

7-2001

Book review: Annual Report 2000-2001: Euforia, Konsentrasi Modal dan Tekanan Massa (Euphoria, Capital Concentration and Public Pressure)

D. N. Hidayat
University of Indonesia

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/apme>

Recommended Citation

Hidayat, D. N., Book review: Annual Report 2000-2001: Euforia, Konsentrasi Modal dan Tekanan Massa (Euphoria, Capital Concentration and Public Pressure), *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 11, 2001, 186-188.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/apme/vol1/iss11/17>

dealt with this cultural growth, Ma moves to the section on re-sinicisation to show that the reversion of HK back to China focussed cultural identity in a new way. Again, with the help of television.

I particularly enjoyed in this and the next chapter his discussion of some Chinese TV serials. To anyone who spent time in Hong Kong the 'Ah Chians' ("primitive mainlanders coming to HK" — p 57) are a big point of discussion. I was very glad that the author brings this issue into the book and highlights it by looking in detail at several relevant programmes. This is pursued in the next chapter, "Outsiders in Hong Kong". He ends the book with a summary of his thoughts on the subject called "rethinking television culture". The book ends with three excellent appendices of great value as well as copious notes, bibliography and index. ■

Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI) (2001)

Annual Report 2000-2001: Euforia, Konsentrasi Modal dan Tekanan Massa (Euphoria, Capital Concentration and Public Pressure), Jakarta, AJI Indonesia. 128 pp. ISBN 979-95689-7-8

Reviewed by Dedy N. Hidayat

University of Indonesia

The significance of this annual report, from the Indonesian Alliance of Independent Journalists, is that it immediately plays a part in the broad debate about the compatibility between economic liberalisation and democracy. Free-market fundamentalists postulate that "the greater the play of the market forces, the greater the freedom of the press; the greater the freedom of the press, the greater the freedom of consumer choice". Advocates of the liberal political-economy perspective also tend to uphold the proposition that liberalisation or deregulation of Indonesia's media industry will support a process of democratisation, creating a free-market place of ideas where the public has sovereignty to determine which media industry products they will consume. However, the concerns of Indonesian journalists, which are poured into this annual report, offer a competing proposition. In the context of capitalistic development in post-New Order Indonesia (i.e. May 1998 onwards), the media industry's liberalisation is not proving compatible with the freedom of the press, operation of public sovereignty and expression of public interest that are vital for the process of democratisation of national life.

The AJI report proposes that the end of the New Order's

authoritarian corporatist regime, which lasted from 1966 to 1998, has already created a new political environment for the growing Indonesian media industry. Signs of this are the dissolution of mechanisms of government control, such as disbandment of the Department of Information and the end of requirements for print media organisations to obtain publishing licenses. The emergence of new media organisations and a swift inflow of fresh capital from local and foreign investors have increased the intensity of marketplace competition in Indonesia's media industry.

However, the market's invisible hands have taken a role that resembles that of the New Order's Department of Information, effectively eliminating those media organisations that do not aim or are not able to apply the principles of "market ideology". Many new media organisations have been pushed out of the free market place of ideas. Of the 1,398 new media organisations that were licensed in the months following the end of the New Order, only 487 are still active in 2000. Market logic and principles have enabled the largest media groups, like the Jawa Pos and Kompas-Gramedia Group, to position themselves as the dominant forces in the post-New Order media structure. Regional media companies have generally been absorbed into the large Jakarta-based press groups.

Many of the failed new media organisations were not professionally managed, but it would be inappropriate if this report were to only blame the professionalism of human agencies for their media organisation's failures. The problem is more structural, connected to issues of economies of scale, product diversification or the ability to engage in vertical and horizontal integration in the market, as can be executed by media groups with large capital bases.

The annual report also shows that in a free market (or, more precisely, unregulated) such as in Indonesia, the bargaining position for media industry workers is weak, and the more so as advances in communication technology increasingly changes the media industry into a capital intensive sector. Capital holders are progressively positioning journalists as just another production factor in the processes of manufacturing information and entertainment, with efficiency being easily reduced by the wages and working conditions. In short, journalists are no longer craftsmen or warriors for free expression of idealism and journalistic creations. Rather, they have become a group of strangers in a market not of their making.

The report also depicts the nightmare for media industry workers who are not just washed away by the dynamics of economic liberalisation but are also rooted in the anomie that results from processes of political liberalisation. On the one hand, political liberalisation can give birth to a civil society that does

not obey the old rules and orders. On the other hand, it may not be possible to establish new rules and orders. The Indonesian public no longer accepts the old ruling that only the government can control the press; members of the public feel that they can take part in governing the press. However, the new rules for how the public will control the media effectively have yet to be agreed upon and implemented. What is happening in the interim is the emergence of public pressure, which is led by vested interests and political groups in political society. These impose physical or psychological pressures on the media.

Several efforts to formulate policies for media industry regulation have generated new challenges for journalists. In the draft, Broadcasting Laws, for example, contain a passage that gives authority to a Broadcasting Commission to control issues relating to broadcasters, including powers to withdraw permission to broadcast.

This annual report is structured primarily from the thoughts and viewpoints of media industry workers themselves. Although the report writers identify only one interest that journalists fight for, that is the public interest, this report does not in fact sufficiently encapsulate the viewpoint of public interest. For example, there is no place in this report for the efforts by the public and non-government organisations to establish public television or to turn the state-owned broadcasters – *Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI)* and *Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI)* – into public media.

Finally, the authors from the start should present a description of the ideal communication situation or an idealised conceptualisation of the way the Indonesian media industry should be regulated. Should it be regulated according to the Scandinavian model? Or by another model? Without this, the reader may reach the conclusion that the journalistic struggle for independence is based only a fight for freedom for freedom's sake. ■