

***Foreign Policy and the Media: The US in the Eyes of the Indonesian Press.* By Jarno S. Lang. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016. Hardcover: 255pp.**

How does the Indonesian public perceive America and its foreign policy? Why were public perceptions of the United States more negative under President George W. Bush than during the administration of President Barack Obama? This book tries to answer these questions by using the lens of the media. Using constructivism, Jarno S. Lang defines power as not merely material factors such as the economy or the military, but also non-material factors, such as the ability to intervene and hinder the reproduction of identities of another actor. It is in this context that, he argues, the media can play a role in “influencing the political decision-making process by affecting public opinion and decision maker’s choices” (p. 12).

This book is arguably a pioneer in the field of media studies. While most media studies in Indonesia mainly discuss the media within the context of domestic politics or the dynamics within the newsroom itself — such as the issue of self-censorship — Lang takes a step further by linking the domestic media to international politics.

Lang’s book has two major strengths: a sophisticated research design, which utilizes the triangulation method, and the richness of the data. The latter consists of 432 newspaper archives (primary sources), 25 interviews with medium-elite-level experts (secondary sources) and statistical data of Indonesian images of the United States (tertiary sources). In his research, Lang looks at a diverse group of four print media: *Kompas*, the *Jakarta Post*, *Republika* and *Suara Hidayatullah*. While the first two newspapers represent the secular media, the other two represent the Islamic-oriented media. In addition, Lang also combines quantitative as well as qualitative methods of analysis to increase the validity and enhance the richness of his findings.

The most important contribution of this study lies in its ability to show clearly the link between the media, public opinion and foreign policy. Lang details this argument through the presentation of his findings in three empirical cases: America’s image in Southeast Asia (chapter five); America’s image in the Arab world (chapter six); and America’s global image (chapter seven). Based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, Lang suggests that there was a high correlation between negative portrayals of President Bush in the Indonesian media, and unfavourable views of the United States by

the Indonesian public during his eight years in power. In contrast, in the early days of the Obama administration, the Indonesian media were largely positive especially with regard to the administration's policy towards Asia. Meanwhile, with regard to America's policies in the Middle East, the four newspapers were critical of US military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and US support for Israel (p. 190). It is noteworthy that despite the different ideologies of the papers, they shared similar positions on certain issues.

More nuanced findings, however, can be found when examining America's so-called "war on terror". While the Islamic-oriented papers tended to see the campaign negatively, the secular media mostly viewed it as legitimate. A more diverse position is also found when describing Indonesia's self-image as regards Indonesia's relations with the United States. While *Kompas* viewed Indonesia as weak, similar to the viewpoint espoused by *Republika* and *Suara Hidayatullah*, the *Jakarta Post* believed that Indonesia had the potential to play a bigger role on the world stage. But while the Islamic-oriented media viewed America as a threat, the secular media argued for closer relations with the Obama administration.

In sum, Lang's book deftly reveals the diverse and volatile nature of America's image in the eyes of the Indonesian press, none more so today after Donald Trump's surprising victory in the November 2016 US presidential election. Most of the Indonesian press have expressed negative sentiments towards the new Trump administration. Interestingly, however, the media tycoon Hary Tanoesoedibjo — who owns the MNC Group, which consists of private television stations, online media and a newspaper — has close business ties with Trump and perceives him as a political role model. As direct intervention into the newsroom has been a frequent practice by media owners in Indonesia, one can expect Tanoesoedibjo to do the same by ensuring that his media group portrays Trump's America in a positive light.

Unfortunately, despite the growing influence on Indonesian public perceptions today, television and online media were not included in the analysis of Lang's study. Nevertheless, this limitation does not diminish the original contribution this book makes to the existing literature. In addition, the fact that the Internet and privately-owned television stations are relatively new in Indonesia, the choice of newspapers that have existed since independence was perhaps a more appropriate choice for Lang's study.

WIJAYANTO is a PhD candidate at the Leiden Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), Leiden University and is a Lecturer of Media and Democracy at the Department of Politics and Government, Diponegoro University. Postal address: Pastoor Moormanstraat, 40A02, 6219AW, Maastricht, The Netherlands; email: w.wijayanto@hum.leidenuniv.nl.