

Sketsmasa's Framing of Sukarno and Suharto in 1957-1968: A Study of Media Framing in the Authoritarian Era

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Abstrak

Tulisan ini ditujukan untuk menjelaskan framing majalah Sketsmasa terhadap penguasa Orde Lama dan Orde Baru. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode sejarah seperti heuristik, verifikasi, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Sketsmasa melakukan framing positif kepada pemerintahan Orde Lama dan Orde Baru disebabkan adanya pembredelan terhadap media-media yang mengancam *status quo* penguasa. Bentuk Framing positif Sketsmasa kepada penguasa Orde Lama, Sukarno, adalah dengan menyampaikan keagungan kepribadian dan kepemimpinan Sukarno, serta membersihkan fitnah-fitnah terhadap Sukarno yang dapat menjatuhkan nama baiknya. Pada masa Orde Baru, Sketsmasa melakukan framing dengan cara yang berbeda. Bentuk framing Sketsmasa tidak hanya berupa hal-hal positif dari penguasa waktu itu, Suharto, tapi juga hal-hal negatif dari penguasa sebelumnya, Sukarno. Sketsmasa menyerang kepribadian Sukarno dan menampilkan kejahatan-kejahatan Orde lama yang tidak pernah ditampilkan oleh Sketsmasa sebelumnya. Tujuannya adalah agar timbul kesan di masyarakat bahwa Suharto adalah penyelamat dari berbagai penyelewengan-penyelewengan yang dilakukan Sukarno pada masa Orde Lama.

Kata kunci: framing media, sketsmasa, sukarno, suharto.

Abstract

This article aims to explain Sketsmasa magazine's framing of the Old and New Order rulers. The method used in this research is the historical method. The results show that Sketsmasa positively framed the Old and New Order governments because the government banned media that threatened their status quo. Sketsmasa's positive framing of the Old Order ruler, Sukarno, was by conveying Sukarno's outstanding leadership and correcting slanders against Sukarno that could defame him. During the New Order, Sketsmasa framed differently. Sketsmasa's framing was not only in the form of positive things about the then ruler, Suharto, but also negative things about the previous ruler, Sukarno. Sketsmasa attacked Sukarno's personality and showed the crimes of the Old Order that had never been shown by Sketsmasa before. The aim was to create the impression in society that Suharto was the savior of the abuses committed by Sukarno during the Old Order.

Keywords: media framing, sketsmasa, sukarno, suharto.

INTRODUCTION

In the libertarian theory of the press, the press is called "The Fourth Estate," or the fourth pillar of power after the executive, judiciary, and legislature. Therefore, the press must be free from government control (Daulay, 2016, p. 13). Indonesia's journalistic code of ethics requires

journalists to be independent and produce news that is accurate, balanced, and not in bad faith (Dhamayanti et al., 2018, p. 1). However, to maintain its survival from banning, the press often sides with the authorities so that the information conveyed is not balanced, with positive information about the rulers being more

accentuated than the opposite information. One press that did this was Sketsmasa.

Sketsmasa, a magazine published in 1957, fully supported Bung Karno as the great leader of the revolution. Even many Sketsmasa news articles praised Bung Karno, such as *Bung Karno Datang Segala Keresahan Hilang* (1959), *Pemerintahan Sukarno Success* (1962), and *Bung Karno adalah Sumber Rejeki* (1965). But as Bung Karno's power waned and Suharto's influence grew more powerful, Sketsmasa began to dare to criticize Sukarno, such as his report entitled *Hantjurkah Indonesia Karena Bung Karno* (1967). Sketsmasa supported Suharto and his policies, such as *The Man: Letdjen Suharto* (1966), which complimented Suharto as a strong and realistic figure.

Another research that is close to the topic of this research is Eny Wahyuning Tyas' thesis entitled *Majalah Sketsmasa Pada Masa Demokrasi Terpimpin Tahun 1959-1965* (2023). The object of research is the same: Sketsmasa. However, this research is still different. This is because framing is not the main focus of Tyas' research. The thesis only explains how Sketsmasa supported Old Order ideologies such as Manipol. It does not explain further how Sketsmasa did a positive framing of Sukarno. How Sketsmasa negatively framed the Old Order when Suharto came to power is also not presented. To fill this gap, the author

chose Sketsmasa as the object of study, with the main focus on how Sketsmasa framed Sukarno, Suharto, and their political opponents.

Framing is an important theoretical framework in this study. In framing theory, the press tells the public what to think and how to think it. According to Entman, framing means making a piece of information more prominent, meaningful, and memorable to the public. In general, the objects of framing are political figures (Simarmata, 2014, pp. 29 & 130). The connection with this research is that Sketsmasa did not only aim for people to think about Sukarno/Suharto but also how people should think about Sukarno/Suharto.

In general, this study aims to find out Sketsmasa's framing of the figure of the ruler. The problems in this study are formulated into two: (1) Why did Sketsmasa do positive framing of the ruler? (2) How was Sketsmasa's framing of the Old Order ruler and the New Order ruler? This study is intended to complement the historiography of the Indonesian press regarding the framing of a particular media towards the Old Order and New Order rulers.

METHOD

The method used is the historical method, which consists of heuristics (source collection), verification (criticism of source validity), interpretation, and

historiography (writing). *Sketsmasa* magazine is used as the primary source of this research, such as writings from Soeripto entitled *Jang Kami Tonjolkan* (1960), *Dirgahayu Pemimpin Besar Kita* (1961), and *Pemerintahan Sukarno Success* (1962). Meanwhile, secondary sources use journals on Google Scholar and books in the Airlangga University library. The references are then verified, interpreted, and written in historical writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sketsmas's Founding, Development, and Positioning

Sketsmasa was founded by Suripto and Sugiri. Suripto's background was that of a journalist, and Sugiri was a medium-sized trader. Therefore, during the first phases of *Sketsmasa*'s establishment, Suripto served as editor-in-chief, editor, proofreader, and errand boy, while Sugiri served as a business leader, secretary, cashier, expeditor, and shipper (Anonim, 1962a, p. 4).

The initial challenges Suripto and Sugiri faced during the establishment of *Sketsmasa* were capital and paper scarcity. *Sketsmasa*'s capital was limited at the time, while the paper was only abundantly available on the black market at a relatively expensive price. To overcome this, Suripto and Sugiri had asked their friends to pay for *Sketsmasa* magazine subscriptions for the next three months to a year in advance. They had

also made payments at the end for printing costs, paper purchases, and office rent. Finally, on October 1, 1957, *Sketsmasa* was published for the first time. The majority of the capital they used was borrowed (Anonim, 1960, p. 28).

In a short time, *Sketsmasa* managed to attract readers. When *Sketsmasa* magazine was first published, it had sold 10,000 copies (Soeripto, 1958, p. 4). The next issue of *Sketsmasa* sold the same amount. In the third issue, the number of sales increased to 12,000 copies. In October 1958, *Sketsmasa* magazine again increased its circulation sales to 35,000 copies (Anonim, 1960, p. 28). One year later, *Sketsmasa* increased its publishing frequency from once to twice a month (Soeripto, 1959a, p. 2). *Sketsmasa*'s peak sales occurred in October 1959, with 75,000 copies sold (Anonim, 1964, p. 9). However, in 1960, *Sketsmasa*'s sales decreased. Even so, *Sketsmasa*'s sales did not decline drastically; in October 1962, *Sketsmasa*'s circulation still sold 70,000 copies (Anonim, 1962a, p. 29). By mid-1964, the total circulation of *Sketsmasa* since its first publication had been 144,000 (Anonim, 1964, p. 9).

Sketsmasa did not feature horror writing and things related to sexuality, as was common in the secular magazines of its contemporaries (Anonim, 1964, p. 34). *Sketsmasa* maintained its identity as a light magazine, presenting societal issues with popular and sarcastic language

(Rahzen, 2007, p. 771). Writers who contributed to Sketsmasa Magazine included Soeripto, Surjono Suroso, Drs. Mintuno Sastroprajitno, Dimara S.D., Amak Sjariffudin, Azizpoerwo, Kartawiguna, Mr. Rahardjo, Don Tereza, Sutan Sati, and others (Tyas, 2023, p. 55).

The sarcastic style of the news resulted in Sketsmasa being accused of being a tool of a political party. In the eyes of the anti-PKI people, Sketsmasa was considered a supporter of communism. This was because, in 1959, Sketsmasa featured the progress of the Soviet Union several times (Soeripto, 1959b, p. 3). But one year after the accusation, the communists considered Sketsmasa to be reactionary and anti-communist. The Information Chief of the Soviet Embassy at the time, Gidaspov, regarded Sketsmasa as the most anti-communist media (Soeripto, 1960a, p. 2). Sketsmasa itself had previously written news about communists with the titles PNI Kontra PK (1959), Khrushchev Takut, Banyak Soal-Soal yang Menakutkan (1959), and Juga Soviet Uni Menghadapi Kesukaran-Kesukaran dalam Negeri (1959).

Amidst many accusations of Sketsmasa being a tool of certain political parties, Sketsmasa immediately clarified to the public that Sketsmasa was a neutral, non-party magazine. Sketsmasa claimed it would not be propaganda of any particular political sect. In Column Surat dari Penerbit on June 1, 1960, Sketsmasa

conveyed that the function of a healthy press was that the good is said to be good, the bad is said to be wrong, and the praiseworthy is commended. In addition, a healthy press does not take sides and does not become the voice of a particular group or sect. As a healthy press, Sketsmasa did not take sides with certain groups and was not indiscriminate, criticizing anyone who needed to be charged (Soeripto, 1960c, p. 2). Regarding the coverage of communism in its magazine, Sketsmasa intended for readers in Indonesia to know about the facts of communism, both its strengths and weaknesses (Soeripto, 1959b, p. 3).

Although Sketsmasa openly declared itself as a neutral non-party magazine, it did not mean that Sketsmasa's news did not favor political interests. Sketsmasa did not take sides with the interests of certain political parties, but Sketsmasa took sides with national political interests in the country's politics (Soeripto, 1960c, p. 35). Sketsmasa was willing to put up a fight to eradicate and criticize anything that endangered the national interest (Soeripto, 1960a, p. 2). These tones became more frequent in Sketsmasa during the guided democracy.

Sketsmasa's Positive Framing of the Orla and Orba Rulers

The 1960s proved to be a challenging period for press freedom in Indonesia, marked by the implementation of Supreme War Ruler Regulation No. 10/1960. This

regulation mandated publishers to obtain a license to issue (STI) and required them to sign 19 articles expressing their willingness to support Guided Democracy (Surjomihardjo, 2002, pp. 181-182). Moreover, in 1963, the Indonesian president issued Presidential Decree No. 6/1963 concerning the development of the press. According to this decree, the press was obligated to disseminate Manipol and constructively report government policies. Violations of these obligations could result in individuals being banned and imprisoned for up to one year (Penetapan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 6 Tahun 1963 Tentang Pembinaan Pers, 1963). The regulation to restrict and control the press in Indonesia originated in 1957 with the enactment of Military Law. It wasn't until the 1960s that press freedom became significantly strained due to numerous binding regulations.

Due to the strict supervision and the significant risk of not following the government's rules, Sketsmasa, as a new magazine that had readers from Sabang to Merauke, chose to be involved in conveying the discourse of guided democracy and the greatness of Bung Karno (Anonim, 1964, p. 34). In December 1960, Sketsmasa began to give a special place on the front cover of their magazine for the propaganda of Adil Makmur through Manipol USDEK. On pages two and three, Sketsmasa also gave space to a serialized article by Minister and Deputy

Chairman of the DPA Ruslan Abdulghani entitled *Penjelasan Manipol USDEK* (Soeripto, 1960b, p. 3). Furthermore, when Sukarno passed his 60th birthday in 1961, Sketsmasa published a special issue to commemorate him (Soeripto, 1961, p. 3).

Sketsmasa consistently proclaimed the good things of the Old Order government. When Hatta criticized Sukarno for adopting a more authoritarian stance through the implementation of guided democracy, Sketsmasa contended that Sukarno's actions were justified (Anonim, 1963, p. 8). The magazine asserted that liberal democracy was not a suitable system for Indonesia, emphasizing that such a system prioritized the interests of political parties over those of the people (Kartawiguna, 1960b, pp. 4-5 & 27).

Sketsmasa's support was not only in the political sphere - as above - but also in the economic sphere. During periods of market price escalation caused by inflation, Sketsmasa asserted that, in the 1960s, a majority of Indonesians, particularly farmers, experienced increased prosperity. In colonial times, farmers had to sell 30 quintals of rice to get a bicycle, while in the 1960's they only had to deal with 15 quintals. For Sketsmasa, it was only civil servants whose salaries were still insufficient to fulfill their needs in one month (Wibisono, 1961, pp. 12-13).

Sketsmasa, focusing solely on positive aspects of government policies, omitted the grim reality that characterized the early 1960s, particularly the food crisis. In that period, 35 out of 80 districts in Java faced a substantial shift to consuming over 50 kg of cassava per year as a staple food instead of rice. Across 85% of the districts, the consumption of corn and rice in 1960 fell below the minimum calorie requirements, resulting in some areas grappling with malnutrition (Booth, 2016, p. 53). Regrettably, these adverse conditions were not addressed or published in the pages of the Sketsmasa magazine.

On edition no.7 th. V 1962, Sketsmasa only wrote that the scarcity and high cost of rice were due to three factors: the imbalance between rice availability and population needs, an excess of circulating money compared to rice, and the presence of capitalist traders aiming for maximum profit (Kartawiguna, 1962, pp. 10-11). In subsequent editions, Sketsmasa reported on the success of two government work programs—food and clothing security, as well as the achievements in the anti-colonialism struggle and West Irian.(Soeripto, 1962, p. 4).

Sketsmasa's stand against various government policies was also reflected in its coverage, supporting the elimination of counterrevolutionaries. According to Sketsmasa, counterrevolutionaries are

those who work in favor of other countries and are not friendly to the government, as well as those who spread false news and harm the name of the government and the country (Prabowo, 1964, p. 12). As a tool to realize the ideals of the Indonesian revolution, opposing Pancasila is also considered by Sketsmasa as a counterrevolutionary activity (Azizpoerwa, 1964, p. 8).

In 1964, Sketsmasa was explicitly proud to be called a tool of the great leader of the revolution, Bung Karno. Sketsmasa even said that every publication should be a tool of Bung Karno. Not only that, Sketsmasa emphasized that it was ready to put up a body when there were parties who wanted to reduce or add to the contents of the USDEK Manipol outside the provisions of the USDEK Manipol s (Anonim, 1964, pp. 8-9).

After the G30S broke out, political conditions became uncertain. Order No.01/Drt/10/1965 was issued, which prohibited all press publications without a special license, except for the daily Berita Yudha and Angkatan Bersenjata (Krisnawan, 1997, p. 25). The communist-affiliated press was wiped out, but not Sketsmasa (Efendi, 2010, p. 18). Sketmasa managed to secure himself by calling communism an opponent who often slandered and launched negative letters to him (Anonim, 1965b, p. 8). Another way Sketsmasa avoided suppression was by

positioning itself as a press that loyally supported Bung Karno (Anonim, 1965c, p. 6). Sketsmasa did this because, at that time, Bung Karno still had enough power. But one year later, when Sukarno was stripped of power, Sketsmasa acted differently.

Sketsmasa quickly grasped the message of de-Sukarnoization that Suharto wanted to bring. Sketsmasa said that when Sukarno was in power, the press was unhealthy. The press was restricted and could not publish negative information, including deaths from starvation. This was why Sketsmasa considered the condition of Indonesian society in the 1960s to be better than the colonial era despite the famine in Gunung Kidul (Anonim, 1966c, p. 15).

To further clarify its position as a supporter of the New Order, in 1966 Sketsmasa declared itself to have three main characteristics: Pancasila ideology, anti-PKI and neutral. (Anonim, 1966a, p. 34). The first two were in line with the spirit of the New Order, while the last one was in line with Sketsmasa's goal of being able to deliver information more freely to the public (Anonim, 1966c, p. 25). The neutral stance that Sketsmasa had expressed since the Old Order was a blessing in itself. Sketsmasa became more secure against the political changes that had occurred.

On paper, the press regulations at the beginning of the New Order looked

more free and democratic. In article 4 of MPRS Decree No.XXXII/MPRS/1966, it was stated that "the National Press is not subject to censorship and publication." In article 8, paragraph 2, it was written that "the press did not need to obtain a license. However, in practice, this was not the case. The publisher was required to obtain a publishing license and a printing license. Without these two licenses, coverage from publishers could not be published (Hill & Soedjoatmodjo, 2011, p. 35). This made Sketsmasa tend to quickly side with the New Order rulers even though the regulations did not require this on paper.

Sketsmasa's Framing of the Old and New Order Rulers

Sketsmasa had positively framed Sukarno in the form of expressing the greatness of Sukarno's personality and leadership.

a. Expressing the greatness of Sukarno's personality and leadership.

As a person, Sketsmasa depicted Bung Karno as a figure of firmness and character, unlike other national leaders who, when they gained power, became respect-crazy and power-crazy (Bey, 1962, p. 4). Different positive feelings inherent in Bung Karno were called 8T by Sketsmasa, namely titi (meticulous), tetes (contained), titis (precise or precise), tatas (could overcome something difficult quickly), tatak (agile, not rigid in movements), toto (organized), terampil

(curious), and terengginas (dexterous) (Soekardi, 1965, p. 7).

In terms of leadership, Sketsmasa portrayed Bung Karno as a great leader. His presence could save Indonesia from problems such as disunity, the PKI rebellion in Madiun, Dutch military aggression, RTC debt, and foreign subversive acts (Handogo, 1959, pp. 4-5). During the guided democracy era, Sketsmasa's praise for Sukarno became even more intense. Bung Karno's leadership level was considered to have touched the international level. According to Sketsmasa, Bung Karno was the one who made the image of Asian countries improve in the eyes of Western countries with the formation of the Asian-African Coalition (Anonim, 1962b, pp. 7 & 31). Sukarno's role in leading Indonesia made Sketsmasa think that Sukarno's appointment as president for life was not a constitutional violation (Azizpoerwa, 1963, p. 15).

b. Cleansed Sukarno's good name from negativity

When President Sukarno was considered by many to be a dictator because he issued a presidential decree on July 05, 1959, Sketmasa became one of the mass media that tried to rid of this negative perception. Sketmasa conveyed that Sukarno was not a dictator. The slanders that declared Bung Karno a dictator, according to Sketsmasa, came from foreigners who wanted to destroy

Indonesia and from people who were against the revolution (Kartawiguna, 1960a, p. 5).

Shortly after Gestapu broke out in 1965, Sketsmasa also became one of the media that fortified Sukarno from negative assumptions. The assumption that Bung Karno was involved in Gestapu was, for Sketsmasa, slanderous. Sketsmasa countered these slanders by explaining that Sukarno had already disagreed with the principles and direction of communism when he was tried in 1930. Bung Karno was also often slandered by the communists themselves. Bung Karno was maligned by Muso as someone who sold Indonesia and its people to America. In his book *Perdjoangan and Adjaran, Karl Marx Aidit* also described Bung Karno as an imperialist socialist who claimed to be a socialist but an imperialist stooge. According to Sketsmasa, these things made it impossible for Bung Karno to be involved in Gestapu (Anonim, 1965a, pp. 4-5).

A different framing during the New Order was carried out by Sketsmasa. The framing encompassed not only positive aspects from the ruler at that time, Suharto, but also negative aspects from the previous ruler, Sukarno. Sketsmasa's framing during the New Order period was:

a. Exposing the crimes of the old order and Sukarno's dishonor

In 1966, Sketsmasa called the Old Order a regime that committed irregularities in

various fields. In the ideological area, the Orla government committed fraud by emphasizing Pancasila rather than communism, even though Sukarno himself invented Pancasila. In the military sector, the Orla government committed fraud by establishing the Vth Armed Forces in addition to the Army, Air Force, Navy, and AK. In the economic field, the Orla government squandered money for personal gain (Anonim, 1966b, p. 27).

If previously Sketsmasa still highlighted these crimes on behalf of the Old Order regime, in 1967, Sketsmasa openly presented Sukarno as a figure who destroyed the Indonesian state. Bung Karno was said to have not implemented the 1945 Constitution purely, distorted free and active politics into pro-communist politics and the Peking axis, trampled on the results of the Asian-African Conference, alienated Indonesia from the international arena, squandered state money, used the interests of the state as personal and family interests, provided enormous benefits for the development of communists in Indonesia, set a bad example in sex and women's lives, and carried out divide and conquer politics to legitimize power. The negative things about Bung Karno were published by Sketsmasa under the title *Hantjurkah Indonesia Karena Bung Karno* (Anonim, 1967, p. 28).

One year later, Sketsmasa's negative assessment of Sukarno had not stopped.

Sketsmasa called Sukarno a person similar to Hitler and Napoleon.

"This weapon is no different from the Napoleonic wars... the wars of Hitler and Mussolini... who successfully made their countries into superpowers... but because of their success, because of their power, they became crazy for respect, crazy for power, crazy for sex and women, crazy for thirsting for even greater power... It is not because of Bung Karno that Indonesia is experiencing a messy collapse...!" (Anonim, 1968a, p. 8).

b. Exposed the virtues of the new order and the virtues of Suharto's

After Sukarno stepped down and was replaced by Suharto as the ruler of the New Order, Sketsmasa said the light of a just and prosperous society would come (Soeripto, 1968, p. 8). Suharto is portrayed as a well-intentioned figure with a steely determination to uphold justice and truth. Suharto is referred to by Sketsmasa as "The Man: Lt. General Suharto," a strong man, realistic-minded, pragmatic, prioritizing national interests and fairness (Anonim, 1966d, p. 9).

In 1968, Sketsmasa alluded to the differences between Suharto and Sukarno. Suharto was not a general who liked to wear the uniform of a major general, while Sukarno was the opposite. Suharto did not want to marry and play around with many women; Sukarno did the opposite. Suharto did not talk and promise much but did real things, while Sukarno

was quite the opposite. In the same year, Sketsmasa said Suharto had achieved great success in politics, foreign relations, financial policy, economic stabilization, and order and security (Anonim, 1969, p. 8).

CONCLUSION

Positive framing of both Old Order and New Order rulers was employed by Sketsmasa as a strategic measure to ensure its survival and prevent being banned under the stringent government supervision of that time. In the Old Order era, Sketsmasa portrayed the greatness of Sukarno's personality and leadership, working to dispel slanders that could tarnish his reputation. During the New Order period, Sketsmasa not only positively framed Suharto but also negatively framed the Old Order and Sukarno. The Old Order was labeled as a regime that committed fraud in various fields, while Sukarno was depicted as a figure who had allegedly undermined Indonesia.

Sketsmasa's goal was to create the perception in society that Suharto was the savior addressing Sukarno's perceived abuses, aligning with the de-Sukarnoization agenda promoted by the New Order. As a neutral press seeking profit openly, Sketsmasa chose to secure its business interests by cooperating with the authorities to avoid being banned, rather than passionately endorsing an

extraordinary figure who was no longer in power. This pragmatic approach allowed Sketsmasa to navigate the political landscape and maintain its existence under the government's strict scrutiny.

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