates how the Post had brought to the surface the issue of the existence of terrorist in Indonesia and the importance of dialogue on the issue of fundamentalism and radicalism in Islam.

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