

# The Antagonist Visual Framing of Soekarno in Kompas Daily's 1966 Photo Selection

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## Abstract

This paper examined Kompas Daily's editorial framing strategy in depicting President Soekarno as an antagonist during Indonesia's 1966 political turbulence. It investigated how the newspaper used visual framing, photo selection, and headline composition to construct contrasting images of Soekarno and his successor, Soeharto. Employing a qualitative method with visual and contextual analysis, this research analyzed the symbolic representation of leadership transition in Kompas's front-page layout published on February 23, 1967. The findings revealed that Kompas framed Soekarno as a declining and melancholic figure while Soeharto was presented as confident and resolute. These visual choices were not neutral but tendentious in shifting political power, allowing Kompas to adapt to the rise of the New Order regime. The study introduces the concept of "swinging journalism" to describe the maneuver of media institutions to survive during the changing political climates. This framing positioned Kompas as not only a chronicler of events but also an agent that legitimized the New Order through subtle visual rhetoric. The paper suggested that visual media could shape public memory and political legitimacy during transitional periods. Therefore, it contributes to the growing body of literature on media representation, newsroom dynamics, and the visual construction of political narratives in authoritarian contexts. Furthermore, this study presents a case-specific illustration of editorial decision-making and ideological positioning in Indonesia's press history, and contributes conceptual perspectives relevant to broader media studies.

**Keywords:** mass media; news editorial; old order; swinging journalism; visual framing

## Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji strategi pembingkai editorial Harian Kompas dalam menggambarkan Presiden Soekarno sebagai tokoh antagonis di tengah gejolak politik Indonesia tahun 1966. Studi ini menelusuri bagaimana surat kabar tersebut menggunakan bingkai visual, terutama melalui pemilihan foto dan penyusunan tajuk utama untuk membentuk citra yang kontras antara Soekarno dan penggantinya, Soeharto. Dengan menerapkan metode kualitatif yang menggabungkan analisis visual dan kontekstual, penelitian ini menganalisis representasi simbolik atas transisi kepemimpinan dalam tata letak halaman depan Kompas edisi 23 Februari 1967. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Kompas membingkai Soekarno sebagai sosok yang mengalami kemunduran dan diliputi suasana melankolis, sementara Soeharto ditampilkan sebagai figur yang percaya diri dan tegas. Pilihan visual ini tidak bersifat netral, melainkan selaras dengan pergeseran kekuasaan politik, memungkinkan Kompas menyesuaikan diri dengan kemunculan rezim Orde Baru. Studi ini memperkenalkan konsep "jurnalisme mengayun" untuk menjelaskan bagaimana institusi media bermanuver secara editorial demi bertahan dalam dinamika iklim politik yang berubah-ubah. Bingkai visual tersebut pada akhirnya menempatkan Kompas bukan hanya sebagai pencatat peristiwa, melainkan juga sebagai agen yang turut melegitimasi Orde Baru melalui retorika visual yang halus. Artikel ini menyoroti peran krusial media visual dalam membentuk ingatan kolektif publik dan legitimasi politik selama masa transisi kekuasaan. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap kajian representasi media, dinamika ruang redaksi, serta konstruksi visual atas narasi politik dalam konteks otoritarian. Selain itu, studi ini juga menyajikan ilustrasi kontekstual mengenai bagaimana pengambilan keputusan editorial bersinggungan dengan afiliasi ideologis dalam sejarah pers Indonesia, dan menawarkan wawasan teoretis yang relevan untuk pengembangan kajian media secara lebih luas.

**Kata kunci:** editorial berita; jurnalisme mengayun; media massa; orde lama; pembingkai visual

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## INTRODUCTION

Visual framing influences public perception of public figures. This paper examines how Kompas Daily portrays Soekarno as an antagonist by constructing the visual images featured in the headlines on February 23, 1967. This period is important because the moment of revolution began on September 30, 1965, when Soekarno's image started to decline (Adiprasetyo, 2025; Künkler, 2024; Lev, 2021). One of the reasons for this was his reluctance to condemn the incident that killed six of his generals. This killing was accused of having been carried out by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), the political party that supported Soekarno back then (Crawford, 2022, p. 563). This research aims to uncover how the editorial of Kompas Daily frames the photo as a tool to antagonize Soekarno in the headline. As a product of mechanical journalism tools, photography can be viewed not only as an image but also as a context-based product, which includes the editorials by the newsroom of Kompas Daily (Krishnani et al., 2021; Krüger et al., 2024; Saputra, 2021).

Previous research has examined the role of media framing during political transitions. Shoemaker and Reese in Elsheikh et al. (2024) revealed how media routines are shaped by power structures, which influence editorial decisions in times of upheaval. Grabe and Bucy, (2014) explored visual framing in election coverage. They show that subtle image cues can guide audience perception of political legitimacy. In the Indonesian context, Wijayanto and Masduki (2023, p. 632) suggested that press institutions are deeply embedded in the political architecture. This observation aligns with Reese (2021) argument that media are not merely passive reflectors but active participants in shaping political structures. During both the Old Order and the New Order regimes in Indonesia, the press was structurally entangled with the state: under the Old Order as a vehicle of revolutionary ideology and under the New Order as an instrument of authoritarian control and regime legitimacy (Besman et al., 2023, p. 111). However, limited research has specifically investigated how visual framing operated in daily news photo selection during the crucial handover of power from Soekarno to Soeharto. This study fills that gap by situating Kompas Daily's editorial photo choices within the broad discourse of media power, ideology, and survival.

This study is theoretically grounded in visual framing theory, which posits that media images are selected and structured to emphasize specific interpretations of events (Grabe & Bucy, 2014). In addition, Hall in Colpani (2021) suggested that media representation is never neutral; it constructs meaning through selective inclusion and exclusion. These theoretical frameworks help examine the way Kompas Daily's visual choices served not only journalistic purposes but also political functions during Indonesia's transition from the Old Order to the New Order. Furthermore, the study introduces the concept of "swinging journalism" to explain editorial positionings during the shifting political pressures to maintain institutional survival (Besman et al., 2023, p. 108).

Kompas daily born at the same period as a revolutionary time of the Republic of Indonesia in the mid of 1965 (Aviandy et al., 2024). This period was characterized by Soekarno's nearly limitless power and saw horizontal conflict among political parties, including the military, which served as if they had been a political party (Palguna & Bisariyadi, 2024). The press, as a powerful force that includes the public, has emerged as a significant agent of revolution. Kompas Daily established itself as a subtle watchdog, using a distinctive method to observe the misconduct of those in power (Wijayanto & Masduki, 2023, p. 628). The famous editorial style of Kompas Daily avoids harsh criticism and uses gentle reminders as a hallmark of their journalism style, up until nowadays (Zustiyanoro et al., 2023). However, during that time, as a newly formed media outlet heavily affiliated with a political party, Kompas was also part of the

political machine and engaged in activities they could no longer pursue, such as bold critiques and journalism affiliated with political parties. The Minister of Information, Major General Achmadi, issued Minister of Information Decree No. 29/SK/M/65 on March 26, 1965, later refined through Decree No. 112/SK/M/65. This decree mandated that every press company must be affiliated with and supported by political parties or organizations associated with the National Front or Pancasila.

The editorial decision of Kompas Daily was similar to what Besman et al. (2023, p. 111) wrote about, as *Swinging Journalism*, a concept describing how the journalism industry swings from idealism to the other side of power. This situation must have occurred due to many factors, particularly the military power led by Soeharto, which served as the main reason for their influence in diminishing Soekarno's political role following the September 30 incident. Kompas Daily, at the start of its existence, supported Soekarno's Nasakom without hesitation. But after Soekarno started declining, Kompas Daily began to support the new power led by Soeharto. These transitions are one of the variables of *Swinging Journalism*, to survive. Using visual framing, Kompas Daily navigates its shifting allegiances through smooth journalistic style and changing axes.

This approach to editorials can spark debate because mass media should adhere to a code of ethics and social responsibility. While every picture already shows the "reality," there is a contextuality that is more difficult for many people, and it can distort reality (Åker, 2025; Greguš et al., 2022). How the mass media engage in this style of journalism is debatable because almost every journalism system in the world has a code of ethics, and some of them also have a social responsibility (Porlezza, 2023). In the 1960s context, the media construction of Soekarno's and Soeharto's personalities raises questions; one of which is the role of mass media. Did the media serve as neutral journalism for this event, or did it choose to be the advocate of one side?

The Old Order government aimed to ensure that each political force had its own media (Prayogi et al., 2024). For example, the Indonesian National Party (PNI) had *Suluh Indonesia* newspaper, the Indonesian Muslim Council (Masyumi) had *Harian Abadi*, *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) had *Duta Komunitas*, and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) had *Harian Rakjat* and *Warta Bhakti*. In addition, the Indonesian National Army (TNI) has its newspapers, the *Armed Forces Daily* and *Berita Yudha Daily*. While direct political affiliations may be absent, certain media outlets tend to adopt journalistic approaches that align with the values and ideological leanings of their ownership and editorial leadership (Koch et al., 2021, p. 755-756). Examples of such media included *Merdeka* newspaper, which was heavily influenced by the ideology of B.M. Diah, *Indonesia Raya* led by Mochtar Lubis, and *Harian Pedoman* under the leadership of Rosihan Anwar.

The identity of a political party, then, would be reflected in the media affiliated with it, as part of Indonesia's political identity and revolution promoted by Soekarno. At the conceptual level, political identity is different from identity politics (Taylor & Yapp, 2024). Political identity is as an effort to increase the sense of unity of a political group that determines the location of individual interests. However, political identity is not only about how politics defines and classifies identity; it is also related to political identity itself and the associated political advantages. These differences underline media functions as part of the political machine and the broader advantage, as a diffusion of information regarding the national identity (Akihary et al., 2023, p. 15). This period also serves as proof that the role of media is changing as part of a political weapon. Newspapers served as battlegrounds where conflicting narratives were fought, with their journalism content playing a crucial role (Cools et al., 2022).

In this situation, Kompas Daily was established by the Catholic Party at the request of the Minister/Commander of the Army (Menpangad), Lieutenant General Ahmad Yani (1962-1965). The Kompas Daily was created to balance the dominance of the PKI, which managed to control the mass media due to its closeness to President Soekarno. With this background, Kompas Daily was expected to show a critical and assertive attitude as a newspaper, especially towards the authorities closely related to communism at the time (Besman et al., 2023, p. 102).

Although it was established to counter the influence of communism, Kompas faced difficulties in its implementation due to political pressure in the Old Order era in 1965. At the time, Soekarno united Nationalism, Religion, and Communism under the *Nasionalisme, Agama, and Komunisme* (Nasakom) flag to balance political power in the Old Order era. Being under the same flag, the authoritarian nature of Guided Democracy made it difficult for each element in Nasakom to express its political views (Mustapa & Hamid, 2024, p. 6).

The early style of Kompas Daily was characterized by a form of traditional journalism known as “Biting Journalism,” a concept elaborated by Dhakidae (1991, p. 253). Dhakidae explained that the term “Biting Journalism” is part of the political system regulated during the Old Order era, from the period of 1955 to 1965. This style of journalism allowed the mass media to be neutral and forces them to align themselves with one of the political axes. In this era, if the media were not associated with political power, it was considered a betrayal of the nation. The press and political movements were deeply interdependent, with the former serving as an extension of the latter. This dynamic was characterized by conflict and competition between political parties, which were often mirrored in the press.

As part of the national revolution narrative, the press competed to appear more revolutionary and loyal to President Soekarno. According to Osman (2023), this context fostered a press culture that was subservient to Soekarno, effectively curbing open and direct criticism of the government. The intersection of mass media and political parties has somehow created a nature of journalism in which every editorial decision must align with ideological affiliations (Hamada et al., 2024). Somehow, this kind of journalism is unique and different from the old doctrine of journalism, which positions mass media as a part of *Vox Populi*, or the people’s voices (Ahmad, 2022, p. 192).

The collapse of the Soekarno regime, which began in late 1965, was ironically also facilitated by the press, which the Old Order had strictly controlled for the last ten years. Soeharto banned the publication of the press not affiliated with the military, starting from October 2, 1965. The mass media were deemed to have interfered with the spread of a single narrative that accused the PKI of being the mastermind behind the events of September 30, 1965. It was only on October 6 that the press was allowed to resume publication, with a uniform narrative condemning the PKI under strict editorial supervision by the military.

When the media was banned from publishing news in early October 1965 by the military, Soeharto simultaneously managed to enter the realm of information by seizing Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) from the hands of unknown forces supporting the September 30 Movement and then unilaterally announced that the September 30 Movement was a counter-revolutionary movement controlled by the PKI (Putri, 2024, p. 47). The mass media became a tool for the military to dominate the rising opinions in society. The press was used to attack the PKI, undermine Soekarno’s credibility, and elevate Soeharto’s name as the potential ruler of the New Order regime.

The destruction of the PKI organization followed the Army’s eradication of the September 30 Movement. The mass media, including the Kompas Daily, disseminated information in the post-September 30 Movement period. According to data collected by the researchers,



from October 1 to October 31, 1965, Kompas Daily published 539 headlines condemning the September 30 Movement or the PKI. Kompas showed flexibility during the transition from the Old Order to the New Order (Besman et al., 2023, p. 109). Initially, Kompas supported the Nasakom ideology created by Soekarno. However, it gradually switched to supporting the military, the cornerstone of the New Order, by condemning the PKI and eventually communism, which was the backbone of Soekarno's rule at the time. On several occasions, Kompas adopted a dual stance in its publications. Through its news articles, Kompas criticized the PKI while supporting Soekarno, who remained politically in support of the PKI. The purpose of this dual stance was to give equal space and opportunity to the two competing factions of influence, Soekarno and Soeharto.

Kompas' editorials towards the PKI and communism became apparent only after the New Order regime came to power. The New Order's anti-communist policies turned the editorial board of Kompas into a newspaper closely tied to the regime. Not only Kompas but also other media outlets developed a similar closeness to the government, mainly due to the control of publishing and mass media licenses by the New Order regime at the time (Eddyono, 2023, p. 778).

The challenges of Kompas Daily upon conducting journalistic activities under each regime were never the same, especially regarding the issue of communism, which consistently filled public discourse even into the reform era. The issue of communism in the Old Order was generally used to strengthen the revolution supported by Soekarno as part of Nasakom propaganda. During the New Order era, the issue of communism was used as a propaganda tool to provoke hatred and demonstrate it as part of the New Order regime's political agenda.

The main ideas and thoughts of the editorial board of Kompas can be seen through the news they cover or, in this study, the photos they display. In line with what is mentioned in Reality Construction Theory, media content is a product of media workers who construct reality. Media content represents the reality constructed by the editorial board of mass media (Fadillah et al., 2022, p. 55). Issue construction is always related to government policies that regulate the press (Smellie & Boswell, 2025). This condition often causes the press in Indonesia to be unable to stand independently. Throughout its history, the press has functioned as a mouthpiece of the government, an agent of political parties, or even a follower of the capitalist market (Kramp et al., 2016, p. 163). However, the Indonesian press cannot step out of this three-type circle to date. The necessity of upholding independent journalism and adjusting to the political circumstances at Kompas Daily editorials is paramount. The shift from endorsing Nasakom Soekarno to supporting the anti-communist Soeharto highlights the intricacies of media management in such a tumultuous environment. Visual framing, as a subtle yet powerful tool, allowed the newspaper to communicate its shifting loyalties without overtly declaring them (Dhanesh & Rahman, 2021).

One of the most critical milestones in the transition of power occurred on February 20, 1967, when President Soekarno officially handed over the reins of government to General Soeharto as the executor of MPRS Decree No. IX/1966, the legal version of Supersemar (*Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret*) (Hayase, 2020). This order signified the winds of change for the political history of Indonesia. It symbolized the end of Soekarno's reign and the beginning of the military-led regime under General Soeharto, which lasted for 32 years, from 1966 to 1998. This transition was made on February 22, 1967, with several political maneuvers, negotiations, and pressure from civilians and the military.

The roots of Soekarno's political decline can be traced back to mid-1966, when the first Nawaksara, a speech presented by Soekarno to the Provisional People's Consultative Assembly

(MPRS), failed to address the pressing issues of political instability and the economic downturn. Soekarno's speech drew criticism from students, academia, and the military leaders. They accused Soekarno of trying to shirk responsibility for the political turmoil following September 30 and the PKI. This brought about students' protests under movements and organizations, such as *Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia* (KAMI), which demanded Soekarno's resignation and the banishment of the PKI. At the same moment, the military, led by Soeharto, composed strategies to maintain order and law to stabilize conditions while simultaneously removing Soekarno from power (Croissant, 2022, p. 78).

Politically, Soekarno's decline was documented by Kompas Daily (1967, p. 1), with the start of a secret letter to Soeharto on February 7, 1967. The letter discussed the transfer of day-to-day government duties from Soekarno to Soeharto. On February 8, 1967, Soeharto discussed this letter with the four Chiefs of the Armed Forces. From their conversation, it was decided that the letter from Soekarno was unacceptable as it did not help resolve the ongoing political conflict. The Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Air Commodore Roesmin Noerjadin, Admiral Moeljadi, Commissioner General Soetjipto Joedodihardjo, and Deputy Army Commander Lieutenant General Maraden Panggabean, finally met President Soekarno in Bogor, West Java. These four commanders carried a message from Soeharto to discuss the concept of handing over national leadership from February 11 to 13, 1967. There were differences of opinion between the Soeharto and Soekarno factions over the extent of government powers to be handed over. Soekarno disagreed with the proposed concept and requested that the phrase "day-to-day management" be added to the statement as a form of power to be handed over to Soeharto. The Chiefs of the Armed Forces rejected this request. The sequence and dynamics of this power negotiation are visually summarized in Figure 1, which outlines the formal process of authority transfer as constructed by Kompas Daily.

Finally, the Armed Forces Chiefs agreed on the concept and appointed Soetjipto Joedodihardjo and Maraden Panggabean. The new concept proposed the announcement of the handover of government power to Supersemar by MPRS Decree No. XV/1966. They met President Soekarno, but the President still expressed his rejection and asked for changes. After being persuaded by the two generals, President Soekarno finally agreed with the proposed final concept. A follow-up meeting was held on February 19 and 20, 1967, between the Chiefs of the Armed Forces and the President. Soekarno agreed with the announced concept but requested the addition of the words "uphold and carry out the revolution." Later in the afternoon, Soeharto met with President Soekarno, who eventually signed the announcement. However, the announcement was scheduled for the traditionally auspicious February 22, 1967. In the evening, Information Minister B.M Diah read out the President's announcement. Kompas wrote that the announcement of the transfer of power was initiated by Soekarno, although there were some negotiations along the way. Kompas wrote that these negotiations followed the constitutional phase and could maintain a conducive situation, preventing movements by Pro-Old Order groups or former PKI groups. The official narrative of this transition was visually reinforced by Kompas through the front-page layout, as in Figure 2, which depicted Soekarno's formal handover of power to Soeharto.

This document, published by Kompas Daily, is part of the evidence that Soekarno is reluctant to give up his powers. Soekarno, according to Kompas, is hesitant and unwilling to read the situation and resign for good. According to Kompas Daily, the reason behind Soekarno's reluctance is that he appointed himself in a legal manner as a lifetime president, or until the election is held. Kompas Daily read this as another reason for Soekarno to get his power back. Soekarno doesn't care about the will of the people who want him out of power.

KOMPAS - JUMAT, 24 FEBRUARI 1967 HALAMAN 1

## Proses terjadinya penjerahan kekuasaan pemerintahan pd Djend. Soeharto

Djakarta, 24 Febr. (PAB) — Pengumuman Presiden Soekarno yang menyatakan penyerahan kekuasaan kepada Panglima Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (ABRI) pada tanggal 12 Februari 1967, ternyata merupakan proses yang sangat menarik sekali. Dalam hubungan ini, Pusat Pemberitaan Angkatan Bersenjata, menjadikan pada para pembantu proses terjadinya. Pengumuman Presiden tsb berdasarkan keterangan2 yg diperoleh dari Brigjen. Soedharmo SH, yang al, sebagai berikut:

**Tanggal 7 Februari 1967:**  
Pak Harto menerima surat dari Presiden (Rahasia/Pribadi) melalui Hardi SH, mengemukakan suatu konsep Surat Pengawasan khusus, yang berisi penyerahan tugas pemerintahan sehari-hari dari Presiden kepada Pak Harto.

**Tanggal 8 Februari 1967:**  
Surat tsb, dikemukakan dan dibicarakan pada keempat Panglima Angkatan, yang kesimpulan nja, tidak dapat menerima surat tsb, karena diperkirakan tidak akan membantu menyelesaikan konflik politik yang ada.

**Tanggal 10 Februari 1967:**  
Pak Harto menemui Presiden membicarakan mengenai surat tersebut dan melaporkan penderihan Panglima Angkatan. Presiden menanggapi kemungkinan2 djalani jg, sebaik-baiknya dapat dilakukan.

**Tanggal 11 Februari 1967:**  
Keempat Panglima Angkatan menemui Presiden di Bogor. Pak Harto mengajukan gagasan/konsep yg mungkin dapat digunakan untuk mempermudah penyelesaian konflik situasi yang ada. Presiden meminta waktu untuk mempelajari, dan supaya bertemu esok harinya.

**Bentuk konsep : Surat Penyerahan.**  
Isi Konsep : Presiden menyerahkan kekuasaan pemerintahan kepada Super-Semar (Sesuai Ketetapan MPRS No. XV).

**Tanggal 12 Februari 1967:**  
Keempat Panglima Angkatan bertemu dengan Presiden di Bogor, kelanjutan dari pertemuan hari sebelumnya, Presiden tidak dapat menerima konsep yang diajukan oleh Pak Harto dan mengajukan Amandemen mengenai bentuk dan isi nja :  
— bentuk tak sednja pernah tsb;  
— isi: tak setuju berhalangan dsb: Minta supaya kesokan harinya kumpul lagi.

**Tanggal 13 Februari 1967:**  
Para Panglima bertemu untuk membicarakan konsep2 baru sebelum menemui Presiden. Panglima Angkatan Bersenjata sepakat satu konsep dan mengusulkan Pak Tjipto Jodohardjo dan Pak Panggabean. (konsep Pengumuman Penyerahan kekuasaan Pemerintahan kepada Super-Semar sesuai Ketetapan No. XV/MPRS/1966).

**Tanggal 13 Februari 1967:**  
(djam 11.00)  
Pak Tjipto dan Pak Panggabean menemui Presiden. Presiden masih minta perubahan disamping yang sulit untuk dipenuhi sehubungan tsb, ingin menambahkan pemerintahan sehari-hari.

**Antara tgl 13 t/d 17 Febr 1967:**  
Melalui hubungan Majdjen Surjo Sumpeno Presiden menyatakan bhw beliau setuju konsep, tetapi beliau minta diammar2 dari Pak Harto. Pak Harto tidak mungkin/dapat memenuhi permintaan tsb.

**Tanggal 17 Februari 1967:**  
Melalui Majdjen Surjo Sumpeno disampaikan bahwa konsep Pengumuman diserahkan kepada Presiden. Supaya hari Minggu tgl 19 Februari bertemu di Istana Bogor.

**Tanggal 17 dan 18 Februari djam 20.00:**  
Pertemuan antara Panglima Angkatan membicarakan soal pertemuan tgl 19 jod.

**Tanggal 19 Februari 1967:**  
Pertemuan di Istana Bogor antara Panglima Angkatan Bersenjata dan Presiden. Presiden masih belum mau menandatangani konsep yang telah disiapkan itu.

**Tanggal 20 Februari 1967:**  
(djam 11.00)  
Panglima Angkatan Presiden mengemukakan konsep Pengumuman yang telah disiapkan tsb diatas, di Istana Merdeka. Presiden menyetujui dgn 10 tambahan kaji (pasal 3 ditambah bhw menjaga dan menegakkan Revolusi). Dan minta supaya Pak Harto dan Panglima Angkatan menandatangani djam 17.00.

**Tanggal 20 Februari 1967:**  
(djam 17.00).  
Pak Harto menemui Presiden. Pengumuman ditandatangani, tetapi mengemukakan tawaran tsb hari baik.

**Tanggal 22 Februari 1967:**  
(djam 19.00)  
Seluruh Manutama dan Menteri berkumpul di Istana Merdeka utk mendengarkan Presiden membacakan Pengumuman tsb.

**Tanggal 22 Februari 1967:**  
(djam 20.00).  
Pengumuman Presiden dibacakan kepada Wartawan oleh Menteri Penerangan.

Figure 1. Process of Power Transfer from Soekarno to Soeharto

Source: Kompas Daily, February 24, 1967

Kompas wrote that Soekarno was incapable of resolving the situation at that time.

According to Kompas Daily, the political change is necessary and a solution to stabilize the situation. Change is inevitable, and Indonesia should consolidate as a nation under Soeharto. By promoting this, Kompas has already positioned itself as an advocate for the New Order. Kompas is completely switching from Soekarno to Soeharto, according to the rules of Swinging Journalism. The appointment of General Soeharto as Acting President by the MPRS on March 12, 1967, was described by Kompas as a decisive moment that resolved the ongoing dualism between the Old Order and the emerging New Order.

According to Kompas Daily in their articles, the biggest problem with Soekarno's leadership is his inability to adapt his political ideas and manifesto to be more flexible to







of authority and legitimacy.

One year later, the 5th General Session of the MPRS, held from March 21 to March 30, 1968, officially appointed Soeharto as the President of the Republic of Indonesia for a five-year term until 1973. Soeharto's definitive appointment as president was strengthened by MPRS Decree Number XLIII/1968. One of the exciting photos published in one of the Kompas Daily editions during the coverage of this series of events was a photo of Soekarno and Soeharto placed side by side. This photo was published on the front page of Kompas newspaper on February 23, 1967. This research examined the visual framing used by Kompas daily regarding the leadership transition from Soekarno to Soeharto. This editorial framing indicates Kompas's editorial position during the 1966-1967 political turmoil. Through its choice of visual framing, this photo creates a New Order version of that history. The use of specific imagery reflects how Kompas Journalism swings to navigate political pressure. By using specific images, Kompas Daily absorbs people's voices and maintains the influence of the New Order with its editorials (Bucy & Joo, 2020; Grabe & Bucy, 2014).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative visual analysis approach. It is qualitative interpretive research on visual framing in political journalism. The object of research is the front page of Kompas Daily published on February 23, 1967, which displays juxtaposed photographs of Soekarno and Soeharto during Indonesia's leadership transition. The subject of this study is



**Figure 3.** Comparison of Soekarno and Soeharto's Expressions

Source: Kompas Daily, February 23, 1967

the editorial practice of Kompas Daily, such as photo selection and layout. Data were collected through archival research using digital and physical newspaper repositories. The data collection technique involved purposive sampling of relevant photo articles and accompanying news texts. For data analysis, the study employed two approaches: (1) visual framing analysis, examining composition, lighting, facial expression, and symbolic cues; and (2) contextual analysis, interpreting the surrounding text, headlines, and political-historical context. This dual-method design allows a deep understanding of how editorial choices reflect ideological alignments.

In addition to these empirical procedures, the study adopted a newsroom-centered analytical perspective grounded in media and journalism studies. It focused on editorial decisions, such as photo selection, composition, facial expressions, and spatial arrangement, to frame the representation of Soekarno. Rather than applying a full critical semiotic framework, the study prioritized contextual and institutional interpretation to reveal editorial intent during political transition (Grabe & Bucy, 2014; Rose, 2016). This methodological choice allowed for a direct exploration of framing as a strategic communicative act without relying on mythological or structural semiotic stages. Contextual reading of the texts accompanied the visual analysis to enrich the interpretation without relying on mythological or structural semiotic stages.

Some studies used semiotic approaches to analyze visual representation (Grange & Lian, 2022; Sitompul & Nasution, 2025), yet this study adopted a framing-oriented visual analysis to expose editorial intent and positioning within the political context of the 1960s Indonesian press. The emphasis was on how visual choices in news production, especially photography, reflect institutional alignment during regime change, rather than unpacking mythological codes. The research also included contextual analysis to understand the historical, political, and social background against which the photographs were published. It involved examining the companion texts, news articles, and broader historical events to gain insight into the motives behind the framing of Soekarno's portrayal. This study is based on a single article from Kompas Daily, published on February 23, 1967. The selection was intentional, as the front page of this specific edition contained a juxtaposition of two photographs, Soekarno and Soeharto, that visually represented the symbolic shift in political power. Rather than using multiple articles, the study focused on this one issue to allow for in-depth visual and contextual analysis.

The data for this paper were collected through a qualitative analysis process with a visual and contextual analysis approach. The visual is based on composition, lighting, facial expressions, and body language. The context, however, is based on companion texts, captions, articles, and historical context. The double analysis helps the author examine the relationship between editorial intent and visual elements. The dual analysis combined to create a comprehensive analysis of the motives and strategies of Kompas Daily in presenting Soekarno as the antagonistic figure. This paper also included the socio-political analysis of media representation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Visual communications and photojournalism are way different from regular photography, as they have a unique context and style. To understand the philosophy of photojournalism, it is important to grasp the standard procedures, production style, and viewer expectations. Photojournalism is expected to be impartial, factual, story-based, and sometimes bold (Azqandi et al., 2020; Lundin, 2025). According to Morgan (2021, p. 155), the camera may not always lie directly in most cases, but it can deceive with angle manipulation. A deliberate and careful selection of photos, accompanied by brief captions, can convey a strong narrative and bring about an expected impact. There is always a risk of presenting an unbiased or one-sided picture

(Kontos & Galanopoulos-Papavasileiou, 2024, p. 5).

This paper presents findings by analyzing the visual representation of Soekarno in Kompas Daily's 1967 coverage. The selection and presentation of images highlight aspects of Soekarno that communicate antagonism, portraying him in a negative and controversial light. These visual choices, framing, composition, and expression were not accidental, but reflected an editorial strategy shaped by the shifting political context and institutional alignment of the newspaper (Xu et al., 2022). Within the newsroom, decisions about which images to publish functioned as a subtle form of ideological negotiation. Representation, in this context, cannot be separated from power. It reveals how media institutions adapt visually to changing regimes, while signaling their political positioning (Johnson, 2025).

Lastly, according to Dodds et al. (2023), the political atmosphere of tension and power struggle significantly influences editorial choices regarding the visual representation of Soekarno. This finding confirms the vital role that visual framing could shape public perceptions of Soekarno during this particular period. Within the confines of this monochrome photograph, a striking visual dichotomy is revealed when presenting Soekarno and Soeharto in a side-by-side composition, as published in the pages of Kompas Daily on February 23, 1967. The details of this visual dichotomy are systematically outlined in Table 1, which compares key visual elements used by Kompas to construct contrasting representations of Soekarno and Soeharto.

On the left frame, the image of Soekarno displays a serious demeanor and emotional facial expressions. There is also despair in the glimpse of his eyes. Soekarno's eyes show decline, and his lips are tightly closed; a dominant feeling of resignation prevails there (Shadaydeh et al., 2021, p. 73783). The visuals of Soekarno convey feelings of loss, melancholy, and a deep sense of unease, along with worry and uncertainty. Soekarno also wore a military-civilian uniform that had long been associated with himself, but in this photo, it dragged him down, symbolizing the desperation of losing pride and identity (Pech & Caspar, 2023, p. 1-2). It is ironic because the image also reveals the reduction of his authority by depicting facial expressions. In sharp contrast, Soeharto, positioned on the right side of the frame, emanates a positive aura of confidence. His gaze is strong, firm, and resolute. This shows assertiveness and leadership (Shadaydeh et al., 2021, p. 73783).

The visual composition on this page also conveys a strong narrative. The placement of Soekarno and Soeharto side by side presents the transitional context in reality. Soekarno's

**Table 1.** Visual Framing of Soekarno vs Soeharto in Kompas Daily (Feb 23, 1967)

Visual Element	Soekarno	Soeharto
Facial Expression	Downcast eyes, tight lips, melancholic, emotional	Confident gaze, slight smile, composed
Body Language	Rigid posture, passive aura	Upright posture, assertive presence
Lighting and Contrast	Dim impression, evokes somber tone	Clear lighting, bright
Costume	Military-civilian hybrid uniform (symbol of fading power)	Full military attire (symbol of command and readiness)
Symbolic Effect	Suggests resignation, loss of authority	Projects leadership, transition to a new era
Editorial Interpretation	Weakening figure, disconnected from people's aspirations	Reliable, stable, and legitimate successor

Source: Author's analysis based on Kompas Daily front page, February 23, 1967

pained facial expression conveys a vulnerability with his fear in his eyes (Kaufman & Feingold, 2022, p. 15). Meanwhile, Soeharto exudes an aura of strength and promises a new era. His gaze symbolizes divinity and leadership. The lighting used in this image choice also plays a subtle yet essential role. Both are brightly lit, and the expressions are visible but have different effects, Soekarno's melancholy and Soeharto's self-confidence. The result is a bold visual narrative reflecting the power transition (Nyman et al., 2023, p. 2).

Facial expressions and body language are crucial in this image. Soekarno's downcast eyes and tightly closed lips communicate his sense of resignation and discomfort (Kaufman & Feingold, 2022, p. 15). His overall demeanor communicates that a leader is beginning to accept the reality of relinquishing power. On the other hand, Soeharto's stern gaze and tightly clenched mouth communicate unwavering resolve. The slight smile on Soeharto's face adds a layer, signaling confidence and readiness for leadership.

This paper concludes that Kompas Daily uses photograph framing by selecting specific images with appropriate lighting, facial expressions, and body language. Kompas Daily uses this approach to align the editorials with a specific narrative during the significant political transition. The photograph, with specific emotions, power dynamics, and historical context, shows a clear and lasting representation of the power transition from Old Order to New Order. Soekarno's image communicates a sense of vulnerability and decline, while Soeharto is associated with strength and promises of a new era. This image visually narrates the reason why the transition must occur by demonstrating that there is a stronger political power than Soekarno. This photo, whether we like it or not, symbolizes the great significance of power transfer. It shows the culmination of the Soekarno era and the start of the new era under Soeharto.

The imagery of Soekarno as a melancholy-stricken figure and Soeharto characterized by self-assurance reinforces the narrative of an outgoing leader relinquishing authority to a new and promising figure. A comprehensive analysis of this photograph, when situated within the broad sociopolitical context of early 1967 marked by mass arrests, the political marginalization of Soekarno, and the ascendancy of military-backed technocrats, reveals that Kompas calculated an editorial shift. At that time, Kompas was navigating a precarious media landscape where press licenses were contingent on perceived political loyalty. The choice of imagery and its careful placement thus reflected not only editorial judgment but also strategic alignment with the emerging New Order power bloc, seeking survival and institutional continuity.

This transition is not merely a matter of visual rhetoric but represents what Stuart Hall in Laghman (2024) conceptualizes as the politics of representation, where meaning is produced and circulated in ways that reflect dominant ideologies. The portrayal of Soekarno as somber and Soeharto as composed shows an ideological signal, constructed through visual framing that reinforces the legitimacy of the new regime while delegitimizing the old. As Mellado and Hermida (2021) noted, newsrooms operate within structured fields of power, and editorial choices become forms of symbolic struggle.

In summary, this photo is a powerful symbol of the profound political transition in Indonesia in 1967. It effectively summarizes Soekarno's declining influence and Soeharto's rise while signaling Kompas' editorial alignment with the New Order regime. The careful composition of this image, the prominent placement on the front page of the newspaper, and the nuanced imagery of the two leaders signaled not only the transition of power but also the role of the media in shaping public perceptions during an important historical moment.

These visual strategies agree with what Grabe and Bucy (2014) described as visual framing, where editorial decisions shape audience perception through non-verbal cues. The emotional contrast between Soekarno and Soeharto in the Kompas layout functions as, besides



documentation, deliberate ideological signaling. Drawing on Busch's concept of representation, the selection and arrangement of these images construct meaning that reinforces New Order legitimacy while discrediting the Old Order (Busch, 2021). The media, therefore, presents reality and shapes political narratives that align with dominant power structures.

Moreover, Blumell and Mulupi (2024) emphasized that newsroom practices are never independent from power. Editorial choices are often strategic, especially in authoritarian contexts. Kompas's framing of the February 1967 transition exemplifies what this study refers to as "swinging journalism," where media institutions adapt visually and ideologically to ensure survival. The synthesis of visual cues, editorial timing, and political agreement shows how press freedom, even in subtle forms, is negotiated within the limits of power.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the intersections between visual communication, photojournalism, and media representation through an analysis of a photograph of Soekarno and Soeharto during a pivotal moment in Indonesian history. Published in Kompas in 1967, the deliberate selection and presentation of this image could shape public perceptions during the political transition from Soekarno's leadership to the New Order regime under Soeharto. The photograph's composition, with certain lighting, facial expressions, and body language, crafted a compelling narrative symbolizing the stark contrast between the two leaders: Soekarno's vulnerability and decline juxtaposed against Soeharto's strength and promise of a new era. This analysis shows the powerful role of visual media in influencing public opinion during periods of political upheaval, with Kompas' editorial decision to feature the photograph prominently reflecting the newspaper's alignment with the New Order regime and its role in legitimizing political power shifts. This analysis centers on a single photograph, so future studies may broaden the scope by examining other editions or comparing visual framing across different publications. Such research could yield fresh perspectives on the changing relationship between media and power in Indonesian history.

This study also contributes theoretically by refining the concept of "swinging journalism" as a strategy of ideological adaptation through visual means. It demonstrates how media institutions in transitional regimes negotiate editorial positioning not only through textual framing but also through non-verbal editorial devices such as photo composition and page layout. In the Indonesian context, where the media often operate under constraints, this research illustrates that editorial subtlety can function as a political act, blurring the boundary between survival and complicity. Moving forward, journalism education in Indonesia should place great emphasis on the ethical dimensions of visual representation, particularly in politically sensitive contexts. Media practitioners must be aware that framing choices, especially visual ones, carry long-term implications on public perception, even the way history is visually constructed and remembered.

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