



Local Press, Democratization, and Freedom of Expression: The History of *Kaltim Post* during Indonesia's Transition from the New Order to Reformasi (1988–2001)

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Abstract. The press plays a vital role in democracy as a means for the public to voice their opinions. Therefore, responsible press freedom is a crucial element in the life of a nation and state. This study examines the developmental dynamics of one of the local newspapers in East Kalimantan, namely *Kaltim Post*, during the New Order era through the early Reform era (1988–2001). This study focuses on the background of the establishment of *Kaltim Post* and its development during the New Order and Reform eras. The study aims to analyze the factors underlying the establishment of *Kaltim Post* and examine the impact of national political changes on political coverage in *Kaltim Post*. The method used is the historical method, which includes heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The research results indicate that *Kaltim Post* was established to meet the need for a daily newspaper in East Kalimantan and served as a tool for social control. During the New Order era, *Kaltim Post* was very cautious in presenting news due to strict government control. Following the Reformasi and the enactment of Press Law No. 40 of 1999, press freedom became more open. However, *Kaltim Post* continues to face new challenges in the form of ongoing press control and competition with digital media. Therefore, this study found that government policies have a significant impact on press freedom.

Keywords: Press, *Kaltim Post*, New Order, Reform Era, Local History.

1 Introduction

The press is a mass communication tool that also serves as a social institution carrying out journalistic activities such as seeking, obtaining, possessing, storing, processing, and reporting information in the form of writing, audio, images, audio-visual, graphic data, and other forms using print media, electronic media, and other media [1]. In Indonesia, the press is regulated by Law No. 11 of 1966 on the Basic Provisions Governing the Press, which was subsequently amended by Law No. 4 of 1967 and then by Law No. 21 of 1982. Under this law, the functions of the press are defined in Article 2, paragraph 3 of Law No. 21 of 1982. The functions of the press as a

disseminator of objective information, a channel for the people's aspirations, a means of communication and public participation, and an agent of constructive social control through positive interaction between the government, the press, and the public. Furthermore, under Articles 3 and 4, the press possesses the right to exercise constructive oversight, criticism, and correction, and is prohibited from being subjected to censorship or suppression.

In addition, the press plays a vital role in a democracy and serves as a means for citizens to express their opinions. This is known as press freedom, which means that the press must be free from coercion by any source and "contribute" to the maintenance of a free society. Therefore, responsible press freedom is essential in a democratic society, state, and government [2].

However, throughout the history of the press in Indonesia, the government has at times failed to uphold the principle of press freedom. For instance, during the Soeharto regime, media organizations that did not align with the New Order government's agenda were shut down. One example was the revocation of the Press Publishing Business License (*Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers*; SIUPP) of *Tabloid Detik*, *Majalah Berita Tempo*, and *Editor* in 1996. The revocation of *Majalah Berita Tempo*'s SIUPP was linked to a scandal involving alleged embezzlement by former Vice President BJ Habibie, who was accused of corruption in the procurement of warships. Meanwhile, *Tabloid Detik* and *Editor* were deemed to be opposing the government because they frequently covered student activities. Consequently, the Ministry of Information revoked the SIUPPs of these three media organizations without following due process [3].

With the onset of the Reform era, marked by the collapse of President Soeharto's regime in May 1998, there was a transition from an authoritarian government to an open democratic system [4]. This also had an impact on press freedom with the enactment of Press Law No. 40 of 1999 during the presidency of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, which guaranteed that the government would not interfere in the activities of the domestic media. In addition, during K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid's administration, the Ministry of Information, which had served as the agency controlling the press during the New Order era was dissolved [5].

Previous studies have conducted in-depth analyses of the development of the press during the New Order and Reform eras. For example, the study titled "*Majalah Sabili: Transisi Orde Baru ke Reformasi (1985-2000)*" by Mursal & Wita (2021), which examines the development of *Sabili* magazine from the New Order period through the Reform era. [6]. Then there is "*Signifikansi Surat Kabar Kompas Dalam Pemberitaan Peristiwa Reformasi 98*" by Febriyanti (2016), which examines the significance of the *Kompas* newspaper in reporting on the events of the 1998 Reform Movement [7]. Next is "*Dinamika Pers Pasca Reformasi di Kota Samarinda: Sebuah Kajian Historis Tahun 1998-2003*" by Ananova et al. (2024), which examines the dynamics of the press in Samarinda following the Reform era [8], among others. Overall, these studies show that political changes play a significant role in shaping the development, orientation, and dynamics of the press in Indonesia.

However, these studies still focus on various media organizations and different geographic locations. Studies on the development of the press during the New Order and Reform eras in East Kalimantan remain very limited. Therefore, this study will focus on the history of Kaltim Post, a regional newspaper in East Kalimantan

Province. This study does not merely examine the content of the news reported by Kaltim Post, but will also reconstruct its historical development in relation to the political changes that occurred between the New Order era and the Reform era. By focusing on Kaltim Post, this study is expected to contribute to a broader understanding of how political changes have influenced the development of press institutions at the regional level, particularly in East Kalimantan Province.

Therefore, the researcher will raise a question that has not been addressed by previous studies: how did *Kaltim Post* develop during the New Order and Reform eras? This will help explain how differences in policies regarding press freedom during these periods may have impacted the state of the press at the local level. *Kaltim Post* is a local media organization in East Kalimantan owned by the *Jawa Pos Group*. *Kaltim Post* was founded in Balikpapan on January 5, 1988, under the name *Manuntung*. In 1997, *Manuntung* was renamed *Kaltim Post* and became a newspaper with a very wide circulation in East Kalimantan. *Kaltim Post* was established during the New Order era, a time when there was no press freedom due to the government's strict control over the press in Indonesia.

Following the New Order regime, press freedom has garnered attention from various parties who recognize its importance as a fundamental right of the people and a key element in a democratic nation. Consequently, this has prompted the government to enact legislation aimed at realizing press freedom. Based on the foregoing, the authors present this study under the title "Local Press, Democratization, and Freedom of Expression: The History of *Kaltim Post* during Indonesia's Transition from the New Order to Reformasi (1988–2001)", which will describe the background to the founding of *Kaltim Post* and the development of *Kaltim Post* during the New Order and Reform eras.

Theoretical Framework

To understand the transformation of Kaltim Post from its founding in 1988 through the post-Reform era of 2001, this study synthesizes two theories of the press found in the book "*Four Theories of the Press*" by Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm. Together, these frameworks explain the relationship between Indonesia's two political regimes and Kaltim Post as a local media outlet in East Kalimantan.

The Authoritarian Press Theory

The theory of the press that was consistent with the New Order era is authoritarian press theory, which is the oldest theory, having emerged in the late Renaissance following the invention of the printing press. This theory developed in England during the 16th and 17th centuries and is still applied today in various countries. The authoritarian theory stems from the ideology of absolute monarchy, which aims to support the government in creating ideal conditions through controlled information. In the authoritarian press theory, the mass media is used as a tool to support government policy. The government can censor news deemed to contain criticism or views that contradict those of the ruling authority.

The relevance of this theory to the New Order regime lies in the implementation of press control through the Press Publishing Business License (*Surat*

Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers/SIUPP), a mandatory publishing license regulated by Law No. 21 of 1982 and Ministerial Regulation No. 01/Pers/MENPEN/1984 (Undang-Undang Nomor 21 Tahun 1982 dan Peraturan Menteri Nomor 01/Pers/MENPEN/1984) issued by the Ministry of Information. The survival of every media organization depended on its compliance with the government's expectations. Media companies that published critical coverage risked having their licenses revoked, as demonstrated by the revocation of the SIUPP for Tempo Magazine, Delik Tabloid, and Editor in 1996.

Kaltim Post, which was founded in 1988 during this regime, operated during that authoritarian era as a local media outlet in East Kalimantan. Therefore, the authoritarian press theory is used in this study to examine the extent to which the newspaper's editorial stance and institutional relations with the New Order government during the period 1988–1998.

The Libertarian Press Theory

During the early years of the Reformation era, there were two theories of the press that were relevant to this period: the libertarian press and the socially responsible press. In the libertarian theory of the press, the press functions as a tool for seeking the truth. Specifically, the press presents evidence and perspectives that serve as a foundation for the public to form their own stances and viewpoints. Therefore, in libertarian press theory, the press is not considered a government instrument that would restrict its freedom. Rather, the press must be free from government oversight and influence so that all opinions, ideas, and information have an equal opportunity to be heard. Whether they come from the majority or the minority, the powerful or the weak, the rich or the poor, everyone must be able to express their thoughts through the press.

The collapse of the New Order regime paved the way for a shift from the authoritarian theory of the press to a combination of libertarian and social responsibility theory of the press. The issuance of Ministerial Regulation No. 01 of 1998 (*Peraturan Menteri Penerangan Nomor 01 Tahun 1998*), which relaxed the requirements for the SIUPP, followed by the Press Law No. 40 of 1999 (*Undang-Undang Pers Nomor 40 Tahun 1999*) under President Abdurrahman Wahid, officially guaranteed press freedom and prohibited government intervention in media operations. The dissolution of the Ministry of Information eliminated the state's institutional censorship apparatus.

The Social Responsibility Press Theory

Furthermore, another press theory used in this study is the theory of socially responsible journalism, which was applied to analyze the development of Kaltim Post during the Reformation era (1998–2001) besides the libertarian press theory. This theory emerged as a result of the 20th-century Industrial Revolution in the United States. This theory arose in response to criticism of libertarian theory, which failed to uphold freedom responsibly because the absolute freedom advocated by liberals was corrupting public morals.

The social responsibility theory holds that freedom must be balanced by responsibility. Therefore, the press must aim to provide information, entertainment, and profit, and most importantly, enable individuals to voice their concerns so they

can be raised in public forums. If the press fails to fulfill these responsibilities, then another entity in society must take over the functions of the mass media, or another entity must compel the press to fulfill its responsibilities as the press.

The collapse of the New Order regime also paved the way for a transition toward a press grounded in social responsibility. While the press has evolved toward libertarian values, the government has established a press council to ensure that press freedom is exercised responsibly, in accordance with the Journalistic Code of Ethics and the Press Law. Amid these political changes, the libertarian and social responsibility theories of the press is used to assess whether the Kaltim Post has repositioned itself as an independent press institution serving the people of East Kalimantan, or whether this transition remains incomplete.

2 Method

This study employs a historical research method consisting of four stages: Heuristics, which involves searching for and compiling sources related to the topic under study [9]. Data collection took place from January to July 2025, through face-to-face structured interviews with the founding figures of *Kaltim Post*. Furthermore, the collection of historical sources was carried out in two ways: through primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources are those derived from eyewitnesses, objects, or artifacts that directly witnessed, heard, or were involved in the event in question [10]. Newspaper articles from the *Kaltim Post* published between 1988 and 2001 were obtained from the East Kalimantan Provincial Library and Archives Office, and interviews with the founding figures of *Kaltim Post* were used as primary sources. Next, there are secondary sources, which are sources where the author has only heard about the event from others. Journal articles and books relevant to the research topic are used as secondary sources [10].

Next comes the source criticism (verification) stage, which involves determining whether the collected sources are reliable. There are two types of source criticism: external criticism and internal criticism. External criticism involves examining the physical characteristics of a source, such as the type of paper, ink, and language style. Meanwhile, internal criticism involves verifying the accuracy of the content presented based on the substance of a historical source [9]. In this study, external criticism was applied to primary sources and articles from the *Kaltim Post* newspaper from 1988 to 2001, by examining the paper stock, ink usage, and language style, which were found to align with the context of the New Order era.

Next, internal criticism was conducted by the researcher reading news articles from the *Kaltim Post* from 1988 to 2001 and then verifying whether the reported events actually occurred by consulting other sources, such as the internet. Additionally, the sources were critically evaluated by examining their backgrounds and histories. Furthermore, the researcher also asked other sources whether the previous source was indeed a founding figure of the *Kaltim Post*.

Then, the study moved to the interpretation stage, which involves interpreting and constructing a framework of past events based on data that has undergone the heuristic and source criticism stages. Interpretation consists of two stages: analysis and synthesis. The analysis stage involves examining the data to serve as the basis for interpreting it. The synthesis stage, meanwhile, entails integrating the various facts obtained into a broader conclusion or understanding [9], [10]. The researcher conducted the analysis and synthesis stages on historical sources that had already undergone the source criticism phase. Finally, the historiography stage begins, which is the process of writing a historical work based on the collected research data.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Background to the Founding of Kaltim Post

The *Kaltim Post* was founded out of a sense of unease among young media figures at the time, as East Kalimantan lacked a daily newspaper that could serve as a social check on the government. This was because daily newspapers could report on events more quickly than the weekly newspapers already in circulation in East Kalimantan. As explained by Rizal Effendi, the former editor-in-chief of *Kaltim Post*:

“...there was a sense of unease among us media people, especially the younger generation at the time. We didn’t have a daily newspaper back then, only a weekly one, yet the pinnacle of a newspaper’s function is being a daily, since it can report on events that occurred the previous day. So, we wondered how we could establish a daily newspaper in East Kalimantan...” [11].

Consequently, media figures such as Rizal Effendi, Ari Gustam, and others asked Dahlan Iskan to help launch a daily newspaper in East Kalimantan, given Dahlan Iskan’s media career, which began in Samarinda and succeeded at *Jawa Pos*. Finally, Dahlan Iskan agreed to launch a daily newspaper in East Kalimantan. He was inspired by newspapers in the United States that had regional or state-specific editions, such as the *LA Times* and the *New York Times*. Given that obtaining a *SIUPP* (Press Publication Permit) was extremely difficult during the New Order era, Dahlan Iskan eventually tried, through *Jawa Pos*, to collaborate with a weekly newspaper in the city of Samarinda that held a *SIUPP* to establish a daily newspaper.

However, resistance came from the leaders of the weekly newspapers in Samarinda, who refused to cooperate with *Jawa Pos*, fearing they would lose their leadership positions if they partnered with *Jawa Pos*. As it turned out, the fate of establishing the first daily newspaper in East Kalimantan lay in the neighboring city of Balikpapan, where a soccer match between *Persiba Balikpapan* and *Persebaya Surabaya* was scheduled to take place. Before the match, the manager of *Persebaya Surabaya* made a comment in *Jawa Pos* stating, “Barmen: We will crush *Persiba Balikpapan*.” Upon hearing this comment, the Mayor of Balikpapan and manager of *Persiba Balikpapan*, Syarifudin Yoes, wanted to establish a daily newspaper to respond to the remark. Upon hearing this, Rizal Effendi proposed to Syarifudin Yoes that they launch a daily newspaper together. Syarifudin Yoes accepted the offer, using the Publication Business License (*Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers*; *SIUPP*) of *Manuntung*, a weekly newspaper in the city of Balikpapan.

A similar case of *SIUPP* misappropriation occurred with the media company behind *Tabloid Detik*, which had originally been a weekly newspaper called *Mimbar Berita* in 1977. Later, a similar incident occurred with the women’s magazine *Kartini*, which used the *SIUPP* belonging to the magazine *Maddonna*.

After several months of preparation, the daily newspaper was launched on January 5, 1988, under the name *ManuntunG*. The purpose of using a capital “G” at the end was to make it easier for potential readers and consumers to remember the *Manuntung* brand itself [12]. From a linguistic perspective, “*Manuntung*” itself originates from the Banjar language, meaning “until completion” [11]. The founding members of *Manuntung* included Dahlan Iskan, Djok Mentaya, Rizal Effendi, Mas Sulaiman, Drs. Widodo, Ibu Siti Ahmad, and Andre Amar Rustam. *Manuntung*’s news format follows that of its parent company, *Jawa Pos*, covering politics, economics, entertainment, sports, and religion.

Jawa Pos, as the parent company, provided assistance to *Manuntung* in the form of vehicles, printing presses, paper, computers, and other equipment. Over time, *Kaltim Post* became financially independent, relying on funding from sponsors and advertising. The growth of *Kaltim Post* was also due to the lack of competitors at the time, which were still limited to weekly newspapers. As a result, *Kaltim Post* was able to produce 1,000–30,000 copies within five years of operation.

Initially, *Manuntung* employed 50 people. Its original office in Balikpapan was located on Jl. Wiluyo Puspayudho before moving to Jl. Ahmad Yani No. 82, and subsequently to Jl. Ir. Soekarno Hatta Km 3.5, Balikpapan, where it remains today. *Kaltim Post* also has a branch office in Samarinda, which originally operated on Jl. Imam Bonjol before relocating to the Mahakam Square Complex, Jl. Untung Surapati Block B No. 5A, Samarinda. In 1997, which coincided with *Manuntung*’s 9th anniversary, the newspaper’s name was changed from *Manuntung* to *Kaltim Post*. The reason for the name change was for branding purposes. As stated by Rusdiansyah Aras, the former director of *Kaltim Post*, remarked:

“Regarding the Manuntung brand—since it wasn’t selling well, our circulation wouldn’t increase, especially back then when ‘Manuntung’ was written with a capital ‘G.’ That’s why we agreed that after operating for several years, we should change the name to Kaltim Post, and our circulation has continued to rise.” [13].

This statement demonstrates that *Kaltim Post* fully understood the impact of a brand name on newspaper sales. By changing the name to *Kaltim Post*, potential consumers, particularly those from East Kalimantan, were more inclined to purchase the *Kaltim Post* based on their regional origin, as the brand image established by *Kaltim Post* aimed to position itself as the primary daily newspaper for the people of East Kalimantan. The increase in newspaper sales following the name change to *Kaltim Post* indicates that *Kaltim Post* has successfully built brand awareness among consumers, particularly those in East Kalimantan [14].

3.2 Development of Kaltim Post During the New Order Era

Kaltim Post was founded during the New Order era, a time when press freedom was restricted. Consequently, *Kaltim Post* and other media outlets had to exercise caution in reporting the news and apply censorship in line with government policy. Government directives were typically conveyed via telephone to the editor-in-chief, through direct visits by officials from relevant institutions, and through oversight by the Ministry of Information and the Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI; Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia), which at that time served as the regulatory body for media companies. PWI's oversight took the form of issuing press cards to each journalist. The way to obtain this press card was by taking a journalist competency test organized by the PWI. As stated by Rusdiansyah Aras, former director of *Kaltim Post*:

"All journalists must pass the UKW (Journalist Competency Test); the membership cards issued by the central office are all based on passing the UKW. The UKW is a journalist competency test, so if they don't have a press card, they can't be considered journalists. If they try to interview a source, the source can refuse because they don't have the UKW" [13].

This refers to the Ministerial Regulation of the Ministry of Information of 1969 No. 02/PERMENPEN/1969, Chapter 1, Article 3 (Peraturan Menteri Penerangan tahun 1969 No. 02/PERMENPEN/1969, bab 1 pasal 3), which states that "Indonesian journalists are required to be members of the Indonesian Journalists Association, which is officially recognized by the government" [3]. Therefore, journalists must comply with government directives by passing an exam administered by the government. If a journalist does not possess a press card issued by the PWI, they are considered an unauthorized journalist, and a source may refuse to be interviewed. Due to strict oversight by the New Order government, approximately 60% of *Kaltim Post's* news content during the New Order era leaned toward non-political reporting to avoid conflict with the New Order government. As stated by Rizal Effendi in an interview:

"...we had to carefully read the trends in government policy; that's why at that time, 60% of our news content leaned toward non-political reporting to avoid getting entangled in issues with the New Order..." [11].

This statement indicates that *Kaltim Post* did not want to get into trouble with the New Order government and sought to distance itself from any politically sensitive issues. If *Kaltim Post* had not been careful in reporting the news, it would have faced repercussions from the New Order government, which could have detained the editor-in-chief and shut down the newspaper. Consequently, many *Kaltim Post* employees would have been at risk of losing their income. This is why a newspaper company like *Kaltim Post* generally takes a cautious approach. As a result, *Kaltim Post's* relationship with the government can be described as good, with the newspaper rarely receiving reprimands from the government. If *Kaltim Post* does receive a reprimand, it is usually only a mild one. As stated by Rizal Effendi:

"... we pay attention to the existing press council, which signals that we might be going too far. For example, with certain news coverage, but we rarely get reprimanded directly. We're not even summoned specifically to the Regional Military Command (Komando Daerah Militer; Kodam), or to Laksus (as it was called back then), or called in by the Information Office. Still, we do receive occasional mild reprimands, but we remain cautious to avoid being shut down or closed" [11].

This form of government control under the New Order aligns with the theory of the authoritarian press outlined in the book *"Four Theories of the Press"*, which states that the mass media is used as a tool to support government policies, even when the media is managed by private entities [15]. The government can censor news released by the media if it contains criticism or views that differ from those of the rulers, and the media's license can be revoked at any time. Other viewpoints can still be disseminated under the authoritarian press theory as long as they do not threaten the interests of the government or a ruling group.

3.3 Development of Kaltim Post During the Reform Era

With the onset of the Reform era, media coverage began to become more free. This was supported by a statement from one of the informants, Syafril Teha Noer, who said, *"Yes. Not just in Samarinda. It has become more unrestricted"* [16]. This statement aligns with the issuance of Ministerial Regulation of the Ministry of Information Number 01 of 1998 (*Peraturan Menteri Penerangan Nomor 01 Tahun 1998*) regarding the relaxation of requirements for obtaining a SIUPP, including the requirements for appointing a chief editor, and Ministerial Regulation Number 02 of 1998 (*Menteri Penerangan Nomor 02 Tahun 1998*) regarding journalist organizations, simplified procedures, and requirements for obtaining a SIUPP.

Moreover, concrete evidence of press freedom during the Reform Era can be found in *Kaltim Post's* edition of Tuesday, August 31, 1999, which dared to report the arrest of Tommy Soeharto for his involvement in the asset-swap scandal between PT Bulog and PT Goro Batara Saksi, which was estimated to have caused the state a loss of approximately Rp 95 billion. If *Kaltim Post* published negative stories about Soeharto during the New Order, it would likely have been shut down by the government. This was also highlighted in the news on that day, which stated: *"In Soeharto's era of power, not only could you not take him to court, even gossiping about or questioning Tommy's business could become a serious matter."*



Fig. 1. *Kaltim Post* Edition, Tuesday, August 31, 1999

This demonstrates that press freedom and freedom of expression were restricted by the New Order government, which prevented people from voicing their thoughts or questioning negative events related to the government or individuals/groups with power. With the Reform Era, all parties could express their views without fear of pressure from the government or powerful individuals or groups.

Press freedom was further guaranteed by the enactment of Press Law Number 40 of 1999 (*Undang-Undang Pers Nomor 40 Tahun 1999*) in September 1999, which assured that the government would not interfere in domestic media activities. In October 1999, K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid was elected as President of the Republic of Indonesia. During his administration, he dissolved the Ministry of Information, which had been the institution controlling the press during the New Order era [17].

In addition, during the Reformation era, electronic media emerged that were faster in terms of reaching the public. As a result, the dissemination of information to the public during the Reformation era was extremely rapid and uncontrolled, leading to abuses of press freedom such as the spread of fake news, criminalization through the press, and news with ethnic, religious, racial, or intergroup overtones. For example, during the conflicts between the Dayak and Madura ethnic groups in Sampit and the religious conflict in Ambon. At that time, the press actually exacerbated tensions between the two ethnic groups [18].

Although the Reform era granted press freedom to the media, *Kaltim Post* remains cautious in reporting news because the media still operates under various forms of control. For instance, the government's new forms of pressure do not target the journalists themselves. However, the pressure is directed at the media owners. As stated by Rizal Effendi in an interview:

"...the media is still, after all, under the shadow of control through various methods. For instance, now they don't pressure the journalists but instead pressure the media owners—since media owners are businesspeople or entrepreneurs, that's who can be pressured..." [11].

This indicates that government control over media companies in reporting the news still exists; however, the focus and control strategies have shifted. Of course, this is deeply regrettable because one of the goals of the Reform era was to enable the free expression of opinions without pressure from any party.

The challenges facing the press during the Reform era, including the *Kaltim Post*, were marked by the rise of digital media, which led to newspapers beginning to be replaced. Advances in the internet have enabled the public to easily access media through mobile phones or electronic devices. However, the growth of social media has had negative impacts on society in the form of press freedom abuses, such as the spread of fake news, criminalization through media, sensationalism, unethical behavior, violence, pornography, provocative content, character assassination, "envelope journalism" (paid reporting), misleading advertisements, racial, religious, and inter-group based news.

The state of the press during the Reform Era aligns with the libertarian press theory in Four Theories of the Press. In libertarian press theory, the press is not viewed as a tool of the government that would restrict its freedom. On the contrary, the press must be free from government oversight and influence so that all opinions, ideas, and information have an equal opportunity to be heard.

This is consistent with the state of the press in the early Reform Era, as evidenced by the enactment of Press Law Number 40 of 1999 (*Undang-Undang Pers Nomor 40 Tahun 1999*) in September 1999, which guaranteed that the government would not interfere in domestic media activities, and by the dissolution of the Ministry of Information that had controlled the press during the New Order era [15], [17].

The libertarian press theory also assumes that information reaching the public may be incorrect or unhealthy. However, the state must not restrict this based on the government's view of what is right or wrong, as this could result in the state suppressing opinions that contradict government or official views, and instead allowing the public to process information for themselves. However, this has negative consequences, including violations of press freedom, and has even led to conflicts in Sampit and Ambon.

Therefore, during the Reformation era, values consistent with the social responsibility theory were also important to implement alongside the development of a press grounded in libertarian values. This was in line with the establishment of a press council tasked with enforcing the journalistic code of ethics. Nevertheless, violations of the journalistic code of ethics continued to occur and even led to conflicts.

All of these developments indicate that after the Reform Era, the press faced various new challenges and ongoing threats from certain parties, despite the greater latitude granted to the press in delivering coverage. Faced with these challenges, the press and Kaltim Post are expected to adapt and act wisely.

4 Conclusion

The development of Kaltim Post from 1988 to 2001 reflects how the relationship between state power and media institutions underwent a fundamental structural transformation. This study shows that the restrictions imposed on Kaltim Post during the New Order era were not coincidental but were systematically enforced within the framework of an authoritarian press. This can be seen in the mandatory SIUPP licensing, oversight by the Ministry of Information, the regulatory role of the Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI), and other forms of control that ensured that Kaltim Post and other media outlets at the time operated under strict control by the New Order government.

The Reform Period of 1998–2001 sparked the opening of genuine structural space. The relaxation of SIUPP requirements through Ministerial Regulations No. 01 and 02 of 1998 (*Peraturan Menteri Penerangan Nomor 01 dan 02 Tahun 1998*), the enactment of Press Law No. 40 of 1999 (*Undang-Undang Pers Nomor 40 Tahun 1999*), and the dissolution of the Ministry of Information eliminated most forms of government press censorship. The Kaltim Post's coverage in August 1999 of Tommy Soeharto's arrest serves as evidence of this press freedom. However, this study also reveals that pressure on the press shifted from direct control over journalists to indirect pressure on media owners, thereby maintaining editorial interference in a different form.

Several key findings emerged from this analysis. First, authoritarian control of the press in East Kalimantan was exercised through various means, including phone calls, visits by relevant officials to the Kaltim Post office, and oversight by the Ministry of Information and the Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI). However, this has also given rise to new challenges, such as the emergence of digital media, the spread of fake news, and the misuse of press freedom for ethnic and religious incitement, which has led to the outbreak of religious and ethnic conflicts, such as those that occurred in Sampit and Ambon. These challenges demonstrate that press freedom, if not accompanied by strong ethics and accountability on the part of the press, can cause harm to society.

Ultimately, the history of Kaltim Post between 1988 and 2001 is more than just the history of a local media outlet. It is a case study of how a media organization adapted under a specific political regime to ensure the company's survival. Understanding this is crucial not only for historians, but also for policymakers and journalists, so that they can strengthen press freedom in a post-authoritarian democratic system.

Acknowledgments. The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Rizal Effendi, Rusdiansyah Aras, and Syafril Teha Noer for taking the time to be interviewed and for sharing their firsthand knowledge of the history of *Kaltim Post*. The authors also thank the East Kalimantan Provincial Library and Archives Office for granting permission to access the *Kaltim Post* newspaper archives from 1988 to 2001. Furthermore, the first author would like to thank the second, third, and fourth authors for guiding the first author in conducting research on the history of *Kaltim Post* from the New Order era through the Reform era.

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