

**CONTINUATION OF MEDIA CONGLOMERATION IN THE POST-1998 DEMOCRATIC INDONESIA****Ludiro Madu\***

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**ABSTRACT**

Media conglomeration has been very prevalent in the post-1998 Indonesia which in turn influenced raised up the issue of media ownership and control in democratic era. This development brings about problems on the ways media power has influenced democratization in the country. While the democratic process has been in transitional phase, it lacks capacity of regulating and limiting conglomerate's ownership on media and has put democracy into risk.

Media take almost full control in determining issues to be published or broadcasted publicly. This paper discusses the failure of democratic culture in regulating media ownership and control in Indonesia. It aims at elaborating the way conglomerates have conducted political appropriation of the on-going democracy which has put democracy into risk, i.e. tendency of media concentration in the hands of few conglomerates. Finally, this paper argues that the post-1998 democratic culture has not succeeded in regulating the concentration of media ownership in Indonesia.

**KEYWORDS:** Media ownership, Media control, Indonesia's democracy, and conglomerates.

**INTRODUCTION**

One of fundamental problem that the post-1998 democratic Indonesia cannot cope with is the ownership of conglomerates in media industry. Apart from the issue of huge investment in this industry, continuation of conglomerate power in the post-1998 also interestingly presents

the incapability of the post-1998 government in managing conglomerates' presence in democratic era. The continuation of media conglomerate in democratic era has been the paradox of democratic euphoria in the post-1998. The case of Indonesia shows that media conglomerations became the urgent issue that democratic government has to deal with (Haryanto, 2007; Cahyadi, 2012; Madu, 2012).

Many scholars have stated that the post-1998 democratization has served as the point of departure for the rearrangement of Indonesia's political, social, and economic structures (Forrester, 1999; Manning and van Dierman, 2000; Madu, 2004; Mietzer and Aspinall, 2010; McLeod and MacIntyre, 2007). This was also the case for media business, including printed, electronic, and online media. The electronic media had actually been the domain of the government-owned television company (TVRI or Televisi Republik Indonesia) and of a certain politically high-profile business people related to the former President Suharto. As for the printed media, this media had also been tightly controlled by the government in order to eliminate its criticism to the government. The shift of tight, strict, and loose control of the authoritarian government to freedom of expression has significantly remarked the post-1998 political reform in Indonesia. Therefore, the 1998 political opening was supported by all segments of Indonesian society as the new way for reforming the authoritarian political structure with the aim of building a new Indonesia which placed democracy as its political foundation.

Media business also experienced this unexpected democratic political change in Indonesia. The immediate impact of the 1998 democratization was liberalization of media which, in turn, led to media industrialization (Tomsa, 2007). This tendency raised the issue on media ownership and control, especially those which have been controlled by conglomerate groups. A conglomerate is defined as the combination of two or more companies or businesses which essentially work with each other in creating a final product. Specifically, a media conglomerate describes companies which own a number of other smaller companies in various economic sectors, including media business. Therefore, the 1998 political reform gave new political structure of opportunity for several conglomerate groups to possess and to control various media (Lim, 2012; Madu, 2012; Nugroho *et.al.*, 2012).

The conglomeration of media seems to build paradox tendency of democratization. While the democratic process has been in transitional phase, it lacks capacity of regulating and limiting conglomerate's ownership on media and has put democracy into risk. Media take almost full

control in determining issues to be published or broadcasted publicly (Haryanto, 2007). Therefore, this paper aims at explaining several reasons behind the incapability of democratic culture in anticipating the concentration of media in the hands of several conglomerates.

## **METHOD**

Using descriptive qualitative method, this paper aims at describing general development of media conglomeration in the post-1998 democratization in Indonesia. Although democratic procedures have been installed and promoted in various institutions in the country, close connection between conglomerate and government seems to give ways for controlling the media ownership. Media industrialization and economic recovery in the early 2000s has placed conglomerate as the only economic actor with sufficient financial resources for establishing media industry. Emerging new media conglomerates in Indonesia's democratic era also presented problematic situation in relations to democratic culture in delivering information to public. With control and ownership in various media industry (such as printed newspaper, radio, television, and online media), some media conglomerates tried hard to use their media for the owner's interest. The issue became problematic approaching the 2014 presidential election since some media conglomerates run for presidential and vice presidential candidates.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Mushrooming Media Industry**

Democratization is supposed to play significant role in reforming media system in a country. Compared to the authoritarian political system, democratic state would impose democratic values or culture in arranging and regulating its media. Robert Dahl (LaMay 2006:15), for instance, claims that democratic culture promotes a free and responsible press system. Press freedom would request some indicators, such as media independence, freedom of public expression, and freedom from any monopoly of media control and concentrated ownership, either state-based control or money-based control (Lee B. Becker, Vlad and Nusser 2000:2). Although detailed implementation would be of difference from country to country, both opinions asserted that the application of democratic cultures in media system would reflect to what extent a country manages to promote and sustain its democratization. Furthermore, those factors empower media as the fourth power of democratization.

The case of Indonesia generally shows that two difference tendencies. The first is that democratization increased the power of media in influencing public opinion. Diversity of

opinion promoted public awareness on the difference meaning of a fact. The increasing number of media gave the people power to choose the right media for their need of information. The second tendency is that democratization promoted concentration of media ownership and control in the hands of few conglomerates. This tendency consequently put democracy into risk. Although democratization boosted the number of media in Indonesia, this political change also resulted in the danger for democratization itself. Media's concentration brought about monopoly of information for the interest of the media's owners. In this case, Indonesia's media conglomerate has the power in managing what kind of information their media would like to broadcast to public.

After the fall of the Soeharto regime in 1998, political and media climate in Indonesia changed from authoritarian and tight state control to the current situation which have been characterized by liberalization, a highly competitive market, and significantly less state intervention (Heryanto and Adi 2001:1). The growth of Indonesian media was initially marked by the abolition of the Press Licensing System (SIUPP) through President B.J. Habibie's policy in 1999 (Tomsa 2007:3). The following president, Abdurrahman Wahid, unexpectedly eradicated the communication ministry and issued the Press Law Number 40/1999 and Number 32/2002. Democratic commitment of the latter was supported by the establishment of the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia/KPI) as the government's partner for monitoring the behavior of media on the application of democratic culture for the interest of public.

Soon after the abolition of the Press Licensing System and the issuance of the Press Law number 40/1999, there was a dramatic increase in the number of media. There were 873 radio stations in 2002, 11 television stations, 186 daily newspapers, 245 weekly newspapers, 279 tabloids, 242 magazines and 5 bulletins in 2003 (Gobel and Eschborn 2005:2). The Press Law number 40/1999 does not necessarily require 16 items of preconditions for establishing a media company as those of the New Order era. The Press Law number No. 40/1999 also easily invites foreign companies invested their money in Indonesian media. This Press Law indicated the initial development of Indonesian press liberalization. These development means that Indonesia's modern state has no more paternalistic and monopolistic power in controlling media. Although state still sustain its power in regulating and controlling the media licency, the state has to share with other new political powers in determining the media growth in the country (Heryanto and Adi, 2001).

Interestingly, the media liberalization in Indonesia was characterized by a certain media in a certain period. In the early years of reform era 1998-1999, tabloid was the most favourite media. Starting the year of 2000, tabloid was vanished due to the lack of advertisement and the shift of reading culture from tabloid to a more qualified media, including electronic media such as television and radio. Business people started to invest their money in the electronic media. This shift also indicated the dynamics of printed media business which accounted for only 20 percent of those can take profit, including Kompas-Gramedia, Jawa Pos, and Femina.

Development of printed and electronic media (television) seems to be paradox. Recently, national printed media has been only owned by several media groups such as Jawa Pos Group, Kompas Gramedia Group, TEMPO Group, Media Indonesia, and Republika which formerly was owned by Indonesian Moslem Intellectual Association (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia/ICMI). Along with the reducing numbers of printed media in national level, we can also see the increasing number of electronic media, especially television stations. In the era of Suharto's New Order, Indonesian television media had only been dominated by the government-owned television, namely TVRI. The last ten years of Suharto's rule had showed private television companies which were established by people closed to the first family. In 1989, Bambang Trihatmojo, Suharto's second son, established RCTI as the first private television company in the country. In the following years, other television companies followed to be aired by other first-family members, including SCTV, Indosiar, TPI, and Lativi.

The mushrooming television companies raised optimism of media Indonesia (see table 1). Although the initial development of media business shows the ownership has been concentrated around politically connected-business people of Suharto family, this electronic

**Table 1: Indonesia's media industrialization in television business.**

TV channels	First on air	Current status	Market share %	
TVRI	1962	State/Independent	1.4	1.4
RCTI	1987	Merged (MNC)	19	36.7
Global TV	2001	Merged (MNC)	5.1	
MNCTV (formerly TPI)+	1990	Merged (MNC)	12.6	
SCTV	1989	Merged (EMTEK)+	17.3	31.5
Indosiar	1995	Merged (EMTEK)+	14.2	
Trans TV	2001	Merged (TransCorp)	12.1	18.5
Trans 7	2001, re-launch in 2006	Merged (TransCorp)	6.4	
TVOne (formerly Lativi)	2001	Merged (Bakrie/MM Group)+	4.5	8.7
antv	1993	Merged (Bakrie/MM Group)+	4.2	
Metro TV	2000	Media Group/Independent	1.9	1.9

Source: Merlyna Lim, *The League of Thirteen: Media Concentration in Indonesia*, <http://merlyna.org/?p=2580>, diakses pada 4 September 2012.

Media took the interest of other business people. In 2000-2001, five national private companies operated, including Metro TV, TV 7, Trans TV, Lativi and TV Global. In regional level, several local business people also established local private television, such as JTV Surabaya, RTV Pekanbaru, Jak TV Jakarta, and Bali TV Denpasar. One of the most interesting reasons of this television business has been the increasing number of advertisement (Bisnis Indonesia, 5 May 2002).

The above-mentioned development in media industrialization shows the way democratization has generally created structure of political opportunity for conglomerates for increasing their business in media industry without any control of the government (Nugroho, 2012). In the name of liberalization, these media conglomerates made use their power of capital to appropriate the on-going Indonesia democratic reform for their own profit. Following the logic of capital, these conglomerates have accumulated their economic profit they gained from media business (Irianto, 2005; Madu, 2012). They did not stop their media ownership in a certain media sector. They, however, have strongly tried to concentrate all media sectors within their conglomerations. These practices of appropriation have, in turn, developed their significant control and ownership of media industry. This tendency shows that Indonesia's democratization has unlikely been able to manage and arrange media industry for the sake of public interest.

### **Two Types of Media Conglomerations**

The rise of these 12 media conglomerates also confirmed that liberalization of media business also revealed two types of media conglomerates (Madu, 2012). The first type is those media tycoons who formerly focused only in building their business in printed media have found new ways of enhancing their business into television media. These tycoons are Kompas-Gramedia Group with Kompas TV (previously owned TV7, but it was sold to Trans Corporation), Media Group with Metro TV, Mahaka Group (owns Republika daily) with Jak TV, and Jawa Pos Group with JPMN TV.

The second type is the emergence of conglomerates which did not have previous experience in doing business of electronic media (see table 2). For instance, Trans Corpora which was formerly known as Para Group established Trans TV and, then, purchased Trans TV.

Table 2: Media Ownership, Control, and Concentration.

Media Group	Group Leader	TV stations		Radio stations	Print		Online media	Other businesses
		National	Other		Newspapers	Magazines/ Tabloids		
Media Nusantara Citra (MNC) Group	Hary Tanoesoedibjo	RCTI, Global TV, MNCTV (ex TPI)	Indovision, Sky Vision, SINDOTV network	Sindo Radio (Trijaya FM), Radio Dangdut, ARH Global Radio	Seputar Indonesia (Koran Sindo)	High End magz, Genie, Mom & Kiddie tabloids	Okezone.com SeputarIndonesia.com, Sindonews.com	IT, content production and distributions, talent management, automobile
Mahaka Media Group	Erick Tohir	—	Jak TV, AII TV	JakFM, Pambors FM, Delta FM, Female, Gen FM	Republika, Harian Indonesia (in Mandarin)	Parents Indonesia, A+, Golf Digest, Area, magazines	Republika Online, rleks.com, Rajakarcis.com	Entertainment, outdoor advertisement
Kompas Gramedia Group	Jakob Oetama, Agung Adiprasetyo	—	Kompas TV network	Sonora Radio network, Otomotion Radio, Motion FM, Etilra FM	Kompas, Jakarta Post, Warta Kota, + other 11 local papers	Intisari + 43 magazines & tabloids, 5 book publishers	Kompas Cyber Media	Hotels, public relation agencies, university & telecommunication tower (in plan)
Jawa Pos Group	Dahlan Iskan	—	JPMC network	Fajar FM (Makassar)	Jawa Pos, Indo Pos Rakyat Merdeka, Radar + others (total: 151)	Mentari, Liberty magazines + 11 tabloids	Jawa Pos Digital Edition	Travel bureau, power plant
Media Bali Post Group (KMB)	Satria Narada	—	Bali TV network, Jogja TV, Semarang TV, Sriwijaya TV, + others (total: 9)	Global Kini Jani, Genta FM, Global FM, Lombok FM, Fajar FM, Suara Besakih, Singaraja FM, Nagara FM	Bali Post, Bisnis Bali, Suluh Indonesia, Harian Derpost, & Suara NTB	Tokoh, Lintang, & Wiyata Mandala tabloids	Bali Post, Bisnis Bali	—
Elang Mahkota Teknologi (EMTEK) Group	Eddy Kusnadi Sarisatmadja	SCTV, Indosiar	O'Channel, EIShinta TV	EIshinta FM	—	EIshinta, Gaul, Story, Kort, Mamamia	—	Wireless broadband, pay-TV, telecommunications, banking, IT solutions, production house
Lippo Group	James Riady	—	First Media, Berita Satu TV	—	Jakarta Globe, Investor Daily, Suara Pembaruan	Investor, Globe Asia, & Campus Asia magazines	Jakarta Globe Online	Property, hospital, education, insurance
Bakrie & Brothers (Visi Media Asia)	Anindya Bakrie	antv, TVOne	Channel [V]	—	—	—	VIVAnews	Telecommunications, property, metal, oil & gas, agribusiness, coal, physical infrastructure
Femina Group	Pia Alisyahbana, Mirta Kartohadiprodo	—	—	U-FM Jakarta & Bandung	—	Femina, Gadis, Dewi, Ayahbunda + others (total: 15)	Femina, GitaCinta, Ayahbunda, Gadis, Parenting Online	Production house, event management, boutique, education, printing
Media Group	Surya Paloh	Metro TV	—	—	Media Indonesia, Lampung Post, BorneoNews	—	Media Indonesia Online	—
Mugi Reka Abadi (MRA) Group	Dian Muljani Soedarjo	—	O'Channel	Cosmopolitan FM, Hard Rock FM, I-Radio, Trax FM	—	Cosmopolitan, Cosmogit, Fitness + others (total: 16)	—	Holder of several international boutique brands
Trans Corpora (Para Group)	Chainul Tanjung	Trans TV, Trans 7	—	—	—	—	Detik Online	Banking, venture capital insurance, theme parks, resort, retail, cinema

Source: Merlyna Lim, *The League of Thirteen: Media Concentration in Indonesia*, <http://merlyna.org/?p=2580>, accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

Another new type of media tycoon is Bakrie Brothers possesses ANTV and Global TV (formerly named LaTivi). The most outstanding media tycoon is Media Nusantara Citra (MNC) Group which bought majority shares of several television companies, such as RCTI, Global TV, MNC TV, and SCTV. The MNC Group also intended to buy Indosiar's majority shares, but this group stop it intention after the Commission of Anti-Monopoly warned the group of building monopoly structure of television media.

The liberalization and industrialization of media has initially resulted two opposite opinion among Indonesian media workers or analysts. The first insight comes from those who view the media industrialization as a good sign of the decreasing role and influence of the politically-connected conglomerates, with particular reference to those closed to the Suharto family. The emergence of Mahaka Group, Trans Corpora, and the MNC Group has raised the issue of the increasing capitalistic considerations in building the media business ---especially those who built television media empire--- instead of political motives of the elite groups.

On the other hands, the emergence of the new media tycoons also reflected the potential danger of the on-going democratization in Indonesia in the name of media industrialization, especially with the issue of the concentration of media ownership in the hands of several conglomerates. The economic motives of building media empire have inevitably put democratic values or culture into risk. In the realm of journalism, the media liberalization which resulted in the emergence of the media tycoons is a new threat to the press freedom. The media conglomerates are an opposing threat to press freedom in itself, leaving a large imbalance of power with limited checks and balances (the Jakarta Globe, 2012).

Furthermore, the concentration of media ownership gave negative impact to the independence of media workers. The conglomerates have the authority of imposing their “agenda setting” with the consequence of content uniformity in all sectors of their media business for their sake of obtaining higher rating and market size. Ignatius Haryanto (2007), a former journalist, criticized that the media conglomerates’ domination has led to their media outlets’ failure to produce news reports that served the public interest because they were driven by sensationalism, commercialism and ‘the speed of news feed ideology’. Therefore, media has to deal with the lack of check and balance between the media magnate and the public.

### **Concentration of Media Ownership**

Following the increasing number of television business in democratic era, media business in Indonesia has gradually, but surprisingly, showed that the media ownership has concentrated in several groups of big business or conglomerates (Nugroho *et.al*, 2012; Lim, 2012). In its research, Centre for Innovation Policy and Governance (CIPG) concluded that 12 groups of big business have dominated almost all channels of media in Indonesia (see table 1). They are MNC, Media Group, Jawa Pos Group, Kompas- Gramedia Group, Mahaka Media Group, Elang Mahkota Teknologi, CT Corp, Visi Media Asia, Media Group, MRA Media, Femina

Group, Tempo Inti Media dan Beritasatu Media Holding. These 12 big business groups have inevitably confirmed the emergence of new business group in media business outside the

**Table 3: Big business' ownership and control in media.**

No	Group	TV	Radio	Media Cetak	Online Media	Bisnis lainnya <sup>a</sup>	Pemilik
1	Global Mediacomm (MNC)	20	22	7	1	Produksi konten, Distribusi konten, <i>Talent Management</i>	Hary Tanoesoedibjo
2	Jawa Pos Group	20	n/a	171	1	Paper Mills, Printing Plants, Power Plant	Dahlan Iskan, Azrul Ananda
3	Kelompok Kompas Gramedia	10	12	88	2	Property, Jaringan toko buku, Manufaktur, <i>Event Organiser</i> , Universitas	Jacob Oetama
4	Mahaka Media Group	2	19	5	n/a	Event Organiser, PR Konsultan	Abdul Gani, Erick Thohir
5	Elang Mahkota Teknologi	3	n/a	n/a	1	Telekomunikasi dan IT solutions	Sariatmaadja Family
6	CT Corp	2	n/a	n/a	1	Financial Services, Lifestyle and Entertainment, sumber daya alam, Properti	Chairul Tanjung
7	Visi Media Asia	2	n/a	n/a	1	Sumber daya alam, <i>network provider</i> , Properti	Bakrie & Brothers
8	Media Group	1	n/a	3	n/a	Properti (Hotel)	Surya Paloh
9	MRA Media	n/a	11	16	n/a	Retail, Properti, <i>Food &amp; Beverage</i> , Otomotif	Adiguna Soetowo & Soetikno Soedarjo
10	Femina Group	n/a	2	14	n/a	Talent Agency, Penerbitan	Pia Alisjahbana
11	Tempo Inti Media	1	n/a	3	1	Produksi dokumenter	Yayasan Tempo
12	Beritasatu Media Holding	2	n/a	10	1	Properti, pelayanan kesehatan, TV kabel, <i>Internet service provider</i> , Pendidikan (Universitas)	Lippo Group

Source: Yanuar Nugroho (et.al.), *Memetakan Lanskap Industri Media Kontemporer di Indonesia*, Centre for Innovation Policy and Governance, Jakarta, 2012.

Circle of the politically connected-business group of Suharto's family. With their wide-range control of various media business, those business groups can also be called as media conglomerate or tycoon.

Regarding the media concentration and the capability of media magnate in controlling various media sectors in their hands, government as the regulator must take responsibility for its failure in managing media business in Indonesia (Nugroho, 2012). Regulatory rearrangement is needed in managing the media concentration with the purpose of promoting democratic culture in the media business in the country. The media concentration has been the real proof of the government failure in empowering public rights in obtaining balanced

news (Cahyadi, 2012). The media concentration has led to the rivalries among the conglomerates for pursuing economic profits and, at the same time, the rivalries have only neglected the principle of 'from public, by public, and for public.' The lack of ownership diversity resulted in the lack of content diversity and uniformity of public opinion (Patters, 2012). Finally, this monopoly of information and the domination of media magnates have put press freedom and democratization of media into risk.

This tendency was remarked by the fact that certain media owners used media within their group for marketing their political interests. Surya Paloh, for instance, frequently used his media ---Metro TV and Media Indonesia daily--- for voicing this political party Nasional Demokrat (Nasdem). Another media tycoon has been in tandem with Paloh is Harry Tanoesoedibyo, the owner of MNC Group. Possessing several television stations (RCTI, Global TV, MNC TV with several channels), Seputar Indonesia's daily, radios, and so on would make him easier to promote his National Democrat Party. This is also the case for Aburizal Bakrie with his media group has strongly tried to oppose various negative coverages on Sidoarjo mud-flow disaster. Bakrie has been predicted to promote his political intention for running presidential candidate in the 2014 election via his media group.

With all of these problems created by the concentration of media ownership and control in the hands of few conglomerates, the main issue is the government's good will on building regulatory borders between business people and politicians. The post-1998 reform has built such a political border and regulatory for military withdrawal from politics. Political arrangement of the 1998 Indonesia's democracy has committed in building professional military institution and personals without any political intervention and provocation for political participation. This development, however, failed to make political distance between politicians and business people (Madu, 2012).

The momentum of political opportunity was presented by the result the 2004 Presidential Election, although it failed in bringing about political regulation and agreement. The first direct and democratically Presidential and Vice Presidential Election raised Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla respectively for the President and Vice President of Indonesia. The 2004 election presented the first business people, Jusuf Kalla (generally called 'JK'), in the political position of Vice President. Both president and vice president were initially agreed on dividing the authority of managing economic issues in the hands of JK and political-security affairs in the hands of SBY. They, however, failed in sustaining the division

of the authorities and in arranging regulations for politicians to do business and for business people to have political activism. Further political development also shows that several media tycoons revealed their political inclinations for promoting their interests in the upcoming presidential election 2012 (Adrianto, 2012; Madu, 2012).

Another issue is the failure of Anti-Monopoly Bills No. 5/1999 in preventing the danger of media concentration (Maryadi, 2012). Recent development of media concentration in the hands of skilful conglomerates has proved the failure. Various discussions on the danger of media industrialization and concentration seemed to find inappropriate response from the government. Many reasons can be presented for the incapability of the recent government, such as the limited power of the government, the increasing economic motives behind the media industrialization, and the powerless of media workers and management. All in all, these failures have actually given a fact that democratization has been incapable of preventing the emergence of media concentration.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Following Badgikian's and Baker's thoughts in the beginning of this paper, the case of media concentration in Indonesia has placed democratization into question. In the name of liberalization, Indonesia's media has significantly increased in numbers and attracted Indonesia's conglomerates to dominate media ownership and control. This development also immediately revealed the fact that democratization failed in regulating media ownership and preventing media concentration in the hands of few conglomerates. This failure will not promote media democratization in securing public's freedom of having diversity of opinion and news. Rather than building media democratization 'for, from, and by public', media industrialization and concentration in Indonesia has significantly eliminated the importance of democratic culture as a means for building media diversity for public interest.

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