



# Representation of Indonesian women politicians (Media analysis to G30S PKI incident coverage from 1965 to 2015)

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The G30S/PKI incident that happened in 1965, was known with the murder of six generals by the PKI. The "New Orders" (Orba) regime, Soeharto, did extermination of hundreds of members and supporters of the PKI and imprisoning thousands of people, including Gerwani and those who were not members of PKI or Gerwani because of prejudices and assumptions. Since the reformation era of 1998, many historical facts about G30S/PKI were questioned by the people. During last 50 years the issues of G30S/PKI appeared and sank in the media coverage. Today, the representation of female politicians cannot be separated from the negative memories of the tragedy and the militant image of Gerwani. **Methods:** The research questions are: How consistent is media reporting when covering the same issue in different political contexts? How does the media, as a means of value socialization, influence the collective memory of society regarding women's activities in politics? The research is conducted using content analysis of a national newspaper from 1965 to 2015 to examine the visibility of Gerwani-related issues over time. Discourse analysis is also used to explore the role and position of Gerwani. **Findings:** The results indicate that the media tends to side with the dominant group, namely the rulers, and does not voice the interests of weaker groups. Women's interests are framed and represented through the perspective of men. **Conclusion:** In this context, female politicians receive more appreciation from society when they do not emphasize militant methods in advocating their ideas but instead focus on a caring approach. **Novelty/Originality of this Study:** The originality of this study lies in its focus on the evolving portrayal of Gerwani over different political eras and its examination of the media's role in shaping collective memory and gender biases. It uniquely integrates collective memory, and feminist perspectives to explore how media representation impacts societal views on women in politics.

**KEYWORDS:** G30S/PKI incident; media representation; Gerwani and female politicians.

## 1. Introduction

Today, the media has become an integral part of various aspects of human life. Media no longer merely functions to provide education, information, socialization, and entertainment as originally proposed by Charles Wright. According to critical media scholars, media tends to sell itself, and it also exhibits gender bias (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001). Critical theorists believe that media does not offer education, entertainment, and information but rather sells them. Various studies depict that the media has engaged in social construction, and many studies indicate that audiences have become aware that media content does not always reflect actual reality (Van Zoonen, 1997). However, media still holds power in influencing individual behavior, public opinion, policy-makers, shaping

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societal culture, and voicing the historical truth of this nation, including the reporting of the G30S/PKI incident that occurred 50 years ago.

At the end of 2015, the G30S/PKI issue resurfaced as a hot topic. Some parties aimed to revisit the G30S incident such as *Simposium Nasional "Membedah Tragedi 1965"* in Jakarta (Sarwanto & Gumilang, 2016), because many people had forgotten or many younger generations needed to know about the PKI crackdown and its affiliated organizations. There was a debate over the 50th anniversary of the event due to differing perceptions. Proponents argued that the Orba government committed human rights violations during the crackdown, such as the mass killing of around 500,000 people across Indonesia, the revocation of citizenship for thousands of Indonesians abroad, stigmatization and discrimination against victims and their families, as well as deportation and forced labor on Buru Island (Adam, 2016). Conversely, opponents feared the resurgence of the PKI, claiming their concerns were based on the still-valid TAP XXV/MPRS/66 which functions as an effective mechanism for integrating and resolving conflicts to overcome the national turmoil after the 1965 G30S/PKI. They also took various measures to suppress activities related to the PKI, including the ongoing destruction of books (Muhammad, 2016). In 2016, there were still many confiscations of books about G30S and raids on leftist activities (Tempo, 2018).

Over the 50-year period (1965-2015), reporting on G30S/PKI and Gerwani has fluctuated. Specifically regarding Gerwani, during the Orba era, it was portrayed as a barbaric, immoral, cruel, and deceitful organization with various negative connotations. Since the Reformation era, following the fall of Orba, Gerwani has been seen as a group needing to restore its reputation as it was a victim of human rights abuses by the Orba government. The research questions are: How consistent is media reporting when covering the same issue in different political contexts? How does the media, as a means of value socialization, shape the collective memory of society regarding women's activities in politics? This study is important because media representation of women still exhibits gender bias, and research on women and media needs to be intensified. Similarly, studies on the role of women in politics still require further investigation, as female participation in parliament is expected to address issues often overlooked by legislative groups, such as reproductive health, sexuality, maternal mortality, and others.

To address the research questions, several concepts are used as theoretical frameworks, namely the political economy of communication, representation in media coverage, collective memory, and feminist perspectives as proposed by Nancy Chodorow (Ihromi, 1995; Jackson & Lawty-Jones, 1996). Broadly speaking, these four concepts explain that media is no longer considered a neutral means of presenting information. This lack of neutrality can be observed in the way media represents an issue. Special attention is needed when media represent minority groups or marginalized groups, such as the representation of women from ethnic or religious minorities, including the representation of women in the coverage of the G30S incident, which carries a negative stigma.

The first concept is a critical media theory that uses a Marxist approach. This concept explains that the patterns and types of media coverage are determined by external powers such as sociological culture, political systems, and economic forces. This means that the information presented in the media is a commodity tailored to market needs. Thus, media managers are no longer institutions that freely determine, select, and present information, but their scope of work is constrained by various structures that force them to report facts according to the interests behind the media. The business aspects of media often overshadow the idealism of media producers. On one hand, media entrepreneurs may have ethics, journalism standards, and other ideals, but on the other hand, media business and pressure from various interest groups cannot be ignored. Consequently, if idealism is prioritized, the business aspect often gets a smaller portion, and conversely, if business is prioritized, it may conflict with idealism. Fiske further refines this by studying media culture, analyzing the complexity of relationships between text, audience, media industry, politics, and historical-social context in a specific unity (Kellner, 1995).

Whether consciously or unconsciously, media bias towards certain groups can be seen in how media represent an issue. Hall (2013) explains that media represent social reality through reflective approach (as a mirror of existing reality), intentional approach (in line with the speaker's intent through emphasizing the uniqueness of the object depicted using language), and constructionist approach, which believes that representation is not a mirror of reality, and communicators do not establish fixed meanings in language. Instead, social actors and communities construct meaning through language systems and culture.

Another theoretical concept in this paper is collective memory (Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan, 2011; Taum, 2015). Collective memory is not just memory stored within a society but is produced and reproduced by the media. Neiger et al. (2011) identify two roles of the media. First, the role of media as a memory agent, which is inseparable from the socio-political context. As a memory agent, the media has three roles: it serves as an arena where various memory agents such as academics, political activists, and others meet to present understandings of the past. Second, the role of media as a means of constraining collective memory; and third, the role of media as a guardian of consensus on existing memory or presenting alternative versions (Johnson & Ensslin, 2008). In other words, the media maintains societal memory of issues, events, and even national identity. How this memory evolves is influenced by interpretation in each context. The media can highlight what should be remembered by society and ignore what is considered unimportant in a given context (Rogers et al., 1991; Twoomey, 2004).

This research uses a gender perspective because previous studies have shown that the media is gender-biased (Rohrbach et al., 2020; Van Zoonen, 1997; Ward & Grower, 2020), and research on the representation of women in media in patriarchal countries needs to be enhanced (Aspinall et al., 2021). The gender perspective used here refers to the ideas of Nancy Chodorow (Ihromi, 1995). Chodorow questions why women are always seen as having an instinct to be mothers and engage in caregiving. This may be because it is seen as a natural trait or as a constructed role of mothers as caregivers that becomes internalized subconsciously. The desire to be a mother begins when a woman enters the pre-Oedipal stage. If a girl is closer to her mother and behaves like her mother, there is nothing to obstruct this. However, this does not occur for boys, who, upon entering the Oedipal stage, experience a difference from their mothers. This mother-daughter relationship then continues and encourages the child to identify as a wife who is capable of caregiving and fulfilling the role of a wife. This construction leads to a sexual division of labor in society that is disadvantageous to women. Regarding media, consciously or unconsciously, various studies show that media tends to represent women in a stereotypical manner, emphasizing their roles in the domestic sphere. Conceptually, the tendency to report a stereotype on Gerwani issue was also done when the media framed the issues aligned with the interests of the dominant group. While there have been changes in the representation of women in media (Akalili & Sari, 2021), there still underrepresentation (Taha & Fahmy, 2023) and the representation of the "good" and "bad" mother, though now in more extravagant constructions compared to the past (Macdonald, 1995; Rollero et al., 2023).

The theoretical framework should be supplemented with a brief discussion on the press system and the status of women in Indonesia. During the Orba era, the government, through the issuance of press licenses, had the authority to revoke licenses considered to threaten security and order. According to Daniel Dhakidae (Hill, 1994; Hill & Sen, 2000), the Department of Information (Deppen) was one of Orba's most powerful and important apparatuses because it held the necessary licenses to foster the Pancasila national spirit. At that time, the government eliminated the revolutionary rhetoric of the Sukarno administration and suggested that the press help maintain national security against domestic and foreign threats. The end of the Orba era was marked by President Suharto's fall, the revocation of press licenses, and the dissolution of Deppen. In the years following the Reformation, Indonesian media experienced a golden age, presenting voices from various sectors. However, over the next two decades, Indonesian media underwent changes due to the influx of large capital into the media industry, leading media companies to rise and enter the ranks of large-scale businesses (Nugroho et al., 2012; Wikan, 2011).

In Indonesia, women legally have the same rights and opportunities as men. This is clearly stated in the 1945 Constitution, the 1988 Broad Guidelines of State Policy (GBHN), and Law No. 7 of 1984, which ratifies the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. However, equal opportunities have not yet been fully realized for all Indonesian women, such as disparities in education levels and the low percentage of women in parliament. In Indonesia, the political world and political behavior are predominantly male activities. On one hand, society still views independent and politically active women as unacceptable and undesirable, and a woman's ambition in politics is considered un-feminine and dangerous. As a result, it is more challenging for a woman to succeed in the political arena compared to men due to facing double standards (Dewi & Kasuma, 2014; Ghazarian et al., 2023).

During the Orba era, the government emphasized the importance of women's roles in development (Lestari, 2016; Lestariningsih, 2011; Mariana, 2015). The GBHN highlighted women's roles as equal partners to men in development, with equal rights, obligations, and opportunities as men in all fields, while considering their natural roles and dignity. These words can be interpreted as highlighting women's roles as mothers and wives. Although their rights and obligations are the same, their roles are fundamentally different. Women's roles in the family were considered crucial for development because, without a healthy and strong family, development goals would be very difficult to achieve.

After the Reformation era, the roles and status of Indonesian women have changed. The number of women with higher education and holding high positions in both government and private sectors, as well as those who are entrepreneurs, has increased. However, these changes are not significantly reflected in the political arena (Fauzan, 2017; Masad, 2020).

## 2. Methods

The data collection method is carried out through content analysis (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006) and framing analysis as proposed by Entman (Entman, 2010; Hegarty, 2024). The data collection process begins with selecting the newspaper to be sampled, and Kompas was chosen because it was the only newspaper in operation during the G30S incident and is still published today. Meanwhile, other newspapers from the early New Order period are no longer in circulation. The second step involves selecting news articles from Kompas from 1965 to 2015 using keywords: Gerwani, G30S, and PKI. At this stage, the researcher identified a total of 207 articles about Gerwani and conducted a content analysis on all these articles.

In the next step, the researcher developed a coding scheme to analyze news articles, categorizing them based on specific attributes. The Page Location was coded according to the page number, identifying whether the news appeared on the front page, inside pages, or back pages. The Column Size was determined by the number of words in the article, categorized into small (fewer than 150 words), medium (151–400 words), and large (over 400 words). The News Source was classified to identify its origin, including news agencies, media staff, other newspapers, other unspecified sources, unclear sources, or cases where no source was provided. The Genre was used to understand how an issue was presented, such as news reports, opinion pieces from external contributors, features, or reviews. The analysis also included News Sources, identifying the primary informants as government representatives, military personnel, organizations, activists, ordinary people, or cases with no clear source. Additionally, the Source Gender was recorded to note whether the information came from male or female informants. Lastly, the researcher examined the Choice of Words used to describe Gerwani, coding these as negative if they included stereotypes, sexist language, derogatory, or insulting terms, or positive if they avoided such biases.

Fourth, to obtain qualitative data, the researcher performed framing analysis. The framing sample was selected through the following steps: choosing large-sized news articles and distinguishing between news presented during the New Order era and the Reformation era.

This study has several limitations. First, the number of newspapers available for analysis is limited to one, so the amount of news that can be analyzed is relatively small. Additionally, the study aimed to interview journalists who covered the G30S incident to understand newsroom policies during the New Order and early Reformation periods. Unfortunately, the researcher has not succeeded in conducting these interviews because the journalists who meet the criteria are retired and difficult to locate.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 A brief overview of Gerwani

Gerwani was an organization founded on socialist and feminist principles. The organization addressed social issues such as the need for affordable staple foods and advocated for equality, including the abolition of polygamy. They believed that without subordination, there would be no exploitation of women, whether cultural or capitalist. Additionally, they asserted that "there is no revolutionary/socialist action without involving women." As the 1955 elections approached, Gerwani not only focused on social issues but also on politics. Several factors motivated Gerwani to join the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party), including: the opportunity for Gerwani members to become legislative candidates and the alignment of their programs with the PKI's promises of emancipation and rights for women, including political rights. During the G30S incident, Gerwani, as a mass organization of the PKI, was accused of involvement in the murder of six generals, allegedly performed in a ritualistic dance with flowers, involving mutilation or cutting of the victims' genitals (Lestariningsih, 2011; Wardhani, 2014).

#### 3.2 Content analysis results

The total number of news articles about G30S/PKI and Gerwani from 1965 to 2015 is 15,932. Of these, 62.6% were about the PKI, 36% about G30S, and only 1.4% or 207 articles were about Gerwani. This very small number indicates that coverage of Gerwani was considered less important compared to the issues of G30S and the PKI.

Table 1. Number of articles on Gerwani from 1965 to 2015

No.	Year	Number of reports
1	1965-1968	83 (40.1%)
2	1969-1974	11 (5.3%)
3	1975-1976	11 (5.3%)
4	1977-1990	
5	1991-1998	13 (6.3%)
6	1999 -2008	66 (31.9%)
7	2009-2015	23 (11.1%)
		207

From the publication years, it is evident that the highest number of reports appeared between 1965 and 1968, accounting for 40% of the total. In the subsequent period from 1969 to 1976, the number of reports drastically decreased to 10.6%. Furthermore, there were no reports at all between 1977 and 1990, despite 1977 being the year of the release of political prisoners. From 1991 to 1998, reports began to appear, averaging two or three per year. Then, starting in 1999 with the beginning of the Reform Era, under President Abdurrahman Wahid and later President Megawati, the number of reports about Gerwani surged to 7.2% and continued to rise until 2008, reaching 31.9%. The number of reports then decreased in 2009 but increased again in 2015, when several groups aimed to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the G30S events.

The following table illustrates the coverage of the Gerwani issue divided into two periods: the New Order era and the Reform Era. During the New Order era, the total number of reports was 57%, while in the Reform Era, it was 43% of all news about Gerwani.

Table 2. Gerwani issues in Kompas reporting

	New order era (1965-1997)	Reform era (1998-2015)
Page placement	Middle pages	Back pages
Size	Small and medium	Medium and large
Source of the news	Kompas, military newspapers, news agencies	Kompas
Genre	News	Opinion
Sources	Military, organizations, unclear or none	Experts, observers, NGOs
Gender of sources	Male	Both female and male
Main story position in reporting	Mentioned only and related	Main story

During the New Order era, issues related to Gerwani were placed on page 2 or in the middle of the newspaper, with only one news story appearing on page 1, and even then, it was not a headline. Most of the Gerwani news was categorized using small and medium-sized columns. The small column size used for reporting during the New Order era can be attributed to the limitation of Kompas newspaper's pages, which was only 8 pages from its inception until the 1990s. After the 1990s, the number of pages in Kompas increased to 16. In the Reform era, Gerwani news was predominantly placed on pages with higher numbers or discussed in special supplements, such as SWARA. The columns used for Gerwani news during the Reform era were generally classified as large.

Looking at the source of the news, the research shows that during the Reform era, the majority of the reports were written by Kompas journalists and external writers, such as observers, academics, or NGO members sympathetic to the victims of human rights violations. In contrast, during the New Order era, the news was only written by Kompas journalists. This finding reflects that for the New Order government, news sources about the G30S events had to come from government-trusted institutions. Intertextuality studies indicate that sometimes news had to be approved by military officers (Kompas, 1966b).

The research findings on genre categories show that the majority of Gerwani issues were presented as news or hard news originating from the military newspaper 'Angkatan Bersendjata and Berita Yudha' or from the ANTARA news agency. In contrast, during the Reform era, news was more often presented in the form of features, reviews, and opinions, or soft news resulting from journalist interviews, discussions about human rights violation seminars, or book reviews about G30S, PKI, or Gerwani. In recent years, reviews about Gerwani have shifted from book reviews or seminars to short stories, film coverage, literary art, and poetry readings related to the aforementioned events.

Regarding news sources, many reports about Gerwani during the New Order era did not specify who the sources were or sometimes did not have any sources at all. Some examples of brief news leads include:

*"In a ceremony attended by all members of Pantja Tunggal from East Kalimantan Province, civil/military officials, political parties, and mass organizations, held on the night of December 10 at the Balikpapan Police Hall, the dissolution of PKI, Gerwani, BTI, SOBSI, and Pemuda Rakjat in East Kalimantan was announced. This dissolution statement was made by the respective regional committee/board, followed by the burning of the party/organization constitutions of PKI and the hammer-and-sickle flag" (Kompas, 1965a)*

The following news example has no source:

*"Three bodies were sent to RS Tjiptomangunkusumo for examination. The three bodies were discovered by residents three days ago at 8:00 PM in the village of Sawah Pangkalan Djati Pondokgede and were then reported to the XII Tjipinang Police. .... Kompas journalists then recalled the confession of a Gerwani member in front of a duty officer. The Gerwani member said that on September 30, she was invited to Lubang Buaja for*

*'training' because she was indeed a volunteer member who was regularly trained at Lapangan Banteng" (Kompas, 1965b)*

A similar pattern is found in many other news stories, which mention institutions as sources but do not name the specific news sources. Kompas only listed sources as political organizations, the police, the military, or the prosecutor's office. For example:

*"The NU Party Board, along with its mass organizations in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, after considering and reflecting, decided to support and reinforce, with all consequences, the PBNU statement dated October 1, 1965, and October 5, 1965, which urges P.J.M., the President/ABRI Commander/Great Leader of the Revolution, to immediately dissolve the Indonesian Communist Party, Pemuda Rakjat, Gerwani, SOBSI, and other mass organizations...." (Kompas, 1966a)*

The various examples above demonstrate a lack of clarity regarding whether the information received by journalists was a press release, a press conference conducted by certain institutions, or the result of media observations at the prosecutor's office, military institutions, or field observations. The consequence of unclear or unnamed sources makes it impossible for researchers to determine the exact gender distribution of sources. However, from the traceable data, the majority of sources are male. Content analysis regarding the position of Gerwani in the news shows that during the Reform era, Gerwani was more often the 'main story' in news articles. In contrast, during the New Order era, Gerwani was only 'mentioned only'. This means that in those news articles, Gerwani was only mentioned as an organization or an underbelly of the PKI. Examples of this can be seen in the excerpts above.

### 3.2.1 Framing analysis

Four news articles were selected for framing analysis: two from the New Order era and two from the Reform era. In the first framing, Kompas depicted Gerwani negatively: as immoral, barbaric, and degrading. In contrast, the government was portrayed as the savior of the chaotic nation, striving to restore the values embedded in Pancasila as the state ideology. Conversely, the second framing portrayed Gerwani in the context of the government allegedly distorting history. Due to the murder of six generals at Lubang Buaya, the immoral flower dances were said to never have occurred. The focus should be on the PKI suppression, which was considered a human rights violation committed by the New Order government. Therefore, human rights victims should be advocated for to help the nation erase the stigma that their descendants, who were never involved in the G30S events or its suppression, also bear. Below is a detailed description of these two framings.

The first framing analysis is derived from the articles "Teror A Susila Gestapu Diketjam" (October 11, 1965) and "Gerwani Djatim Giat Lantjarkan Gerakan Nasi Bungkus" (November 1, 1965). The first article describes Gerwani's actions during the murder of generals at Lubang Buaya. The second article discusses Gerwani's activities in selling cheap rice packages. The core framing of both articles depicts Gerwani as an immoral and barbaric organization. In the first framing, the term "barbaric" is used to describe Gerwani members as immoral women who defiled the dignity of Indonesian women by brutally killing, torturing, and mocking generals during the G30S incident. In the second article, the term "barbaric" describes Gerwani's propaganda activity of selling cheap rice packages, which caused a stir in Malang. However, these packages were not intended for the general public but were reserved for Gestapu members (PKI and its mass organizations). Kompas reported that Gerwani's tactics were considered a cunning and inhumane deceit.

Intertextual analysis shows that the portrayal of Gerwani as immoral appears frequently (Bustam, 2008). For example, Gerwani is depicted as degrading to women's dignity (Kompas, 1965k). Reports describe a "fragrant flower dance" performed by Gerwani members in the nude, watched by 400 men, leading to promiscuity, where each woman was

tasked with serving 3-4 men. Subsequent reports described how many women's organizations condemned Gerwani's actions and urged President Suharto to take strict action. These condemnations came from Kartika Chandra (Kompas, 1965c), the women police corps or Srikandi Bhayangkari (Kompas, 1965g), religious groups (Kompas, 1965e), and Marhaenis Women (Kompas, 1965d). Besides being depicted as immoral, Gerwani members were also framed as sadistic and barbaric, accused of gouging out eyes (Kompas, 1971), poisoning children, and instilling the belief that faith in God was futile and unbeneficial (Kompas, 1965l).

New Order era reporting also displayed sexist elements related to women's bodies or objectification. For instance, stories about a beautiful girl who deceived others (Kompas, 1965j) or a young woman who was deceived (Kompas, 1965h). Other reports mentioned a "Gerwani" mark on the thigh, which was a special code visible when a skirt was lifted (Kompas, 1965f). There were also stories about a husband requesting that authorities capture his older wife while also bringing his younger wife (Kompas, 1966c). Numerous reports surrounding the G30S events depicted promiscuity among Gerwani and PKI members in the barracks at Lubang Buaya (Kompas, 1968), and there were many similar reports (Kompas, 1965i).

What was accused of Gerwani during the New Order era was challenged by many during the early Reform era. This is evident from the framing of Gerwani in the Reform era. The news articles selected for framing analysis are "Sejarah Gerakan Perempuan Harus Diluruskan" (The History of the Women's Movement Must Be Corrected) dated November 11, 1999, and "Menolak Warisan Stigma" (Rejecting the Legacy of Stigma) dated July 30, 2005. The study results show that the core of the framing analysis in the Reform era contrasts sharply with that of the New Order era. Gerwani, which was previously considered barbaric, amoral, degrading to women, and to be eradicated, was now framed as a victim of the New Order government's defamation. Many of those accused of being Gerwani members were not actually affiliated with Gerwani and were, in fact, victims of mistaken identity. However, the New Order government continued to imprison and never tried those who were wrongfully accused. Historian Asvi believes that the "fragrant flower dance" described by Harian Angkatan Bersenjata and Berita Yudha on October 10, 1965, never occurred and was merely a fabrication by the government. The military press (Angkatan Bersenjata and Berita Yudha) is considered to have ignored proper journalism standards, but no one dared to refute the military press reports. These two newspapers were also official historical sources and used their information as educational material in schools (Adam, 2000). To this day, history has not erased the stigma that has unknowingly been passed down to Gerwani's descendants. Maria Hartiningsih, the author of the aforementioned articles, wrote that Gerwani's children, even as youngsters, were continuously ridiculed by children of PKI members, and it was difficult for these children to receive scholarships despite their intelligence. Unbeknownst to many, history's failure to correct the mistakes previously labeled on Gerwani is now seen as a way to extinguish the women's movement.

Many issues have emerged, including human rights violations committed by the New Order government (Kompas, 2000). An article extensively describes the violations perpetrated by the New Order government, including forcing several women, among them sex workers, to confess to being members of Gerwani (Kompas, 2005). They were coerced into stripping and beaten with rattan; some were arrested but never tried, and were detained in Semarang. The trauma experienced by the victims was long-lasting, as they spent over a decade in prison, were ostracized, treated poorly and unfairly, and stigmatized by society.

While numerous social and political organizations condemned Gerwani during the New Order era, during the Reform era, many social organizations and women's advocates, as well as female journalists from this media, expressed their support for the female victims. A senior journalist wrote that Gerwani was an organization advocating for gender equality with educated members who were politically conscious (Kompas, 1999). In contrast, the government-formed organization, Dharma Wanita, was considered to offer no space for women to express their thoughts and interests. The journalist also emphasized the



importance of the government listening, rehabilitating reputations, restoring rights, and seeking the truth (Kompas, 2005). Unfortunately, their hopes have not been easily realized, as there is still widespread censorship of "leftist" books, and no major bookstore dares to display these books in their windows.

### 3.3 Discussion

What happened in Kompas' reporting is inseparable from the issue of the political economy of communication. Media must choose between adhering to idealism and performing its functions as envisioned by Charles Wright (Freeman, 2011) or basing its reporting on pressures from various external factors, potentially neglecting proper journalism standards. If media chooses to uphold idealism, it must be prepared for the consequences, such as the newspaper being censored or shut down, as happened to various newspapers closed by President Suharto's government. During this time, media chose not to emphasize its role in controlling government policies; media control was absent during the New Order era. At the beginning of Suharto's presidency, the media system adopted was authoritarian. Even newsworthy stories sometimes required military approval. The military's authority as a center of information was established to produce news that was clear and not confusing to the public about which news should be trusted. This issue is evident from the numerous hard news reports about Gerwani during the New Order era and the almost complete absence of opinions from sources other than news agencies and media personnel.

A point of interest for discussion is the unclear or absent news sources. This issue needs clarification from journalists who worked during the New Order era about the journalism standards used at that time, how journalists obtained data or information, what media did when information from non-government sources differed from government sources, editorial policies, how the New Order government controlled the media, and the role of 'Amanah Penderitaan Rakyat' (The People's Suffering Mandate) as a media catchphrase. Clearly, the political context greatly influenced reporting during the New Order and Reform eras. Media that initially supported the New Order government condemned it during the Reform era. There was no longer any support for the New Order leaders. Everything related to the New Order had to be removed, just as during the G30S incident, when everything associated with the Orla government and Sukarno, the first President of Indonesia, had to be eliminated, including his loyal followers. Thus, the press's role as a social control mechanism, particularly for marginalized communities, remains elusive.

Media reporting is not only influenced by political context but also by economic issues. Media, in this case, Kompas, which is dependent on economic factors, needs to consider whether an issue is profitable. Here, it is evident that issues concerning women (Gerwani) were less attractive and profitable compared to reporting on the G30S PKI issue. Several studies have shown that Kompas allocated little space to news about or related to women. Kompas once had a column, *Swara*, specifically advocating for women's interests, but it did not last long due to financial considerations. To this day, research on female sources in this media shows that their numbers are still far below those of male sources. This indicates that the media has not yet aligned with women's interests, and women's issues are still constructed by the dominant group, which is male.

What about the role of the media as a bearer of values or a means of socialization? What happens when the media intensively reports negative news about women, portraying them as immoral, barbaric, degrading to women's dignity, cruel, and deceitful? Such reporting did not only appear in print media around the G30S events in 1965 and 1966. It continued in the form of films, hero monuments, and *Ex-Tapol* (ET) related to former G30S prisoners. This stigma was not only borne by the former prisoners but also affected their children, who were deprived of equal opportunities due to being labeled negatively as 'children of Gerwani or PKI,' portrayed as enemies of the state who destroyed national unity. The collective memory of Gerwani, a militant women's political organization that demanded equality, is viewed as a political organization incompatible with the patriarchal culture of

this country. Consequently, during the Orba government, women's political activities were reduced, and existing women's political organizations were government-formed, primarily tasked with supporting their husbands and remaining in the domestic sphere, reinforcing the concept of motherhood, and supporting their husbands' careers.

The collective memory ingrained in society portrays militant women in politics as bad, potentially evil, and immoral, deserving of eradication. This is why many reports from women's organizations during the G30S events condemned Gerwani and demanded its dissolution. At that time, women's organizations were pitted against each other, and studies show that these organizations were often more persistent in urging the government to crush Gerwani. It seems that it is indeed easier to discredit women by depicting them as immoral. Indonesian women at that time could be categorized as traditional, often wearing kebaya and avoiding trousers, with long hair worn up rather than short hair. Thus, it is understandable that many women's organizations, which adhered to traditional Eastern values, were angered and embarrassed when confronted with the issue of immoral behavior among women.

#### **4. Conclusions**

During the G30S events, women's political participation (Gerwani) was framed by the media as an immoral and militant movement that should not be undertaken by women. A topic worthy of further discussion is how the memory of Gerwani influences contemporary female activists and politicians in advocating for their interests today.

Learning from the collective memory of the militant Gerwani, which was later destroyed within a framework of nefarious issues. Using Chodorow's perspective, it seems that Indonesian women in politics need to consider the strong patriarchal cultural values that still prevail. Although women's participation in the political arena is necessary, primarily to advocate for interests that men might not experience, many in society still perceive women in politics as deviating from norms. Thus, the way they pursue their political interests must align with existing norms, carried out in a less militant and more feminine manner. The ideology of 'motherhood' remains an important aspect for female politicians.

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#### **Author Contribution**

The author conceptualized the research framework, designed the methodology, and conducted the content and discourse analysis. Data collection and analysis of Gerwani-related issues across political eras were performed by the author. The author also interpreted the findings through feminist and collective memory perspectives, drafted the manuscript, and revised it for intellectual coherence and originality.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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