

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF
PUBLIC RELATIONS

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**ASIAN PERSPECTIVES
ON THE DEVELOPMENT
OF PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Other Voices

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Asian Perspectives
on the Development
of Public Relations:
Other Voices

Edited by

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This series is dedicated to my wife, Jenny, who has endured three decades of my practice and research in public relations (I'll be finished soon) has been my response to her on too many occasions, and to the scholars and practitioners who have embraced and contributed so much to the International History of Public Relations Conference. They have come to Bournemouth University each year from around the world and reinvigorated the scholarship of public relations history. I hope everyone enjoys this series and are inspired to develop their research.

Tom Watson

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4

Indonesia

Gregoria Arum Yudarwati

Abstract: *The history of public relations (PR) in Indonesia, from the emergence of nation identity era (1900–1942), the Japanese occupation era (1942–1945), to the Soekarno era (1945–1966), was characterized by the use of rhetorical messages for propaganda. Building nation identity marked public relations activities during these periods. Public diplomacy to gain international legitimacy was also found in the Soekarno era. Due to the absence of freedom of speech and press during the Suharto era (1966–1998), only positive publicity that supported government development programs was allowed. Public relations was a one-way communication process to transmit organizational and governmental policies to the public. Suharto's resignation in 1998, however, allowed growth of the public relations profession. Freedom of speech and expression in the Reformation era (1998–now) has resulted in opportunities and challenges for public relations practices. There are more public movements demanding transparency, accountability, reliability, responsibility and fairness, which have led to the increasing need of public relations to manage situations.*

Keywords: history of public relations; Indonesia; non-aligned movement; public diplomacy; public relations

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This chapter describes narratively the history of public relations in Indonesia. It portrays how the development of PR in Indonesia occurred during attempts to gain organizational legitimacy, which is at the core of most PR activities (Metzler, 2001). To survive, organizations, including a country and its leaders, constantly pursue legitimacy to gain support from the public (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990). Legitimacy is essential to enhance stability, ensure survival, and secure sustainability.

The name 'Indonesia' was introduced by James R. Logan in 1850 to describe the geographical region of the archipelago from Sumatera to Formosa (Taiwan), which has similar ethnic characteristics and cultural traits (Hilson, 2008). The term 'Indonesia' did not refer to any political matters nor was it connected to the Netherlands East Indies territory, until 1870 when the Dutch began to spread their political power along the archipelago.

The history of PR in Indonesia is presented within five different time periods. The first is the emergence of Indonesia (1900–1942), which portrays the nationalism movements led by some influential figures to build the nation's identity. The second period is the Japanese occupation era (1942–1945), in which Japan employed PR techniques to gain trust from Indonesians in order to support its economic and political aims. The third period is the Soekarno era (1945–1966). Soekarno is the first president of Indonesia. This section discusses Soekarno's use of propaganda in order to gain legitimacy from the Indonesian public as well as the international world. This was followed by the New Order era (1966–1998), when Suharto, the second president of Indonesia, ruled Indonesia for 32 years. Finally, the fifth period is the Reformation era, in which Indonesia has experienced a democratic atmosphere.

The emergence of Indonesia: building self-identity (1900–1942)

The emergence of Indonesia as a political term was marked by the revival of the nation identity among some Indonesian nationalists. Three prominent Indonesian nationalist organizations, Budi Utomo, Indische party and Indonesian Nationalist Party, were established in the first three decades of the 20th century. Their use of propaganda to raise the Indonesian nationalism against the Dutch colonialism and communication with people indicated knowledge of PR techniques to build identity and support.

Budi Utomo was initiated by a low-level Javanese aristocrat, Dr Wahidin Sudirohusodo (Draceley, 2005; Ricklefs, 2001). Its name means 'the beautiful endeavour' in the Javanese language and also denoted superior intellect, character or culture. The organization aimed at strengthening Javanese consciousness and culture against European dominance due to colonialism. The day Budi Utomo was founded, 20 May 1908, is now designated by the Indonesian government as the Day of National Awakening: the day of the beginning of the nationalist movement and the fight to free Indonesia from the Dutch colonialism (Brown, 2003; Cribb, 2004; Ricklefs, 2001).

In 1912, a political party called the Indische Partij (Indies Party) was founded by the radical Indo-European Douwes Dekker, who was also known as Setiabudi. It claimed to be more explicitly nationalist organization than Budi Utomo, as it called for Indonesian nationalism and demanded independence (Brown, 2003; Draceley, 2005). This party gained support from two radical Indonesians: Dr Tjipto Mangunkusumo, a Javanese physician, and Soewardi Soerjaningrat, who was formerly a Budi Utomo leader. The party frightened the Dutch who banned it in 1913 and exiled its leaders to the Netherlands.

In 1927, the Indonesian Nationalist Association was founded and, under Soekarno's leadership, its name changed to Indonesian Nationalist Party the following year (Brown, 2003). It was the first religiously neutral nationalist party and brought Soekarno, who later became the first Indonesian president, to national prominence. This party clearly declared its goal of independence for Indonesia and against the Western colonialism through its Marhaenism ideology. Marhaenism became Soekarno's propaganda against Western dominance. This ideology was vaguely socialist though not Marxist, anti-capitalist, anti-liberal and focused on the rights of the community rather than the individual (ibid.). In 1930, Soekarno and other party leaders were arrested. During the trial he continued his propaganda campaign through his speech *Indonesia Menggugat* (Indonesia Accuses), which was a very strong anti-colonial rhetoric. It was widely circulated and inspired many younger Indonesians (Vickers, 2005).

Another important date in the history towards Indonesian unity was 28 October 1928, when an oath, which was then called the Youth Pledge, was sworn at the second Youth Organizations Congress in Batavia. Indonesians declared that they owned one fatherland: Indonesia, one nation: Indonesia, and one language: *Bahasa Indonesia*, the language of

unity (Lindblad, 2002; Foulcher, 2000; Ricklefs, 2001). For the first time the anthem *Indonesia Raya* was sung and the red-and-white flag flown. To celebrate this congress, Muhammad Yamin, who was to become one of the most radical Indonesian political figures, wrote a collection of poems which were published in 1929 under the title *Indonesia Tumpah Darahku* (Indonesia, Land of My Birth) (Ricklefs, 2001).

The Japanese occupation (1942–1945)

PR techniques were also found during the Japanese occupation during 1942–1945. The Japanese used propaganda to get support from leading Indonesian figures in order to achieve their goal to restructure the Indonesia economy to support Japan's war and its plans to dominate East and Southeast Asian economies (Gin, 2011; Ricklefs, 2001; Vickers, 2005). Japan presented itself as the Asian nation that remained independent from colonialism and had successfully made the transition to a modern, technological society at the end of the 19th century. It used slogans, such as 'Asia for Asians', 'Japan, the Light of Asia', and the concept of the 'Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere' as part of its propaganda to seek acceptance from the people of the occupied territories (Gin, 2011). The Japanese language was promoted but Dutch and English were banned. European statues were pulled down, streets were renamed and the name 'Jakarta' was adopted to replace 'Batavia'. It later became the capital city of Indonesia. To implement their propaganda efforts, the Japanese employed Indonesian school teachers, artists and literary figures with anti-Dutch records (Gin, 2011; Kushner, 2006). Movies, drama, *wayang* (shadow puppet plays) and, especially, radio were used to spread Japanese messages. The Japanese controlled the content of those media. For example, films were not allowed to portray Western values, but had to show Japanese values such as self-sacrifice, motherly love, modesty of women, diligence and loyalty (Gin, 2011; Vickers, 2005). Radio became a popular medium as the Japanese set up public loudspeakers to spread radio broadcasts, so that everybody could hear the programs including messages from Emperor Hirohito.

To support its propaganda, Japan had established an organization called 'Triple A Movements' in April 1942. The name of the organization came from the Japanese slogan of Japan as the leader of Asia, the protector of Asia, and the light of Asia (Ricklefs, 2001). This organization,

however, did not gain support from Soekarno and Hatta, the two most prominent nationalist figures, as Indonesia's interests seemed to be completely absent from this organization's output. As a result, Triple A Movements was closed within the year.

During Japanese occupation, Soekarno also employed propaganda to promote Indonesia's independence. On 9 March 1943, Soekarno, Hatta and the Japanese agreed to establish an organization called Putera, which was an abbreviation of *Pusat Tentara Rakyat* (the centre of people's power). The name Putera, which also means child or son, was part of Soekarno's propaganda to strengthen nationalism. He said that 'Putera was a name which recalls to each son of Indonesia that he is a Son of his Mother, with the responsibility to honour her so long as blood still flows in his veins and a soul still lives in his body' (cited in Brown, 2003, p. 145).

Radio was Putera's favoured medium of communication and reached even small villages in Java. Accordingly, for the first time, Soekarno could reach people across Java through radio broadcasts. By early 1944 the Japanese realized that Putera was doing too much for the Indonesia's interests and it was disbanded on 1 March 1944.

The Soekarno era (1945–1966)

Soekarno's propaganda campaign continued until Indonesia became independent on 17 August 1945. Soekarno, who then became the first president, realized the need to declare Indonesia as an independent country. PR was utilized to publicize Indonesia's independence internationally as well as to strengthen nationalism against Western colonialism. Soekarno offered Indonesians something to believe in, which would give the nation dignity and pride. He said the role of the people was above the role of the leaders: 'Without the people I am nothing. I am only the "extension of the people's tongue" (*penyambung lidah rakyat*)' (cited in McGregor, 2007, p. 52).

He also implemented a political system called 'guided democracy' which differed from Western-style democracy, which he believed as inappropriate for Indonesia, and set out his case in a 1956 speech:

The democracy I crave for Indonesia is not liberal democracy such as exists in Western Europe. No! What I want for Indonesia is a guided democracy, a democracy with leadership. A guided democracy, something which is guided but still democracy. (cited in Brown, 2003, p. 186)

The guided democracy system was derived from traditional village systems of discussion (*musyawarah*) and consensus (*mufakat*), which were guided by village elders (Dick, 2002; Draceley, 2005; Lev, 2009). To spread political messages, including his Manipol (*Manifesto Politik* or Political Manifesto) ideology and USDEK (the 1945 Constitution which included Indonesian socialism, guided democracy, guided economy and Indonesian identity) he used the only radio station, *Radio Republik Indonesia* (RRI), and the only television station, *Televisi Republik Indonesia* (TVRI) (Ricklefs, 2001). All newspapers during this era were mainly used to promote Soekarno's policies and propaganda (Kakialatu, 2007; Sen and Hill, 2007).

At the international level, Soekarno was also successful in establishing his prominence as an international figure. From 18 to 25 April 1955 the first Asian-African Summit took place in Bandung (Tan and Acharya, 2008). Attended by 29 countries, it was part of Soekarno's policy to build cooperation with Asian and African countries. The summit was also part of his anti-colonial rhetoric and aimed to show that Indonesia was capable of uniting the world. The conference led to the establishment of the non-aligned movement in 1961, creating a separate identity for those countries that wanted to maintain their independence from Eastern and Western ideologies (Vickers, 2005).

Soekarno's propaganda at the international level continued through his effort to initiate a new alliance called the 'New Emerging Forces' (NEFO), as a counter to the Western superpowers called the 'Old Established Forces' (OLDEFO), which he believed of spreading 'Neo-Colonialism and Imperialism' (Weinstein, 2007). Soekarno also initiated the GANEFO or Games of the New Emerging Forces in 1963, which led to the construction of the Gelora Bung Karno stadium in Jakarta in order to compete with the OLDEFO's Olympic Games. GANEFO was a great success for the Soekarno policy, as it involved over 2,700 athletes from 51 nations from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

Soekarno's PR efforts were supported by the Information Ministry, which acted as a PR bureau for the government. To publicize Indonesia's independence to the world, the ministry had assigned Soedarpo Sastrosatomo, who is recognized as the first government PR officer, to handle media relations, especially relationships with foreign journalists (Noeradi, 2008). Soedarpo was then sent to New York as an Indonesian delegate in the United Nations and then worked as press attaché at the Indonesian Embassy in Washington DC. He continued to support Indonesia's diplomacy at the international level.

PR practices at profit-oriented institutions were introduced by three foreign oil companies: Bataafsche Petroleum Maatschappij (BPM or Shell), Standard Vacuum Petroleum Maatschappij (Stanvac) and Caltex Pacific Petroleum Maatschappij (Caltex) (Noeradi, 2008). They hired senior journalists, who were S. Maimoen, R. Imam Sajono, and Soedarso, as their PR officers (ibid.). In 1954, Garuda Indonesia Airways, followed by other state-owned companies, started to establish PR units. In 1955, the Indonesian National Police and *Radio Republik Indonesia* included PR departments in their organizational structure. In 1960, PR practices entered a new era when PR became a field of study under the Faculty of Publicity, Padjajaran University in Bandung, West Java. This faculty changed its name to the Faculty of Communication in 1982.

The New Order era (1966–1998)

During 1965–1966, there was political disruption, which ended with Soekarno stepping down and Suharto being appointed as the next president. Suharto focused more on developing Indonesia's economy (Vatikiotis, 2003). A year later, he liberalized the economy and opened it to foreign investors. The issuance of Foreign Capital Investment Law No. 1 in January 1967 and the Domestic Capital Investment Law No. 6 in July 1968 led to further economic growth. The program of national development became his slogan. In 1983, Suharto received an award as the Father of Development, as the economy had improved during his presidency.

As Suharto opened Indonesia to foreign investors, the number of business organization increased. In line with this, the number of PR practitioners working within organizations and the number of PR consultancies also increased (Dahlan, 1978). According to Dahlan (1978), at the end of the 1960s almost all government agencies had PR units, mostly responsible for handling media publications. Most foreign companies also had established PR units by the early 1970s. Media relations was the main PR activity in these foreign companies. The corporate support for Indonesia went beyond its borders: for example, a public service advertisement entitled 'Five Years From Now You Will Be Sorry You Did Not Read This Ad' was placed in the *New York Times* on 17 November 1968 by Caltex to attract more investors to Indonesia (Noeradi, 2008). In 1972, the first PR consultancy, Inscore Zecha, led by Alwi Dahlan, was established.

The growth of PR practitioners led to the creation of professional and industry bodies (Putra, 1996). In 1971 the Coordinating Body of Government PR (Bakohumas: *Badan Koordinasi Hubungan Masyarakat*) was established to coordinate the PR activities of all government agencies (Bakohumas, 2012). In 1972, the PR Association of Indonesia (PERHUMAS: *Perhimpunan Hubungan Masyarakat*) was established (PERHUMAS, 2012). The founders of this association were not only from domestic and foreign private companies but also from government agencies. Its activities were on both a national and international scale. These included the promotion of FAPRO (Federation of the ASEAN PR Associations) and the hosting of its congress in 1981.

Economic deregulation in 1983 led to privatization in the economic sectors. It decreased the government monopoly in the economic sector and gave more opportunities for the public to participate in (Soesastro, 1989). As a result, there was an increasing number of private companies which needed more PR practitioners to support their business strategy. When PERHUMAS was established in 1972, it only had 21 members. In the 1990s, membership had increased to 224 and reached 3,000 by 2000 (Hiendarto, 2006). In the 1980s, the number of PR agencies increased, as well. In 1987 the Association of Indonesia's PR Companies (Asosiasi Perusahaan PR Indonesia) was created to increase PR professionalism within agencies in Indonesia. In the early 1990s there were approximately 90 PR agencies, but only 55 of them became members of this association (Yudarwati, 1999).

Despite the development of PR profession in terms of the number of practitioners and agencies, PR practices during the Suharto era were limited to a one-way communication process, especially if related to government issues (Putra, 1996; Yudarwati, 1999). PR practitioners were mainly assigned to get favourable publicity into the media and to keep unfavourable publicity out. Even if they performed media relations, the content of their media output was controlled by the government as there was no freedom of speech or of the press. Those, including mass media, that criticized the government were considered as spreading subversive messages and were banned (Kakiailatu, 2007; Sen and Hill, 2007). More than 25 publishing permits were cancelled without judicial process during the Suharto era (Tempo, 1994).

The Department of Information was employed to control the press and disseminate pro-government propaganda (Hill, 1994). The press was expected to simply report and support the government's national

development projects. Journalists were banned from reporting activities of mega-projects, such as mining industries, which involved foreign investments and generated significant income for Indonesia, and other businesses owned by Suharto's associates. The press was used to cover up scandals and mismanagement, which caused society to lose its ability to separate national interests from corrupt elite interests. Within this situation, public opinion was suppressed. ABRI (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia* or the Indonesian Armed Forces) remained Suharto's central tool for repressing opposition (Ricklefs, 2001). PR, accordingly, aimed only at supporting the interests of the government and businesses of Suharto's cronies' (Putra, 1996).

The Reformation era (1998– onwards)

By the end of 1997, Indonesia was overwhelmed by tremendous political, social and economic challenges faced by the country. In 1997 most East Asian countries faced financial crisis. Indonesia received the greatest economic shock compared with other countries (Garnaut, 2000; Soesastro, 2000). This crisis led to high inflation and forced price hikes across many sectors, including food and other essentials. People asked the government to take responsibility for the crisis and some students protested against government policies. The economic crisis increased public distrust in the Suharto administration and, finally, on 21 May 1998, Suharto announced his resignation.

Afterwards, Indonesia entered a new period of democratic reform, known as the Reformation era. In 1999, freedom of speech and expression were enshrined in law as the government passed the Law of Press no. 40/1999. This major reform led to euphoria in the mass media (Kakialatu, 2007; Sen and Hill, 2007). The number of printed media increased significantly, from 289 dailies at the end of 1990s to 1,600 dailies in 2005 (Mukrimin, 2012). However, only 306 remained at the end of 2010 as the rest had closed due to intense competition (Dewan Pers, 2010). The number of radio stations increased significantly as well, from about 700 stations in the 1990s to 1,200 stations in early 2003, but only 378 remained at the end of 2010 throughout the country (Mukrimin, 2012; Dewan Pers, 2010).

After Suharto stepped down, the public pressured the government to decentralize authority. As a result, the government issued Law

no. 22/1999, which regulated regional autonomy and decentralized authority to district level (Brown, 2003). This law eliminated hierarchical relationships between cities and districts and higher levels of administration. Besides democratization at the local level, this reform strengthened the civil society movement at the local level.

This democratic atmosphere had had an influence on the relationships between companies and their public. There were more public movements that demanded transparency, accountability, reliability, responsibility and fairness. Criticisms against companies' operations as well as the number of conflicts between companies and their stakeholders, such as conflicts with environmentalists (Indonesian Forum for Environment, 2006; Indonesian Mining Advocacy Network, 2004), local communities (Prayogo, 2010), employees (Juliawan, 2011) and the press (Kakialatu, 2007) had increased. The companies, that formerly had protection from Suharto's regime, were no longer able to use the military's repressive approach. During the Suharto era, companies were more likely to recognize only the government as their legitimate stakeholder, with other stakeholders as secondary to the government. However, in the post-Suharto era, the companies' legitimacy lessened. They needed to build new relationships with stakeholders and negotiate with them. This situation led to the growth of PR within the businesses.

There has been no empirical study on the current status of PR in Indonesia, which involved all types of organization and industry. However, a recent study on mining industry has shown how post-Suharto era social and political changes had influenced PR practices (Yudarwati, 2011). The mining industry has never been free from political issues. During the Suharto era, mining companies only had PR offices in Jakarta, usually with fewer than ten employees as they only needed to deal with the central government. Post-Suharto, however, they established PR units at mining sites employing more than 50 people. These units were mostly responsible for handling relationships with local government and communities with whom they needed to negotiate their legitimacy (*ibid.*).

There was also some evidence that showed a growing number of companies employing PR practitioners. When companies experienced crisis, such as labour strikes (*The Jakarta Post*, 2011; Wanda, 2011), criticism from environmentalists (*The Jakarta Post*, 2004), community blockades (Fadillah, 2011) or plane crashes (Prasetyo, 2007; *The Australian*, 2013), PR officers were their spokespersons, especially in dealing with the

press. PR activities, however, mostly applied media relations to manage the issues. Only big and multinational companies implemented more comprehensive PR practices, such as employee relations, community relations, crisis management, issues management and reputation management. Corporate social responsibility had also become an important agenda for PR practice (Yudarwati, 2011).

Political freedom had led to the development of political PR. Some 148 parties have been officially registered in the post-Suharto era. However, only 48 of them were allowed to take part in the June 1999 General Election (Ufen, 2006). The political parties and their public figures used PR techniques to build their image in order to gain votes from the public (Wasesa, 2011).

As there has been no publicly accessible information about PR billings, it was not easy to measure the growth of PR industry in Indonesia. Nevertheless, there have been some observable and measurable positive improvements. There had been an increasing number of PR consultancies in Indonesia, including some international agencies that have operations in Jakarta, such as Fleishman Hillard, Weber Shandwick, Edelman, Ogilvy, and Burson-Marsteller. There has been also a growing number of academic degrees in communications in which PR programs were offered. The data from the Directorate General of Higher Education in Indonesia showed that by 2010, 186 out of 227 communications department had been accredited for the teaching of PR. There were also an increasing number of students who studied communications, rising from 9,703 students in 2005 to 17,526 in 2010. In 2003, another PR body, the PR Society of Indonesia (PRSI), was founded. This PR body has become the Indonesian member of the Global Alliance for PR and Communication Management.

These positive trends were followed by the government's and PR bodies' efforts to increase PR professionalism. The government, through the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, developed standards of competence for PR practitioners that are applied to governmental institutions. In line with this, PERHUMAS also offered an accreditation program for PR practitioners in Indonesia (PERHUMAS, 2000).

Conclusion

The history of PR in Indonesia, from the emergence of nation identity era (1900–1942), the Japanese occupation era (1942–1945), to the Soekarno

era (1945–1966), was mainly characterized by the use of rhetorical messages for propaganda. Building nation identity had marked PR activities during these periods of time. Public diplomacy to gain international legitimacy was also found in the Soekarno era. Due to the absence of freedom of speech and press during the Suharto era (1966–1998), only good publicity that supported the government's development programs was allowed. PR was a limited one-way communication process to inform organizational and the governmental policies to the public. Suharto's resignation in 21 May 1998, however, gave new hopes for the growth of PR profession. Freedom of speech and expression in the Reformation era (1998–now) has resulted in opportunities and challenges for PR practices. There are more public movements demanding transparency, accountability, reliability, responsibility and fairness, which have increased the demand for PR services to manage situations. There has also been extensive growth of PR practices, the number of practitioners and students, and research in universities. However, despite all these advances, one-way media relations activities to manage issues still dominate PR practices in Indonesia.

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