

AMBIGUOUS NEUTRALITY: *KOMPAS*' POSITION AMID THE WAVE OF POLITICAL POLARIZATION DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2014

NETRALITAS YANG AMBIGU: POSISI SURAT KABAR HARIAN KOMPAS DI TENGAH GELOMBANG POLARISASI POLITIK PADA PEMILIHAN PRESIDEN LANGSUNG 2014

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the position of *Kompas* daily newspaper amid the wave of political polarization during Indonesian presidential election 2014 and explain the underlying reason behind it. Based on six months on site observation within the daily's newsroom as well as content analysis to 278 of *Kompas*' article during the presidential campaign, this study found that the actual position of the daily has been ambiguous. On the one hand, it claimed to be neutral in its editorial policy, but on the other hand, most of its editorial elites as well as its reporters had personally supported Jokowi. Furthermore, even though the daily has managed to be in a relative balance in term of space in its coverage, it has favored Jokowi in term of tone. This study argues there are political, economy as well as cultural reasons underlying this ambiguous position. Politically, *Kompas* took position to be neutral to stay close, and to avoid conflict, with whoever might win the election. Economically, this position was taken to maximize its economic interest to maintain its readers whose supports were also divided to the two pairs of candidates and to keep the chance to get advertising revenue from both candidates. Finally, this position has been justified by the shared cultural values among the journalists to remain neutral to avoid direct confrontation with either Presidential candidate. This value has been embodied as part of the habitus of the journalists which its development primarily took place under the previous authoritarian era. This situation is surprisingly similar with the case in the post authoritarian South American countries, in which the legacy of the authoritarian past still takes hold to the current state of its journalism.

Keywords: Kompas, newspaper, political polarization, presidential election, neutrality, journalism

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui posisi surat kabar harian *Kompas* di tengah gelombang polarisasi politik selama pemilihan presiden langsung 2014 di Indonesia dan menjelaskan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi posisi itu. Berdasarkan enam bulan pengamatan di dalam ruang berita harian serta analisis isi terhadap 278 artikel *Kompas* selama masa kampanye pemilihan presiden, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa harian ini mengambil posisi netralitas yang ambigu. Di satu sisi, *Kompas* menyatakan netral dalam kebijakan editorialnya, tetapi di sisi lain, sebagian besar elit editorialnya serta para wartawannya secara pribadi lebih mendukung calon presiden Joko Widodo (Jokowi) daripada Prabowo Subianto. Lebih jauh lagi, meskipun harian ini telah berhasil relatif berimbang dalam memberikan ruang pemberitaan bagi kedua kandidat yang bersaing, namun dalam segi orientasi pemberitaan berpihak kepada Jokowi. Studi ini menemukan adanya faktor politik, ekonomi serta budaya yang mendasari posisi netral yang ambigu ini. Secara politik, *Kompas* mengambil posisi netral untuk tetap dekat, dan menghindari konflik, dengan siapa pun yang memenangkan pemilu. Secara ekonomi, posisi ini diambil untuk memaksimalkan kepentingan ekonominya untuk mempertahankan pembacanya yang dukungannya juga dibagi ke dua pasang kandidat dan untuk menjaga peluang mendapatkan pendapatan iklan dari kedua kandidat. Akhirnya, posisi ini mendapat justifikasi dari sisi budaya di ruang redaksi di mana para wartawan meyakini pentingnya untuk netral demi menghindari konfrontasi langsung dengan salah satu kandidat Presiden. Nilai-nilai ini telah diwujudkan sebagai bagian dari habitus para wartawan yang perkembangannya terutama terjadi di bawah era otoriter Orde Baru. Situasi ini secara mengejutkan mirip dengan kasus di negara-negara pasca-Amerika yang otoriter, di mana warisan masa lalu otoriter masih mempengaruhi kondisi jurnalisisme saat ini.

Kata kunci: Kompas, surat kabar, polarisasi politik, pemilihan presiden, netralitas, jurnalistik

Introduction

Year of 2014 marked a very important time for Indonesian democracy. In this year, the country held its direct presidential election for the third times since entering the new democratization era after the fall of authoritarian New Order in 1998. Even though there were many names appeared in the public debate, the election was finally highlighted two official candidates: Prabowo Subianto and Joko Widodo. The first pair of candidates, Prabowo, who ran together with Hatta Rajasa (Hatta) as his vice presidential candidate was supported by five political parties: Gerindra, PAN, Golkar, PPP and PKS. While the second pair of candidates, Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and his vice presidential candidate, Jusuf Kalla (JK), was supported by four political parties: PDIP, Nasdem, PKB and PKPI.

Both candidates were very popular and supported by loyal followers. Prabowo was a former military general who was also a founder of Gerindra political party. He had been seen as a strong leader with eloquent stage performance as he delivered speech in his various campaigns. Jokowi was seen as a media daring whose popularity was constantly on the rise, due to his excellent performance when he was a Mayor of Surakarta between 2005 to 2012 and Jakarta Governor from 2012 to 2014.

The competition between these two popular presidential candidates created a strong political polarization in every level of Indonesian society. As mentioned above, there were two groups of political party in an opposite position: those who support Prabowo in one hand and those who support Jokowi in another hand. The competition also stimulates a big polarization among Indonesian citizens as reflected in Indonesian social media where 69 millions of Indonesians are on Facebook making it the fourth Facebook users after US, Brazil and India (Wall Street Journal, 27 June 2014) while in twitter, Indonesia ranked fifth in Twitter use worldwide, with 29 million users, trailing the US, Brazil, Japan and the UK (Jakarta Post, 29 August 2014). Approaching the election, public is covered by euphoria to support their own favorite candidates colored by strong debates and argumentations.

Indonesian media was also drifted into this polarization. The two main Indonesian news televisions, Metro TV and TV One, took a contrast position. While Metro TV, owned by

Surya Paloh, the founder of Nasdem Party, a supporting Political Party for Jokowi, was seen as strongly supported Jokowi through its coverage, TV One, owned by Abu Rizal Bakri, who was also the then General Leader of Golkar political party, a supporting political party for Prabowo, was seen as supporting Prabowo in its coverage. The same situation also happens with Indonesian newspapers. They were divided into two main groups: those who are seen as favorable to Jokowi in its coverage and those who are seen as favorable to Prabowo in its coverage. The support from those media were so obvious which could be seen from the frequent appearance of one of the candidates in their news coverage, or from the political affiliation of the owner of the media.

However, apart from the media polarization, what was interesting and made the 2014 different was a very strong rumor among the Indonesian media and intellectuals about the dark past of one of the candidates, Prabowo, due to his involvement in the series of serious abuse of human rights including abducting student's activist in the 1998 Indonesian student protest as well as in the case of East Timor back to 1983 (Klinken, Inside Indonesia, 27 April 2014). This was the reason why *The Jakarta Post*, a media with no direct affiliation to political party decided to endorse Jokowi, not necessarily to support him, but more to prevent Prabowo from winning the election. This endorsement was declared as follows:

....Rarely in an election has the choice been so definitive. Never before has a candidate ticked all the boxes on our negative checklist. And for that we cannot do nothing... Therefore the Post feels obliged to openly declare its endorsement of the candidacy of Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla as president and vice president in the July 9 election. It is an endorsement we do not take lightly. (Jakarta Post, 4th July 2014)

Confirming the position of *the Jakarta Post*, Goenawan Mohamad, the founder of respected media in Indonesia: *Tempo* weekly as well as *Tempo* daily newspaper, for instance, had openly declared his support to Jokowi and believed that being neutral was not an obligation (*Tempo* daily, 25 June 2014). It is the very same reason that many Indonesian intellectuals also decided to convey their support to Jokowi such as the declaration of support from 333 intellectuals living in the Netherlands (*Kompas.com*, 4 July

2014). Those intellectuals and activists announced their support in the social media with a campaign saying -- referring to a famous statement from Desmond Tutu of South Africa: "*If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor*". In short, due to the track record of Prabowo who had been seen as a threat for the future of human rights and democracy in Indonesia, some Indonesian media and intellectuals have believed that preventing Prabowo from winning the election had also meant defending Indonesian democracy.

However, despite what at stake with regard to the future of Indonesian democracy as well as despite media polarization above, *Kompas* had taken an ambiguous position by, on the one hand, decided to take a neutral position in its formal editorial policy by not taking side to either candidate manifested through: giving a relatively equal space in its coverage for both pairs of candidates, describing both candidates mostly in a favorable tone, as well as avoiding to be too critical in exposing the weaknesses of both candidates. But on the other hand, the overall tone of the coverage is more favorable to Jokowi-JK and most of the journalists have personally supported Jokowi-JK which was manifested in various ways. Some of the elites have given advices to the campaign strategy of this candidate, while some of the reporters have even attended the campaign of these candidates.

This paper will then explain the underlying reason for such ambiguous position by arguing that the position was influenced by political economy as well as cultural factors. Politically, *Kompas* took position to be neutral to stay close, and to avoid conflict, with whoever might win the election. Economically, this position was taken to maximize its economic interest to maintain its readers whose supports were also divided to the two pairs of candidates and to keep the chance to get advertising revenue from both candidates. Finally, this position has been justified by the shared cultural values among the journalists that this is important to remain neutral to avoid direct confrontation with either Presidential candidate. This value has been embodied as part of the habitus of the journalists which its development primarily took place under the previous authoritarian era. This situation is surprisingly similar with the case in the post authoritarian Mexico, in which the legacy of the authoritarian past still takes hold to the current state of its journalism.

To elaborate further the argument above, this paper will be divided into five sections. The first part will discuss briefly the concept of media neutrality in the literature of journalism. The second part will discuss *Kompas*' official editorial policy to be neutral. The third part will discuss individual position of most journalists who were in favor of Jokowi, in a sharp contrast with their formal editorial policy. Meanwhile, the fourth part will explain how this tension between the institutional policy and individual preference has manifested in the contesting definition between the journalists about what they mean by being neutral. The fifth part will explain the actual coverage of the newspaper and suggest which kind notion of neutrality actually prevails in the newsroom. The last part will explain underlying factors behind such ambiguous position, followed by the conclusion highlighting all of the main findings of this article.

Neutrality as a Contested Theory in Journalism

In the literature on journalism, there are three different groups of scholars who view neutrality in three different ways. The first groups are those who view neutrality as simply equal with balance. This definition usually emerges in the discussion of media position during general election (Semetko, 2010; Hopmann, Aelts and Legnante, 2011; Deloire, 2012; Marquez-Ramirez; 2012; Tapsell, 2013). In this camp of scholars, being neutral in the election means giving equal treatment to each candidate competing for the election manifested in the equal media coverage for each of them. By doing so, it is suggested that a political bias to one of the candidates can be avoided.

A journalist must devote equal and balanced attention to all parties and candidates.one way of ensuring impartiality is to provide equal amounts of coverage to each candidate or to teach major issue, with each party's position balanced by the others....the tone of news stories must be neutral. They should report on differences between the parties but without judging them in any way... (Devoire, 2012, page19-20)

In the quotation above, it can be seen that Deloire has gone further that in order to be neutral, a journalist has to avoid giving his personal judgment.

This simple definition of neutrality, however, has been challenged by the second camp of scholars who define neutrality as not

only giving balance but also providing as many different perspectives as possible about a certain story or issue (Hanitzsch, 2006; Sambrook, 2012). In this regard, neutrality is not just seen as an output, which manifest in the news content, but also as an input, which refers to the process of news production.

Impartiality is to be distinguished from balance (the allocation of equal space to opposing views) and objectivity (by which journalist usually mean an effort to exclude subjective judgment). Impartiality involves no more than the attempt to regard different ideas, opinions, interests or individuals with detachment...

(Sambrook, 2012: 5)

In the quote above, Sambrook emphasizes that providing space for different ideas and opinions is at the heart of neutrality. In this regards, he suggested that neutrality has to be followed by the effort from the media institution to be transparent in about themselves, such as their political affiliations, corporate interests and the procedure on how they gather their information. The ultimate aim of this neutrality as a process is to win trust form the readers and to give them a chance to decide for themselves about the credibility of the information.

However, despite defending the notion of neutrality, he also suggested that its implementation is not without exception. In this regard, he believes in the notion of moral relativism in which neutrality was no longer applied for reporting groups, movements or individuals who can generate a threat to the survival of democracy which has been the basis where neutrality emerges. In the words of Sambrook: "you can not be neutral in a situation of national or democratic survival" (page 25)

Finally, there is the third group of scholars who do not see neutrality as one of the core values in journalism. One of the supporters of this notion was Patterson & Donsbach (1996) who argued that journalist's political beliefs will always effect their news decision. In line with it, Boudana also believes that neutrality which is defined as being in the middle as a "delusive position" as truth does not lie. Instead of being neutral or impartial, she suggested the journalists should turn to the concept of accuracy and fairness. Meanwhile, Jensen has seen neutrality as an "illusion" which should be better replaced with the concept of objectivity, which is supporting a story with facts and evidence

(1992:20). Confirming the previous scholars, Kovach & Rosenstiel (2006) have also argued, in their famous work *The Elements of Journalism* which has been much referredby student of journalism, that neutrality is just a myth in the mind of the journalists which should be replaced with the concept of independency. In their words:

"It is worth restating the point to make it clear. Being impartial or neutral is not a core principal of journalism... Journalists must maintain independence from those they cover...It is this independence of spirit and mind, rather than neutrality, that journalists must keep in focus..."

(Kovach and Rosenstiel, 115-118)

By the statement above, they wanted to convey that journalists should be independent from those they cover and simply tell the truth to the citizens: the only thing they should be loyal to.

In short, from the discussion above it can be seen that there are three different theories about neutrality which are: seeing neutrality as equal with spatial balance, seeing neutrality as more than just spatial balance and lastly those see neutrality is an elusive notion which should not be seen as part of journalistic values. While the first two theories still believe that media should be neutral or impartial, the last theory believe that this notion should be replaced with other ideal such as independency, objectivity or fairness. As will be clear in the section that follows, *Kompas'* institutional policy is closer to the first definition above, which sees neutrality as synonymous with balance by giving equal space to both pairs of candidate during election.

***Kompas'* Institutional Policy to be Neutral**

Tens of journalists gather around a table at *Kompas* newsroom in that evening of 18 March 2014. The internal meeting of political desk was being held. In one side of the table, there was the head of *Kompas* political desk and some journalists in his division. However, unlike the previous meetings, the chief editor was also present and it was he,himself, who gave the opening speech. Also present in the meeting were the vice chief editor of the newspaper and some other senior journalists. They were discussing the newspaper agenda setting for the most important political event in Indonesia in the last five years i.e Indonesian presidential election which would be held on 9 July 2014 - less than four months.

During the discussion, one of the reporters in the political desk raised a critical question:

“I did not do content analysis to our coverage approaching this election, however I felt that *Kompas* was supporting Jokowi. Was it really our editorial policy?”
(Dina¹, *Kompas*’ Journalist, 18 March 2014)

Her question was a reflection of growing tension within *Kompas* newsroom, especially in the internal political desk, in which strong debates has been going on among the journalists in that division about the newspaper’s position. Outside the newsroom, there was a strong scrutiny in which Prabowo himself felt that *Kompas* has not acted neutrally and taking side to Jokowi². In response to the question, the chief editor clearly answered that *Kompas* position editorial is neutral. He elaborated:

“So, we would emphasize here that we did not take sides. It’s because our position is neutral. We will hold our independency, our neutrality, our integrity by not endorsing any candidates. Our main basis is, still, on the journalistic values....”
(Arif Subangun, *Kompas* Chief Editor, 18 March 2014)

From the quotation above it could be seen that Arif interpreted neutrality as not taking side of either candidate. This statement that *Kompas* position was neutral was declared in the editorial column of the newspaper, 8 July 2014 as follows:

“...With only two pairs of presidential and vice presidential candidates, the competition could escalate into a conflict between two groups and mass media (print, electronic and digital) is in the middle of this turbulence. Mass media as part of the society is in a very vulnerable position, as if walking on *wot ogal-agil*[swinging bridge]. Position and

identity of the mass media which should be free from practical political interest is on trial...”

(*Kompas*’ editorial column, 8 July 2014)

The editorial column above was written by *Kompas* vice director, who then told me that the overall meaning of the editorial is to emphasize that *Kompas*’ position is neutral. He explained:

... *Wot ogal-agil* is a narrow bridge usually made of a single piece of bamboo to cross a river usually found in a village. The bamboo is so small and weak that it will be shaking as we are walking on it. Therefore, this is very important to walk slowly and carefully to keep our body in balance as a failure to do so would mean we will fall into the rivers where which many wild crocodile already waiting for us...So, through this editorial, we want to convey a message that we are neutral...We also would like remind implicitly that even though in our hearts we have a hope for Jokowi, as an institution we are neutral...

(St. Sularto, Vice General Director of *Kompas*, 8 July 2014)

From the quotation above, it could be seen that besides providing balance reporting, *Kompas* also further defines neutrality as not taking side to any candidates, which has never been explicitly coined in any of the literatures discussed in the previous section. However, the interview also suggests that *Kompas*’ vice editor aware d that there was a tension between the institutional position of the newspaper and the individual aspiration of most of the journalists who mostly support Jokowi. To what extent was the journalists support Jokowi? The next section would be dedicated to answer this question.

Individual Position of the Journalists: Mostly in Favor of Jokowi-JK

Unlike its institutional policy to be neutral, *Kompas*’ journalists who were mostly in favor Jokowi-JK. These individual political preferences were manifested in various ways from simply giving a moral support to the candidates, to giving a political advice in the campaigning design of Jokowi-JK, to attending the campaign of this pair of candidate. This section will elaborate further these findings.

The first and most interesting support from the journalists within the daily was the support from Jakob Oetama to pair of candidate of Jokowi-JK. As I was in the newsroom, there was rumor among the journalists in the third floor

¹ The author changes the names of some informants due to ethical consideration.

² In a youtube channel dated 4 Augusts, 2015 by *Kompas TV*, there is a video tape showing how Prabowo had refused to be interviewed by a journalists from *Kompas TV* as he believed that all the media belong to *Kompas Group* had been unfair and injustice to him (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UcAc_P0wrY). In the words of Prabowo: “*Kompas* group was not fair and not just to me.” Even this video was uploaded around a year later, the event itself was taking place around the election period back to July 2014.

that an important political event was just going on in the sixth floor the *Kompas*' building. It was on that floor where Jakob's office was located. This important political event was the visit from the then Presidential candidate Jokowi to Jakob to ask for political support. The meeting was only participated by a handful number of elite in the newsroom, with Jakob Oetama himself. However, a picture was circulated among the journalists confirming the meeting in the early March 2014.

When I confronted the picture to one of the elites of the newsroom, he explained to me that *Kompas* would welcome any candidate who wish to pay a visit to their office. Therefore, the picture did not necessarily mean that the newspaper was supporting Jokowi (interview with *Kompas*' journalists 20 March 2014). This is also noteworthy that, Oscar, one of the journalists who appeared in the picture with Jokowi had been complained by other journalists for showing the picture as his profile picture in the blackberry application, which he obeyed by declining the picture immediately. However, this was hard to deny that many of those journalists were feeling proud and happy with Jokowi's visit. Besides, it was hardly heard any rumors suggesting Prabowo's visit to *Kompas*, let alone any pictures of him with Jakob Oetama. Therefore, this picture could be seen as a political support of Jakob Oetama to Jokowi.

The picture's incident above confirmed the finding earlier that Jakob Oetama has always been in favor of Jusuf Kalla, who had long a close relationship with the newspaper. In Jakob's view, Jusuf Kalla who was a senior politician from Golkar Party, whom he had known personally as one of his friends would make a better President than Jokowi. One of the senior journalists confirmed that Jakob had personally known Jusuf Kalla who was often invited to *Kompas* in a series of discussion on Indonesian economy back to the 1990-s. In his writing to congratulate the golden anniversary of the newspaper, Jusuf Kalla had confirmed this by suggesting that he was often invited to the paper and appeared in the coverage of the daily in that period (Jusuf Kalla, *Kompas*, 28 June 2015). It was for this reason that during Jakob's meeting with Megawati, the chairman of PDIP party, the political part which won the parliamentary election in 9 April, Jakob suggested Jusuf Kalla to be selected as the candidate of vice chief president endorsed by PDIP in paired with Jokowi (*Tempo Weekly*, 17-23 March 2014,

"Drama Jokowi, Di balik penetapan Gubernur DKI sebagai calon presiden dari PDI Perjuangan"; *Tempo Weekly*, 21-27 April 2014, *"Kutak-Katik Calon Pendamping"*; *Tempo.co*, 19 May 2014, *Perjalanan JK Sampai Mendampingi Jokowi*). To this support of Jakob to Jusuf Kalla, Director of Communication in *Kompas*, Nugroho F Yudho explained that while Jakob accepted and supported all politicians who came to him, this support was not translated into *Kompas*' editorial policy.

Secondly, personal support also came from the editorial boards of the newspaper in which *Kompas*' chief editor as well as vice chief editor occasionally met Jokowi to give personal advice for his campaign for president. In the day when legislative election took place in the 9th of April for instance, the Chief Editor shared story to other journalists in the newsroom. Speaking almost in a whisper as if there are supporters of Prabowo in the newsroom, Arif said:

"...Yesterday I met Jokowi. He told me how he felt surprised to the political support on himself as he did not feel as a rich person, neither he was a handsome man. ...he also asked for suggestion in which we happily provided..."

(Arif Subangun, 9 April 2014)

From the quote above, it is clear that Arif had supported Jokowi by giving him a political advice on how to win the election. This is noteworthy, however, that Arif himself was not a member of Jokowi campaigning team. In line with Arif, Edi Suharjo, the vice chief editor of the daily, also shared his support to Jokowi. In one of the casual conversation in the newsroom he shared his story to other journalists:

"...sometimes I want to write a book behind the scene of *Kompas*. When Jokowi visited us yesterday he looked panic. It was because Prabowo was already very close (in the poll to him). Sadly, I don't have a heart to do that..."

(Edi Suharjo, 10 July 2014)

In the quote above, Edi wanted to share to his colleagues that he had actually helped Jokowi a lot that he could actually write a book length about it. However, he decided not to do that.

The statement of the members of *Kompas*' elites above were confirmed by one of the Jokowi's Campaigning manager, Priyadi Subangkit, who now served as a President Jokowi's Special Staff in political communication.

He suggested that approaching the voting day in the 9th of July, there was a period in the polling conducted by several survey institutes in which Prabowo's votes were very close to Jokowi. *Kompas* was one of the institution which conducted the survey. In response to this situation, he visited *Kompas*' office and asked for further information about the research to examine what went wrong and to find the way to overcome the situation. Then based on the data from *Kompas*, he was finally able to design a campaigning strategy which met the problem (Interview with Priyadi Subangkit, 5 September 2016).

Thirdly, support to Jokowi also came from the head of political desk, Asep Setiawan, not necessarily because he liked Jokowi but more because he believed that if Prabowo won the election it would be a danger for Indonesian democracy. It is for this reason that he would resign from his work as a journalist if it was Prabowo who won the election. In an interview he said:

“...I feel that even now when the (political) situation is already free *Kompas* not yet able to tell the truth straight forwardly too the public. It must be worse if Prabowo became a president. We could go even lower... That was my only reason.
(Personal interview with Asep, 5 October 2014)”

Asep went further by suggesting that in his view most of *Kompas*' journalists were in favor of Jokowi not because they were part of Jokowi's campaigning team but because they shared the same idealism with him to prevent Prabowo from winning the election to secure the future of Indonesian democracy. However, as would be elaborated further in the discussion part, he also refused to publish a critical coverage to Prabowo which would make people think that the newspaper was in favor of Jokowi-JK.

With regard to the tension between the newspaper institutional policy to be neutral by not taking side in one hand, and the journalists individual position as a citizen who has rights to support one of the candidates in another hand, how was then they reconcile this tension as a journalists demanded to be professional? To more specific, how do those journalists define the concept of neutrality amid the political competition between the running candidates during the presidential election? In the section that follows, it will be explained that just like

there is a contested theories about neutrality, there is also a contested definition of neutrality in the *Kompas*' newsroom among the journalists.

Defining Neutrality Differently

Interviewing various groups of *Kompas* journalists, I found that they all agree with the idea to be neutral, however each of them defining neutrality differently. These differences to some extent were influenced by their position in the editorial board. I found that the higher the position of the journalist, the easier they become in defining the neutrality as “giving the same space for the two opposing candidates”. On the contrary, the lower they are the harder they define such concept. The chief editor of *Kompas*, Arif, for instance, define neutrality as follows:

...so perhaps we need to clearly stated here that we did not take side to one of the candidates...that is in term of institution... In term of culture, taking side does not fit with our culture...To be honest, my priority is our safety. We gave the same centimeter, same pages and also same column... I don't care if people see me as too technical...
(Arif, chief editor, 18th March 2014)

Arif's statement stated that neutral means that in qualitatively term, the coverage should not be in favor of any candidates while in quantitative term, the same space has to be shared to both candidates. However, this very idealistic view about neutrality of Arif was hard to be implemented in day-to-day news making practice. Suhartono, one of the senior editors in the political desk, shared his unique view on this.

“I personally still cover both candidates but different in the tone, for instance in the case of photo. There is a photo of Prabowo going down from his landed helicopter while at the same time Jokowi in the rice field. The photo of Jokowi was good. But I did not prohibit the photo coverage of Prabowo, for instance with a reason that it could break Prabowo's image. In fact, Prabowo is like that in his real life. So we keep covering both but with different tones... “
(Suhartono, Senior Editor, 7th October 2014)

The above statement shows that even though quantitatively, it might be possible to give the same space for both candidate, but he argued that qualitatively it is impossible to provide the same tone. In the above case, Suhartono could not control if the tone was unfavorable for Prabowo since the picture shows him getting down from

the helicopter, which could be interpreted as being exclusive and distanced to common Indonesian people. Thus, he defined neutrality by just giving the same space in quantitative term.

Jimmy Laluna, whose position was the chief executive editor of *Kompas*, shared the same view with Suhartono. He argued that in practice, even though *Kompas* gave the same chance for all candidates to be in the coverage, the newspaper's tone clearly placed towards their favorable candidate. He responds,

Neutral is giving chances for everyone to speak. But in practice sometimes we used other people mouth to articulate our preference.
(James Luhulima, 10th of July 2014)

However different with all of those previous editors, Asep, head of political desk who was in charge for editing the day-to-day works of all reporters in the political division, argues that this is practically impossible for giving either the same space in the quantitative term or same tone in qualitative term. The reason is not technical, but ideological. He describes,

"...When we talk about the presidential election, it is clear that we talk about person. And I told our friends (the reporters) that for me it was impossible to score those candidates 50:50. The fact was that one of those candidates (Prabowo) has defect against the law. While one other doesn't have it... So we have to score 60:40 for Jokowi, or even 70:30. For me, it was wrong to give same starting score 0-0 for both candidates..."
(Asep, Head of the Political Desk, 5th October 2014)

Asep further explained that as a journalist, they are all well aware of the fact that Prabowo was involved in some serious violation of human rights, among other was kidnapping some university-student activists in Indonesian 1998 riots when he was in the duty as the commander general of special military army (Kopassus) which leads to the resignation of Suharto from his presidency. For him, the legal evidence has been released by Indonesian National Commission of Human rights (KOMNASHAM) and remains unchallenged by Prabowo himself.

Explaining in a cynical way, Dian, one of the reporters in the political desk, provided the same line of argument with Asep. She was even doubted that the policy to be neutral is really implemented in *Kompas*. She said:

"I think it is non sense that we were really neutral during the presidential election. As even until now (half a year after the election), most people in the newsroom are still in favor of Jokowi. What I did as a reporter was to keep reporting what I believed as having news value, then I left it to the editors whether my work was published or not."
(Dian, 25th February 2015)

From the above statement, it is clear that the definition of neutrality is different among these journalists. While the editorial elites believe in the idea of neutrality as a spatial balance, the medium editor or the ordinary reporters suggest that such balance is impossible and therefore they believe that journalists should simply convey the truth regardless the consequence. Their position is closer to the concept of independency and objectivity. The question then is: which definition prevails in the newspaper as manifested in the content of the newspaper?

***Kompas'* Actual Coverage: Equal in Space, Taking Side in Tone**

In order to reveal the content of the newspaper, a qualitative content analysis was conducted towards the newspaper coverage during the period of presidential campaign. This research did a census (total sampling) to all of the *Kompas'* coverage during the Presidential campaign. According to the regulation from Indonesian Electoral Commission (KPU) as stipulated in the Decision of KPU Number 457/2014 the period of campaign actually started from 4 June and ended in 5 July or four days before the election day in the 9th of July. However, with regard to the fact that the news coverage until the election day could still influence the decision of the voters, this research conducted content analysis starting from 4 June to 9 July 2014. This period was chosen as it was during this period that both candidates gave all of their financial resources for the final blow before voters came to the election box. Based on the articles from the period, it was found that there were 190 article and 89 photos/pictures covering the candidate.

Every single photo/article of photos appeared in the newspaper then would be selected as a unit analysis to examine the tone of the coverage. In this research, there are three categories of tones: favorable, unfavorable or neutral. The tone of the coverage was seen as favorable if an article covered a candidate or pairs of candidates in a positive way that it will

encourage reader to support him. This can range from, among others, describing a candidate as having a positive track record as a public official or state apparatus, having a positive character of a leader who is close to the people (down to earth or *merakyat*). Meanwhile, the tone of a coverage would be seen as unfavorable if it portraits a candidate or a pair of presidential candidate in a negative light which will encourage the reader not to vote him. This can range from, among others, describing a candidate as a weak leader, a corruptor or a criminal who had committed on the violation of human rights. Finally, the tone of coverage would be seen as neutral when it covered a candidate or pairs of candidate neither in a positive or negative way.

In the case of *Kompas*, sometimes an article has a positive tone in the beginning (article lead) and negative tone in the last paragraph. In the contrary, sometimes an article has a negative tone in the beginning (article lead) and positive tone in the last paragraph. When such a case happens, the judgment will be taken based on the title and the lead of the article. This is based on the assumption that title is the first sentence read by the readers and, due to the fact that a title is written in a bigger font, more noticeable to the readers. Meanwhile, news is structured in such a pyramidal form in which the more important thing would be revealed first on top of the pyramid. Therefore, title and lead also reflects more the position of the newspaper.

Based on the qualitative content analysis on the *Kompas* coverage the 4th of June until the 9th of July 2014, it is revealed *Kompas* had managed to relatively keep its balance in term of space given to both candidates in its coverage but, in another hand, the tone of the coverage was in favor of Jokowi-JK. The balance in term of space could be seen in the number of article covering both candidate as can be seen in the table 1 below:

Table 1
Number of Article Coverage

Pairs of candidate	Number of Coverage
(1). Prabowo – Hatta	52 (27.3%)
(2). Jokowi – JK	62 (32.6%)
Combination	76 (40%)
Total	190 (99.9%)

From the table 1 above, it can be seen that there were 190 articles covering both candidates in total. Those 278 articles appeared

in many forms: straight news, features, political column, opinion, editorial, and corner (a satire which was placed in the corner of the opinion column of *Kompas*). Out of these 190 articles, most of them (40% of articles) are combination in its main theme, meaning that they cover both Prabowo and Jokowi in the same articles. Meanwhile, there are 62 articles (32,6%) covering pairs of candidate number 2 who are Jokowi - Jusuf Kalla. It means that those article either mainly tell a story of campaign of Jokowi or Jusuf Kalla, or both of them in the same article. Slightly different with them, Prabowo - Hatta Rajasa has been a main theme in 52 articles (27.3%). It means that those articles either mainly tell a story of campaign of Prabowo or Hatta Rajasa, or both of them in the same article. That said, most of the articles have relatively covered both pairs of candidate in a quite balance in term of number.

However, a slightly different result is found in terms of article orientation, in which the newspaper is more favorable to pairs of candidate number 2 (Jokowi – Jusuf Kalla), as can be seen in the table 2 below:

Table 2
Orientation of Article Coverage

Pairs of candidate	Orientation
(1) Favorable to Prabowo – Hatta	40 (21.0%)
(1) Unfavorable to Prabowo – Hatta	12 (6.3%)
(2) Favorable to Jokowi-JK	78 (41.0%)
(2) Unfavorable to Jokowi - JK	-
Neutral for both candidates in a coverage combining both of them	60 (31.5%)
Total	190 (99.8%)

The table above shows that the tones of the articles are mostly favorable to both candidates (62%) or neutral (31.5%). In a sharp contrast, this is only 6.3% of article which in negative in tone, which is to Prabowo-Hatta. This reflects the tendency of the newspaper to avoid critical reporting about both candidates.

However, when both pairs of candidate are compared to each other, the tone of the article is more in favor to pair of candidate number 2, in which 41% was in favor of them. It means that those articles have covered either Jokowi or Jusuf Kalla, or both of them in the same article, in a positive light that might persuade readers to vote for them. Meanwhile, the article which is favorable to Prabowo-Hatta is only 21%. It means that those articles have covered either

Prabowo or Hatta, or both of them in the same article, in a positive light that might persuade readers to vote for them.

One of the articles in favor of pair of candidate number 2 can be seen in the article entitled *"It's Time for The People to Give Their Voice"* as follows:

"...but I am not a king/I am just an ordinary people/whom always be made as a doormat for the king... *The song which contains a satire in its lyric and entitled "King" above was sung by a group band Rif in the concert "Greeting of the Two Fingers" in the Desire of Bung Karno (GBK) Stadium, Jakarta, Saturday (5/7). This concert involved about 200 musicians who supported the candidacy of Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla...*" (*Kompas*, 6 July 2014, page 1)

The article above covered a story in which during the campaign of the pair of candidate number 2 and framed them as the representation of the people through its title as well as its story. The main message is that those who gather in the stadium to support the Jokowi and Jusuf Kalla were that as the election day would be held three days after the concert, which was in the 9th of July, so this is time for them to vote for this pair. This message also implied that this is the time (the turn) for the people to convey their message who had been neglected so far. This was fit with the narrative made by Jokowi's campaigning team who consistently portrait him as the first Presidential candidate who was really coming from the grass root and really close to the Indonesian people. One of the popular slogan which was conveyed at that time was: "Jokowi Is Us (*Jokowi Adalah Kita*)."

Meanwhile, one of the article in favor of Prabowo can be seen in an article entitled, *Seven Chop Steak For Prabowo*, as follows:

"Arrive in Bandung when twilight comes, Prabowo Subianto directly came to visit Chop Steak and Curry Restaurant of HM Harris. It looks like Prabowo was trated by Aburizal Bakri. "I asked him to come here. He said yes. So we come here" Said Aburizal." (*Kompas*, 5 June 2014)

The paragraph above pictures the close friendship between Prabowo and the Chairman of Golkar Party, Aburizal Bakri. With regard to the fact that Golkar was the party that supports him to be a presidential candidate, the close relationship between the two by having dinner together in a

restaurant conveyed a message that they are solid.

However, there is 6.3% of articles which covered pairs of candidate number 1 in an unfavorable tone. It means that those articles have describes either Prabowo or Hatta Rajasa in a negative light which might discourage the readers to vote them. One of the examples is in the article entitled *"Prabowo's Team was Not Worried"* as follows:

"...the campaigning team of pairs candidate Prabowo-Subianto was not worried about the circulation of a document of decision letter (*surat keputusan*) of Former Indonesian President BJ Habibie in 1998 about the dismissal of Lieutenant General Prabowo Subianto as well as recommendation letter of Soldier Ethical Board in 1998. They believed it won't disturb the electability in the Presidential election 9 July 2014..." (*Kompas*, 12 June 2014, page 3)

The coverage was reporting the stories of a letter that was circulated among Indonesian around that period which consisted of two letters, which were the decision from President BJ Habibie who was then the superior of Prabowo as well as letter from Soldier Ethical Board, which both confirmed the dismissal of Prabowo from the army as he was proven guilty of violating the ethical conduct of the military corps. This violation could not be separated from the widespread rumors among Indonesian in which Prabowo was guilty in his involvement in the activist abduction in 1998. Whether the rumors carried by the letters were true or false, and despite the title of the story in which the Prabowo's team was not worried about this rumor, this is clear that the story was unfavorable for Prabowo's candidacy.

Besides analyzing the article, this study also examined the content of the pictures, photos, diagram, cartoon which covered the pairs of candidates during the period of presidential campaign. From the data collection, it was also found that *Kompas* had given a relatively equal space to both pair of candidates, however the overall tone was in favor of Jokowi – Jusuf Kalla. The equal space for both pairs of candidate could be seen in the table 3 bellow:

Table 3
Number of Picture's Coverage

Pairs of Candidates	Number of Coverage
(1). Prabowo – Hatta	33 (37.5%)
(2). Jokowi – JK	31 (35.2%)
Combination	24 (27.2%)
Total	88 (99.9%)

The table above shows that the number of coverage to Prabowo-Hatta (37.5%) is relatively equal with Jokowi-JK (35.2%). Furthermore, just like in the article, most of the tone of the pictures are also favorable or neutral to both candidates as in the table 4 below:

Table 4
Picture Orientation

Pairs of Candidate	Orientation
(1) Favorable to Prabowo – Hatta	30 (34.0%)
(1) Unfavorable to Prabowo – Hatta	3 (3.4%)
(2) Favorable to Jokowi-JK	38 (43.1%)
(2) Unfavorable to Jokowi - JK	-
Neutral for both candidates	17 (19.3%)
Total	88 (99,8%)

From table 4, we can see that 77.1% articles are favorable in tone, 19.3% are neutral and *only* 3.4% are unfavorable, which is to Prabowo-Hatta.

However, just like in the article, when the statistic for both pairs of candidate is compared, the tone of the pictures are relatively in favor of Jokowi – JK. While there is 43.1% pictures illustrating Jokowi-JK in a favorable tone, the picture in favor of Prabowo-Hatta is slightly lower which is 34%. Furthermore, while there is 3.4% picture describing Prabowo-Hatta in an unfavorable way, there is no picture covering Jokowi-JK in the same manner.

The example of photos favorable to Jokowi as well as photo that was unfavorable to Prabowo could be found in the coverage at the same day, 14 June 2015, but with a contrast campaigning style which favor Jokowi as follows:

Picture 3
A Contrast Campaigning Style of Both Candidates



Prabowo Meets The People
Kompas, Wednesday, 14 June 2014, page 4



Jokowi Greets Fishermen and Farmers
Kompas, Wednesday, 14 June 2014, page 5

From picture 1 it can be seen *Kompas'* coverage displaying the picture of both candidate in the same day, but in a different page. While the picture of candidate number 1, Prabowo, appeared in page 4 (in the left), candidate number 2 appeared in page 5 (in the right). From both pictures, we can see a contrast theme framed by the newspaper. While both pictures are covering the activities of both candidate

meeting the Indonesian people, Prabowo is framed as an elite who used a helicopter in order to meet his people, while Jokowi is framed as a humble leader (*merakyat*) who is eager to go to the rice field. In one hand, despite the article is entitled "*Prabowo Meets the People*", but the picture only described how he was welcomed by his assistance. There is no picture of the people in the frame. In a sharp contrast, the picture of Jokowi is entitled "*Jokowi Greets Fishermen*

and Farmers” and we can see how he shook the hand of the farmer directly as he was stepping his foot in the soil. If selecting a President is about finding the right man who is really committed to the people, then the picture of Jokowi is surely more convincing. Thus, those pictures show that *Kompas* was more in favor of Jokowi in its tone. In fact as I was in the newsroom, one of the editors had told me that Prabowo’s campaigning team have come to the newsroom to complain about the picture. They suggested that there were many pictures of Prabowo among the crowd or people in the street but why such picture was hardly covered by the newspaper (interview with Asep Setiawan, 18 July 2014).

In summary, this section has provided evidences that *Kompas* coverage has mainly reflected the definition of neutrality as not taking sides and covering both candidates in balance by providing equal space for both of them. However, there is an ambiguity in which despite neutral in term of space, the tone of the coverage was less neutral. While most of the coverage portrait both candidates in a positive or neutral tone, when the two was compared it is found that the number of favorable tone to Jokowi-JK is higher than to Prabowo-Hatta. How is then this ambiguous neutrality should be explained?

Underlying Factors Behind *Kompas*’ Ambiguous Position

Based on the in-depth interview as well as on site observation, I found that the underlying reason for neutral position taken by the newspaper resonates with the reason why the daily conducts watchdogging process in a polite way as proposed in chapter V, which actually also resonates the argument of this book. It is that there is a combination of cultural as well as political economy factors which are intertwined and interact each other to shape the newspapers position.

First of all, by not taking side to either candidate, the newspaper aims to keep its chance to be close with whoever might win the election. As explained in the previous chapters, this close relationship with power holder is important to avoid banning during the authoritarian period (Chapter II), while in the current democratization

era this close relationship is important to secure political protection against the attack from the intolerance group due to its Catholic background (Chapter IV). The newspaper’s aim to be close with the power holder by staying neutral can be seen in the statement of Arif Subangun, the chief editor of the paper, as follows:

“Politics is dynamic. If now we support Jokowi...we hold on to this but then it breaks...don’t you think it’s scary? ...Whoever might win, *Kompas* had to win...”
(Arif Subangun, 18 March 2014)

Secondly, the position to be neutral reflects the economic interest of the newspaper both to maintain its readers whom they believe also politically divided to the two candidates as well as to maximize the chance to get advertising revenue from both candidates. The first factor to maintain its readers can be seen from the words of St Sularto:

“...I think it will be unfair for those who don’t like Jokowi. The readers of Jakarta Post are nor only the followers of Jokowi. I think they are being too pragmatic...”
(St Sularto, *Kompas*’ Vice Director, 8 July 2014)

In the lines above, Sularto questions the position of *The Jakarta Post* who endorsed Jokowi. In his view, the post did not consider that the readers were politically divided. By suggesting this, he would suggest that maintaining their readers was one of the underlying factors contributing for *Kompas*’ neutrality.

Meanwhile, the newspaper also has an economic interest to maximize its chance gain advertising revenue from both candidates. By staying neutral or, at least, not explicitly declaring its position during the election, it would give the newspaper a chance to gain advertising revenue from both candidates. From all of the coverage from 4 June to 9 of July, it was found that both pairs of candidate number 1 and pairs of candidate number 2 have advertised their campaign in the daily. The following table shown the date of the advertising in the paper and the estimated price the candidate has to pay to the daily based on the newspaper media kit released in 2014.

Table 5
Estimated Advertising Cost From Both Pairs of Candidate

Date	Prabowo Hatta	Jokowi - JK
9 June, Monday		Page 1 (399.000.000)
11 June, Monday		Page 1 (399.000.000)
12 June, Wednesday		Page 4 (259.200.000)
15 June, Sunday	Page 10 (553.770.000)	
18 June, Wednesday		Page 4 (259.200.000) Page 9 (259.200.000)
21 June, Saturday		Page 1 (399.000.000)
23 June, Monday		Page 1 (399.000.000)
25 June, Wednesday		Page 16 (259.200.000)
28 June, Saturday	Page 5 (464.000.000)	Page 1 (399.000.000)
2 July, Wednesday		Page 1 (399.000.000)
3 July, Thursday		Page 1 (399.000.000) Page 4 (259.200.000)
4 July, Friday		Page 1 (399.000.000) Page 10 (553.770.000)
5 July, Saturday		Page 1 (399.000.000) Page 10 (821.700.000)
Total in rupiahs	1.017.770.000 IDR	6.253.470.000 IDR

There is indeed no direct evidence that the advertising has provided the reason for the journalists to take their editorial position. This is because in *Kompas*, the editorial division was separated, and worked independently, from the advertising division. However, as a profit oriented company, this is obvious that the newspaper expected to gain advertising revenue from both candidates. The fact that *Kompas* nature is not just a newspaper but also a profit oriented company in which advertising is important has been stated by its founder and owner, Jakob Oetema, decades ago as follows:

“...from an economic point of view, *Kompas* began to pioneer the press business. The others did not even think to get advertisement as much as possible. Their emphasis was on the editorial side. That explained why the most highly placed are the journalists, the editors (yang hebat itu hanya wartawan, hanya redaksi). In *Kompas*, we left that concept behind...”
(Oetama in Dakidae, 1991: 250)

From the quotation above, it is clear the importance of advertising revenue for *Kompas* as a media company. In this regard, being friendly to both of them might increase their chance to be used as a medium for advertising for both of them. In fact, despite the big gap between the two, both candidates have spent a huge amount of money for advertisement in the newspaper in which both Prabowo – Hatta Rajasa and Jokowi

- Jusuf Kalla had spent more than 1 billion rupiahs (66,000 euros).

Finally, the neutral position has been justified by the shared cultural belief among the journalists to not hurting the feeling of the power holder which was very much shaped by the Javanese values to respect those in power to maintain social harmony. As suggested by Geertz (1961), maintaining the social harmony is important even though it's only in its surface. This is the reason why, unlike Sambrook (2012) who has suggested that neutrality should involve transparency, individual support of *Kompas'* journalists to Jokowi was not made transparent by the newspaper in its editorial, nor formalized as a formal endorsement to this candidate. This is because for *Kompas*, at least in the surface, it did not make an open confrontation with either side. Furthermore, despite its more favorable tone to Jokowi, most of the tone was positive or neutral to both of them. Meanwhile, in terms of space, the coverage is very much equal which further blurred the actual position of the paper. In this regard, this situation reflects the habitus of the paper which has been developed during the authoritarian era to be always indirect and cautious in their political position. In the words of its journalist:

“The journalists from the generation of *Mas Edi* as well as those before him often got a phone call from *Pak Jakob*, this also shaped their character...as a younger generation, we have never experienced the call from *Pak*

Jakob in which he would direct his anger...I believe it has provided the reasons why the more senior journalists did not want to take a straight forward position... *Pak Jakob* himself had experienced banning from Suharto, forcing him to be more cautious... to some extent this past experience must still have influence..."

(Asep, head of political desk, 5 October 2014)

Despite believing that cautious practice of journalism which according to Asep, as seen in the quotation above, was mainly performed by the senior journalists, he himself also confirmed this cautiousness. He believed that exposing the wrongdoing of the power holder bluntly does not suit the value of *Kompas* which emphasized on not to hurt the feelings of others. It was for this reason that he refused the idea of some reporters to fully unearth Prabowo's involvement in the human right violation. For this, he suggested: "we might write about it but it has to be in the *Kompas*' way..." (personal communication with Asep, 5 October 2014). But more than that, he also decided to drop some articles written by his colleagues whom he considered as too critical. Very often, it resulted in complains from them. In his words:

".. .. They (*Prabowo's supporters*) were surprised when I told them that many of the news related to human right which we did not publish. I said to Hasyim (*Prabowo's brother*), there were many news which we already wrote but we dropped. On the contrary, when the news was not good about Jokowi, we never drop it. For example the writing of Ong. He often complained me. But we gave him explanation. Our principle is not to hurt the feelings of *Prabowo's supporters*..."

(Personal communication with Asep, 5 October 2014)

In the lines above, Asep explained that *Prabowo's brother* had come to *Kompas*' office to protest some stories written by the newspaper, but he explained that he had committed on much of self-censorship practices in favor of *Prabowo*. These practices have actually resulted in a protest from his own colleagues but he persisted in order to take care of the feelings of *Prabowo's supporters*. Apart from the journalists whom Asep mentioned as complaining to him, I also found from my interview with Dina, other journalist from political division, on how she was upset that many of her stories about *Prabowo* were rejected.

"..for me, let's just expose all of the candidates without exception, not just *Prabowo* but also *Jokowi*: all of their strength and weakness. However, the elites did not agree. You could see here many of investigative reports were dropped..."

(Interview with Dina, 27 February 2015).

In the quotation above, it can be seen that unlike Asep, the chief editor of the political desk, the journalists in the lower rank like Dina has been more courageous in expressing their position. However, this reporter has been powerless to their seniors. Furthermore, *Sutta's* support to such position of the newspaper despite he was still a young journalist in the middle position reflected how the he also has internalized the *Kompas*' way as part of his own habitus.

To some extent, the case of *Kompas* unsurprisingly similar with the media position during general election in the case in the post authoritarian Mexico. As argued by Ramirez (2012), neutrality is also understood as equal space for the running candidate despite that the angle might be less neutral. Furthermore, this neutrality is not so much motivated by the commitment to establish journalism standard nor to support democracy, but more as a catch all strategy for gaining audiences and to maintain close relationship with any would-be president. Not less importantly, the neutrality is aimed to avoid confrontation with the next election winner which might make them suffer of economic disadvantage as government's advertisement remains one of the main sources of economic revenue for the media in Mexico. She further argued that this situation is influenced by the journalistic culture developed in the old authoritarian era in which the political parties, the government, and the state agencies had been the main advertisers for the print and the smaller broadcast media (Ramirez, 2012: 243). In the case of *Kompas*, the close relationship with the power holders as well as avoiding conflict with them is even more pressing as there is also additional interest to secure political protection from the intolerance group who might attack them due to their Catholic background at any times.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that *Kompas* has developed an ambiguous position during the Indonesian presidential election 2014. In one hand, the journalists embrace a formal

institutional policy to be neutral which is defined as not taking side to either pairs of presidential candidate running in the election. Those pairs of candidates are Prabowo Subianto and Hatta Rajasa (Prabowo-Hatta) who ran as a pair candidate number 1, and Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla (Jokowi-JK) who ran as pair candidate number 2. But in another hand, most of the individual journalists actually favored and supported the pair candidate number 2. This individual support from those journalists manifested in various forms from giving a political advice for the Jokowi's campaigning strategy to attending the campaign celebration of Jokowi. This support for Jokowi was conducted by journalist from various different levels, from Jakob Oetama, the owner himself to the members of editorial boards, and from the chief editor of political division to the ordinary reporters which could be seen in the everyday in the dynamics within the newsroom approaching the Election Day.

In turn, the tension between the formal policy to be neutral and the individual preferences to Jokowi-JK has transformed into the ambiguous newspaper's coverage to both pairs of candidates. In one hand, *Kompas* has managed to provide an equal space for covering the campaigning process of both candidates both in the form of articles as well photos. However, the tone of the coverage both in the form of article or photo was more in favor of Jokowi-JK. Furthermore, this favorability in tone was also reflected in the way the newspaper frame Jokowi as a leader who is humble, down to earth and committed to the people. In contrast, Prabowo was framed as an Indonesian elite who was distanced from the people, and had a problem with regard to his alleged involvement in the human right violation by abducting some political activists during the Indonesian people power in 1998. However, more favorable to Jokowi-JK, *Kompas* had also refused to portrait Prabowo-Hatta in a critical way in which only very low number of coverage which is unfavorable in tone to this pair of candidate: 6.3% in the article and 3.4% in the photos. Moreover, the editors have committed on the practice of self-censorship by frequently dropping the investigative report from their own journalists who were considered as too critical to Prabowo-Hatta.

There are political, economy as well as cultural reasons underlying this ambiguous

position. Politically, *Kompas* took position to be neutral to stay close, and to avoid conflict, with whoever might win the election. Economically, this position was taken to maximize its economic interest to maintain its readers whose supports were also divided to the two pairs of candidates and to keep the chance to get advertising revenue from both candidates. Finally, this position has been justified by the shared cultural values among the journalists that this is important to remain neutral to avoid direct confrontation with either Presidential candidate. This values has been embodied as part of the habitus of the journalists which its development primarily took place under the previous authoritarian era. This situation is surprisingly similar with the case in the post authoritarian Mexico, in which the legacy of the authoritarian past still takes hold to the current state of its journalism.

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