

The Dynamics of Contentious Politics in The Indies: Inlandsche Journalisten Bond and Persatoean Djoernalis Indonesia¹

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In the last three decades of Dutch colonialism, the vernacular press in the Netherlands Indies flourished. Journalists played a significant role in mounting various nationalistic and social movements by circulating and articulating both news and political messages. Such a honeymoon relationship between the press and mobilizational politics saw the high days of political radicalism in the 1910s and 1920s Java. Not a small number of the vernacular press functioned as organs of political parties and associations, and being conduits of their propagandas. After the crash of the so-called communist uprisings in 1926 and 1927, however, the colonial authorities suppressed mobilizational politics.² Despite of the fact that newspapers now recoiled from doing propaganda works or politics altogether, they were actually able to attract more readerships than ever before throughout the 1930s.

Dutch colonial authorities did not allow freedom of the press in the Indies and exercised censorship against the emergent periodical markets. *Persdelict* (press offense) as penal code was introduced in 1914, while *persbreidel* (press curbing) as an administrative measure was introduced in 1931 and became the dominant tool to curtail press freedom in the 1930s. The former targeted individual journalists including editors and associates, whereas the latter had power to shut down the publisher and the printer of a particular newspaper for a certain period of time. Under these two censorship regimes, journalists were always put under pressure of severe legal punishments and sometimes even being expelled from the Indies. Due to these censorships, some newspapers ceased publications.³

The early twentieth century Indies saw the popular tendency among elites and intellectuals to form associations. The so-called first “native” intellectual association, Boedi Oetomo (Beautiful Endeavor), was formed in Jogjakarta in 1908, while earlier Chinese merchants and intellectuals established the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan (THHK, Chinese Association) in Batavia in 1901. The mass-based religious organization, Sarekat Islam (Association of Islam), began its movement in Soerakarta in 1912.

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Journalists were not exceptional. In 1915 the Inlandsche Journalisten Bond (IJB, League of Native Journalists) was formed in Soerakarta. It is considered as the first union of indigenous journalists in the Indies. But it became inactive in 1916 when its chairperson, Marco Kartodikromo, was imprisoned. No similarly radical journalist association was found after the IJB.⁴ When the age of mobilizational politics petered out at the end of the 1920s, Indonesian journalists became increasingly professionalized and began to organize professional associations. In December 1933, they formed a new journalist association called Persatoean Djoernalis Indonesia (Perdi, Association of Indonesian Journalists) in Soerakarta. With a nationalistic outlook, the Perdi continued to exist until the end of Dutch colonialism, and was even allowed to remain active during the Japanese occupation; and when Indonesia gained its independence, in 1946 the association assumed a new name, Persatoean Wartawan Indonesia (PWI, Association of Indonesian Journalists). As indicated on its official website and in other sources, the PWI traces its genealogy back to the Perdi.

So far, however, little attention has been paid to the study of both the IJB and the Perdi in the history of Indonesian newspapers and journalism, let alone in the history of Indonesian nationalism. This wanting stands out if one looks at the mainstream studies of Indonesian nationalist movements and social activism in the colonial period; they have mainly, and sometimes exclusively, examined the rise, development and failure of many nationalistic political associations. More than two decades ago, this fact led Shiraishi (1990) to criticize the historiographical nature of the studies of Indonesian nationalism, and to argue the importance of deeds and words of individual nationalists. The historical inquiries of Indonesian press focus on individual newspapers, both Indonesian and Chinese and others, and overlook the existence of journalists associations during the colonial era (cf. *Proyek Penelitian Pengembangan Penerangan* 2002). Soebagijo's 1981 book, *Jagat Wartawan Indonesia* (Universe of Indonesian Journalists) may be the only study that covers the Perdi well by giving accounts of prominent individual journalists,⁵ whereas Parada Harahap as a contemporary journalist wrote his view on the Perdi (Harahap 1941). Such lack of knowledge about journalists associations can be understood from the point of view of the nature of academics that confers more significance on radical activism to moderate one. This also reflects the availability of colonial documents. The IJB lived only for one year and it is hard to trace any significant political outcome from its activity, while the Perdi was not politically active at all in the 1930s. Most studies on the Indonesian nationalist movement in the 1910s more or less refer to the IJB, but only in connection with its founder and leader, the radical activist Marco (Shiraishi 1990; Adam 1995). Similarly, almost no study exists on the Perdi, except for a few descriptive works with no analysis (Gani 1978; Soebagijo 1981). Despite these similarities, the colonial authorities treated the IJB differently, that is as a political threat because of the connection with Marco, while they took the

Perdi as politically safe.

But regardless of the way the authorities perceived the IJB and the Perdi, both journalists associations in fact had political aspirations. The question is not how politically dangerous their voices and activities were to the colonial authorities, but how they expressed and exercised their politics. This paper argues that the kinds of politics that were available to the IJB and the Perdi influenced the dynamics of “contention” if any. Charles Tilly has defined contention as essentially “making claims that bear on someone else’s interests” (Tilly 2008: 5). I would argue that the IJB and the Perdi represent the dynamics of contentious politics which will explain the dissimilar ways the colonial government responded to them. This paper thus tries to explore the characteristics of loosely structured networks of journalists in a changing societal context, and to understand how journalists engaged in politics in the 1910s and in the 1930s. It also attempts to identify the organizational identity and political nature of the Perdi that survived three different political regimes.

Inlandsche Journalisten Bond

The IJB was conceived in 1914 after Mas Marco Kartodikromo moved from Bandoeng to Soerakarta. Born around 1887 in Tjepoe (Tichelman 1985: 237), Marco was the son of a lower *prijaji* (aristocrat) family. He graduated from the second-class native school at Bodjonegoro and the private Dutch native school at Purworejo. In 1911 Marco went to Bandoeng, joined *Medan Prijaji* as an apprentice, and started his career as a journalist. Under the editorship and ownership of Tirtoadhisoeerjo, *Medan Prijaji*, an organ of Sarekat Prijaji (Association of Nobles) founded in 1906, appeared as a weekly (1907-09) and then as a daily (1909-12). Tirtoadhisoeerjo was Marco’s mentor in Bandoeng, while Soewardi Soerjaningrat who was the leader of Bandoeng Sarekat Islam got him acquainted with various methods of mobilizational politics. After *Medan Prijaji*, in late 1912 Marco moved to Soerakarta and worked briefly as an editor and administrator for *Sarotomo*, which was an organ for the Soerakarta Sarekat Islam.

Unlike previous associations such as Boedi Oetomo and Sarekat Islam, the IJB did not have any organizational base. In the middle of 1914 when Marco established the IJB, it was his close friends, activists, journalists, and a few nobles in Soerakarta who helped run the IJB, in particular its organ *Doenia Bergerak* (The World is in Motion). Marco became chairperson and Sosrokoernio served as secretary, both had worked for the local daily, *Sarotomo*. A local business person, M. Hadji Bakrie, was appointed as treasurer, while commissioners included M. Tondokoesoemo from Sarekat Islam, R. Ng. Wirodarmodjo who was a local traditional administrator (*mantri kepatihan*), Ng. B. Roeswidjo Darmobroto who was a school head, and Poespo Hadikoesoemo from a local newspaper, *Sinar Djawa* (Gani 1978: 41). Two other prominent intellectuals in Soerakarta joined the IJB: one was Tjipto

Mangoenkoesoemo, who was a former Indische Partij (Indies Party) leader and who just returned to Soerakarta in July 1914, while the other was M. Darnakoesoema who was a member of the Insulinde central committee (Shiraishi 1990: 82). The Indische Partij, established in 1912, was the first political party in the Indies that promoted the political attitude “the Indies for the Indiers” and the independence of the Indies from the Netherlands; Tjipto was a vice chairperson of the party. The Indische Partij was considered a radical party with socialist ideology because its chairperson E. F. E. Douwes Dekker, a former journalist, became more radicalized over the years. In his articles published in the newspaper, Douwes Dekker “freely used words such as demonstration, agitation, revolution, passive resistance, strike (singling out such important sectors as the postal, telegraph and railway services), boycott, and rebellion” (Van Dijk 2007: 49). Founded in 1907, on the other hand, the Insulinde was an arguably “nonpolitical organization” (Shiraishi 1990: 59) whose members were dominated by Indos (Eurasians). Looking at those names, it appeared as if the IJB had an organizational structure, and yet the reality was that it was Marco’s personal enterprise. Nevertheless, he received substantial supports from Soerakarta’s local associates as well as the Indische Partij and the Insulinde.

The weapon of the IJB was its Malay organ, *Doenia Bergerak*. Marco worked as the chief editor with his close friends along with his colleagues from Bekasi, Semarang and Madioen. Printed by the printing firm Insulinde in Bandoeng, it continued publication from the middle of 1914 to the middle of 1915. Throughout the period Marco carried out what Takashi Shiraishi calls “a war of voice” against the colonial authorities. The main target of Marco’s “a war of voice” was D. A. Rinkes, the adviser for Native Affairs.⁶ Malay was the language he chose for *Doenia Bergerak* to reach out to the public. He was aware that there was a “community of individuals who made each other aware of evils and abuses in Hindia through print and discussions” (Maier 1996: 186).

Rinkes closely followed and watched Marco’s words and deeds. It was a part of his mission at that time to monitor indigenous and Chinese newspapers all over the Indies, to catalog them, and to append his analysis on them. That was a part of his preparation for the comprehensive press monitoring system that in 1917 was realized in the form of *Inlandsche Persoverzicht* (Native Press Summary) (Yamamoto 2011: Chapter 3). In fact, this press monitoring was to provide information on who might pose political threats, where such persons resided, and how they could potentially harm the Netherlands government and the Indies government as well as colonial bureaucrats. In his letter to Governor General Idenburg dated on 7 June 1915, Rinkes wrote about Marco, *Doenia Bergerak*, and the IJB. He even pointed out that Soewardi, one of Marco’s early mentors back in Bandoeng, who was then exiled to the Netherlands, occasionally contributed articles to the newspaper. Rinkes recognized that Marco inherited the spirit of *Medan Prijaji*, the newspaper organ of Sarikat Prijaji edited by his Bandoeng mentor Tirtoadhisoeerjo, but described that

Marco was less talented than Tirtoadhisoejo. Therefore, Rinkes concluded that Marco was not a significant political threat,⁷ but only as a stand-in for Tirto and Soewardi whom he considered a bigger threat.

However, Rinkes' assessment of Marco was about to change in the latter half of 1915. Marco was slapped with *persdelict* in July 1915, because as chief editor of *Doenia Bergerak*, he had refused to disclose the authors of "offensive" articles. For this refusal, Marco was sentenced to jail. Due to these repressive actions against Marco, he was able to expand his personal connections when the radical Dutch Social Democrat, Henk J. F. M. Sneevliet sought him out. Before coming to the Indies, Sneevliet had been active as a left-wing Social Democrat in the Netherlands who started working for the Dutch railways in 1900 and became a member of the Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij (SDAP, Social Democratic Workers' Party). In 1911 he became the chairperson of the Dutch railway union and became known for his radical voice. In 1913 he moved to Soerabaja and on 9 May 1914 established the Indische Sociaal-Democratische Vereeniging (ISDV, Indies Social Democratic Association). Soon the ISDV sought the cooperation with the Insulinde, so that the latter would get involved in political activism. The two organizations worked closely and Sneevliet once called such partnership "De Kombinatie" (The Combination). Sneevliet's first major political action in public was to attend the public meeting that the Insulinde held in Semarang on 7 July 1915 (Tichelman 1985: 19; 21).

When Sneevliet and the ISDV were establishing his political connections with the Insulinde, another development was taking place in 1915. That is, Marco was prosecuted for violating articles of 63 and 66 in the penal code of *persdelict* with his articles in *Doenia Bergerak*. On 1 July the Judicial Council of Semarang sentenced Marco to 9 months in prison, and which on 27 October was reduced to 7 months by the higher court. These verdicts stirred political reaction in the Indies. Nearly two months after the first verdict was made against Marco, on 29 August 1915, Sneevliet organized the "Comite van Actie tegen de artikelen 63 en 66 Indisch Wetboek van Strafrecht" or Action Committee against Articles 63 and 66 of the Indies Penal Code. These two articles were added to the Penal Code in 1914, and later became known as the press code or haatzaai-artikelen (hate-sowing articles). The essence of the article reads, "He who by way of words, or by signs or performances or in any other way raises or increases the feelings of hostility, hate or contempt among the various groups of Dutch subjects or inhabitants of the Dutch Indies, will be punished, from an imprisonment of six days to five years/forced labor without chains of at most five years" (Maier 1996: 192). It was to colonial authorities to decide when to apply it to journalists. It clearly violated the liberal principles of the freedom of press and freedom of speech that, as Sneevliet knew, were secured in the Netherlands. The Action Committee members were consisted of Sneevliet from the ISDV, G. Topee and Van der Kastele from the Insulinde, Darnakoesoema from the IJB and other associations, as well as Baars, Dekker, Weydemuller, R. Pramoe, R. Soemarmo,

Waworoentoe and Brunsveld van Hulten as provisional members.⁸ The Action Committee tried to amend and if possible abolish the articles by organizing meetings and contributing articles in the newspapers, and even putting pressures on Dutch politicians from the SDAP in the Netherlands. And all these efforts paid off. On 24 February 1916, the Governor General gave his pardon to Marco (Tichelman 1985: 238). This incident became a foundation of a strong personal connection between Sneevliet and Marco, and it was an unexpected and undesirable development concerning Marco from Rinkes' perspective. But unfortunately, while Marco was imprisoned, the IJB and its organ *Doenia Bergerak* ceased their operations, and never resumed even after Marco was released. Rinkes won the battle over Marco in this regard, and yet Marco emerged as a hardy socialist, armed with political ideology learned from Sneevliet and other socialists.

Year by year Marco's political orientation became increasingly leaning to the left. All necessary political ideology and political measures were available to Marco when his activism rose and he became a prominent journalist and movement leader. Marco appeared to learn methods of political actions not only from his mentor, Tirto, but also from political realities that had been developing in the Netherlands as well as in the Indies. "A war with voice" that manifested as propaganda on the newspaper was the political means that Marco learned from Tirto's *Medan Prijaji* and the Indische Partij's organs. Such propaganda strategy was dominant among the Dutch Social Democrats since the late nineteenth century. From the 1880s in the Netherlands, it became common practice for the political parties to have their own newspaper organs. In particular, the Social Democrats in Belgium and the Netherlands made use of the newspaper as the main tool for propaganda (cf. De Sutter & Van Ginderachter 2010). Angenot (2000: 295; 296) observes that the Socialist and/or Social Democratic propaganda was "the greatest rhetorical undertaking in modern times," because it successfully integrated "the class struggles and their miseries, frustrations and social rebellions of all types". This was exactly what Marco intended to do with *Doenia Bergerak*. Furthermore, since 1907 a group of Dutch left-wing Social Democrats was associated with its newspaper *De Tribune*.⁹ They were known as the Tribunists for expressing their propagandas in *De Tribune* (Gerber 1990: 48-54). What Marco meant to do by organizing the IJB was to make a similar association as (and platform for) the Tribunists. It was already a common practice and knowledge by the 1910s that journalists were the group of people who fought with their words. And having close interactions with the Indische Partij members such as Soewardi and Tijpto as well as Sneevliet, Marco learned socialist ideology and political styles.¹⁰ According to Angenot (2000: 296), the Socialist propaganda in Europe maintained "the complete emancipation of all human beings without sex, race, or nationality," "the abolition of exploitation" and the "reign of justice". Needless to say, these political messages corresponded with the Indische Partij's slogans. Such messages later led Marco to compose his influential poem

“*Sama Rasa dan Sama Rata* (Solidarity and Equality).”¹¹

When Rinkes began to take Marco into consideration in 1914, Marco was a rising star in the world of journalism and the world of political movement. His style of actions and words were not only familiar with Dutch authorities but also potentially threatening because of the Dutch authorities’ political experiences in the Netherlands. They knew that politically motivated journalists could be dangerous and could cause social instability, as in July 1913 when they expelled Soewardi and Tjipto from the Indies to the Netherlands. Although Rinkes maintained that Marco did not pose a threat to the colonial authorities in his letter dated on 7 June 1915, this gesture of picking out one particular name (Marco) explicitly was itself extraordinary and shows that Rinkes was in fact concerned with Marco’s activities, and could sense the familiar socialist nuances in them. Therefore, based on Rinkes’ summary of *Doenia Bergerak* in the routinely filed colonial mail report, the Indies government decided to penalize Marco with jail-term that consequently terminated the activity of the IJB and *Doenia Bergerak*.

Persatoean Djoernalis Indonesia

One Sunday night on 23 December 1933 in Soerakarta, the Perdi was officially formed. From the journalist point of view, two years had passed since the new administrative measure of censorship regime was installed, that was the *persbreidel ordinantie* (press curbing ordinance). It was also the time when the most radical nationalist leaders – Soekarno, Sjahrir, and Mohammad Hatta – had just been arrested and internally exiled, and radical newspapers were forced to shut down. Facing such challenging (and oppressive) political situations, prominent journalists decided to organize the Perdi at the end of 1933. It was not a conventional organization, like those the Indies had seen from the beginning of the twentieth century, but rather an association that carried out annual congresses. Its basis was a loosely networked journalist community, and it did not have any organ specifically designed to speak to the public. It was essentially an association for leading Indonesian journalists, designed to identify and preserve their own (group) interests so they could function in the colonial society.

The Perdi’s foundational meeting was held on 23 December 1933. The event was originally planned for an umbrella organization of various nationalistic associations, *Pemoefakatan Perhimpoean-perhimpoean Politik Kebangsaan Indonesia* (PPPKI, Association of Political Organizations of the Indonesian People), to organize a congress geared toward the consolidation of its members’ political missions (known as the second Congress of Indonesia Raja). The Perdi appeared to take advantage of the popularity of the PPPKI. One of the leaders who took initiative of establishing the PPPKI was Soekarno who was the then leader of *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian National Party). The PPPKI’s ultimate aim was to gain

Table 1: The Perdi Conferences

	Dates	City
Organizing meeting	23 December 1933	Soerakarta
1st Conference	23-24 December 1934	Soerakarta
2nd Conference	7-11 June 1935	Soerakarta
3rd Conference	17-18 May 1937	Batavia
4th Conference	1938	Bandoeng
5th Conference	1939	Soerakarta
6th Conference	1940	Bandoeng
7th Conference	23 February 1941	Jogjakarta

economic and political independence for the Indonesian archipelago, which more or less corresponded with the Perdi's mission. Ahead of the PPPKI's meeting in December 1933, Soedarjo Tjokrosisworo called for a journalists' meeting in *Darmo Kondo* (13 December 1933) and *Adil* (16 December 1933), and proposed that Indonesian journalists gather at the second Congress of Indonesia Raja (Soebagijo 1981: 612). From the outset, it is clear that the Perdi had nationalistic orientation. Just before the Congress was supposed to take place, however, circumstance intervened and the event was cancelled. It was unexpected for the journalists who had planned to establish the Perdi along side the Congress. But no less than 37 journalists were already present, representing 28 newspapers (Said 1988: 40). There were journalists from *Sipatahoenan*, *Soeara Oemoem*, *Oetoesan Indonesia*, *Darmo Kondo*, *Sikap*, *Sedio Tomo*, *Adil*, *Bahagia*, *Panjebar Semangat*, *Koemandang Rakjat*, *Soeara PBI*, *Panggoegah Rakjat*, *Berdjoang*, *Kromodoeto*, and *Swara Desa* among others. Even prominent nationalistic leaders, such as Thamrin, R. M. H. Woerjaningrat, and Dr. Soetomo, came all the way to Soerakarta (Soebagijo 1981: 613-614). So the journalists decided to proceed with the organizational meeting of the Perdi at the last moment.

However, the meeting did not start as schedule at 20:00. Soetopo Wonobojo who was a key member of the meeting did not show up on time. He was summoned by the local intelligent office, the *Politieke Inlichtingen Dienst* (Political Intelligence Service), to report to the local police station. He was questioned on the nature of the journalists meeting and its connection with the Congress. This was a clear message for the gathering journalists that they were under close surveillance by the police. After a long interrogation, Soetopo was released and he managed to arrive at the meeting place at around 21:30. The meeting continued until 3:00 in the next morning.

Finally the Perdi was formed. It appointed Soetopo as chairperson, Soedarjo

Tjokrosiswono as secretary, Samsoe Hadiwijoto as treasurer, all of them resided in Soerakarta. There were regional representatives from major cities of Java; a representative from West Java was Bakri Soerjaatmadja who stationed in Bandoeng, from Vorstelanden was I. P. Martakoesoema in Djokjakarta, from Central Java was Sjamsoeddin in Semarang, and from East Java was J. D. Syaranamual in Soerabaja (Poeze 1988: 348). Later its branch expanded to outside of Java, that is, Padang. The foundational meeting decided that Perdi's mission was to promote the progress of the Indonesian people using the newspaper as medium, and its membership was exclusively limited to journalists who would annually pay one guilder for the membership fee (Soebagijo 1981: 614).

A year later in December 1934, the Perdi's first congress was held in Soerakarta.¹² Three journalists were elected as the overseers of the congress – Dr. Soetomo from *Soeara Oemoem*, Soerabaja; Saeroen from *Pemandangan*, Batavia; and Parada Harahap of *Bintang Timoer*, Batavia. The chairperson of the Perdi, R. M. Soetopo Wonobojo, opened the congress. There were three keynote speeches. Saroehoem of *Sin Tit Po* represented Saeroen (who did not attend); Mohammad Tabrani gave a speech on the topic of “Djoernalistik dan pergerakan dan kepentingan oemoem” (Journalism and the movement and the public interest); and S. de Heer from *Globe Betawi* representing Adinegoro presented a speech entitled “Krisis doenia sekarang, hoeboengannya antara Timoer dan Barat pada oemoemnya” (The current world crisis, the relations between the East and the West in general).

Such annual conferences were the ordinary operation of the Perdi. There was little radical element of politics at these conferences. The reason was obvious, because the Perdi were required to invite government officials to their conferences. For instance, at the first conference, there were the deputy chief commission Wilbergen, Wedana police R. Ramelan, and a representative member from the Office for Native Affairs Datoek Toemenggoeng, along with some local aristocrats such as Pangeran Koesoemojoedo and R. M. H. Woerjoningrat. There was even a Japanese delegation that sought an opportunity to make connections between Japanese and Indonesian journalists.¹³ The Perdi's conferences were under tight surveillance from the outset. No anti-colonial discourses were allowed, or any mobilizational politics. The conferences were “open” to local journalists “if” they paid membership fee. The number of members was small; up to 33 at the time of its 5th conference in Soerakarta in 1939 (Harahap 1941: 198).¹⁴ In other words, the Perdi was an exclusive club for the editors of major vernacular newspapers.¹⁵

But even under such restricted circumstances, one could argue that some form of politics took place at the Perdi activities. It was not a kind of politics that Marco and the IJB channeled through Doenia Bergerak and at public meetings. It was the politics among “professional” journalists and the politics of economy concerning the newspapers. Since the middle of the 1920s a new trend of newspapers emerged – that is, newspapers that were not party's organs. Contrary to the latter, the Perdi

journalists referred to themselves as an association of the “neutral” newspapers. This idea of the “neutral” press was not new to Indonesian journalists. In 1924 the first Malay textbook on journalism was published, in which Harahap (1924) used the term “neutral” press, which essentially meant apolitical newspapers. Such apolitical attitude among journalists appeared to be a new trend. One year after Harahap’s book was published, a manual book for journalists and printing business became available (Gebr. “LIE” Semarang 1925). By declaring themselves “neutral” from the various political streams in the Indies, apolitical newspapers could flourish and survive even after the communist uprisings and subsequent took place. At around 1930 those who led such “neutral” newspapers turned “nationalistic” in character. “Neutral” for them was to build financially solid bases for the newspaper business. Harahap (1924) criticized party organs because they relied on subscriptions and lived short due to the financial tightening, and instead praised Chinese-Malay newspapers that succeeded in cultivating advertisements and did not have to rely on subscriptions. This understanding of financial neutrality also reflected the fact that major newspapers more or less received financial supports from the Indies government even in the 1920s. With this understanding that neutrality in finance and politics were tightly connected, journalists and managers of newspapers tried to build a community of economically independent newspapers. For instance, at the *Congres Journalisten Indonesia* (CJI, Congress of Indonesian Journalists) held on 8 and 9 August 1931 in Semarang,¹⁶ its chairperson, Saeroen, maintained the importance of advertisement for the newspaper business. For Harahap and Saeroen, it was clear that having a solid financial basis was the way to economic autonomy from the colonial government, an autonomy that could be advantageous politically. It is clear that the road that the Perdi took was a non-confrontational one against the colonial authorities.

This non-confrontational stance however could result in confrontations among Perdi’s members’ companies and newspapers. The fourth conference in Soerakarta in 1938 deserves attention because it “passed an important resolution” (*diambil poetosan jang penting*) (Harahap 1941: 198). It was the conference where Mohammad Tabrani was elected as Perdi’s chairperson. Tabrani was a prominent Indonesian journalist, who in 1929 published a book entitled *Ons Wapen: den national Indonesische pers and hare organisatie* (Our Weapon: the national Indonesian press and its organization) in Den Haag. In the book Tabrani lays out how he plans to develop Indonesian national newspapers and how to run a newspaper company. In this sense Tabrani shared similar ideas with Parada Harahap (1924) and Saeroen (1936). The most important resolution for the Perdi at the conference was to suspend its ties with the Antara (Algemeen Nieuws-en Telegraaf-Agentschap), an associated news agency. Established by Dominique Willem Berretty in 1917, the Antara was the first news agency in the Indies with mainly distributed international news. It started receiving financial support from the Indies government

in 1938. This issue stirred a controversy at the Perdi's conference. At the end of the conference, the Perdi decided to expel the Antara and declared that the Perdi was an independent institution (een zelfstandige instelling) (Kwantes 1982: 633).¹⁷

Declaring an independent institution sounded brave, but the Perdi appeared to have a series of internal conflicts, as the Antara case illustrates. For instance, during his term as chairperson between 1939 and 1940, Tabrani had to deal with problems that the Perdi faced, which were unpleasant experiences for him. First, the Perdi for a period of some time boycotted *Sin Po*, a daily that catered to the Chinese population in the Indies, even though *Sin Po* was a member company of the Perdi. *Sin Po* was one of the most circulated newspapers in the colonial period. It was a Chinese-Malay newspaper that as its political orientation supported Chinese nationalism in the Indies as well as in China. But at one point *Sin Po* carried an article that was deemed offensive to Indonesian women. All national newspapers stopped exchanging their copies with *Sin Po*, except the daily *Pemandangan*. Second, M. H. Thamrin, a prominent Indonesian politician who was a member of the Volksraad (People's Council), wrote an accusatory letter to Tabrani regarding the war in Europe started in 1939. The Perdi members demanded Tabrani to reply it, but Tabrani kept his silence did not give any response to Thamrin. This decision by Tabrani prompted an internal discussion at the Perdi (Soebagijo 1981: 87). It appears that Tabrani grew tired of these problems and decided to resign from Perdi's chairperson position in 1940.

From the beginning the Perdi did not have any clear mission to achieve, except to contribute to the development of the Indonesian people and society through newspapers. It also did not have a solid organization, but was an institution that coordinated annual conferences (for journalists) in Java. It was an exclusive club for elite Indonesian journalists. Each conference did not have any clear resolution, except for the 1938 conference in Bandoeng. Thinking of the nature of the Perdi as a body holding annual conferences for Indies journalists, it is not surprising if members quarreled among themselves. It was not immune from the habitual quarrels that journalists were known for,¹⁸ especially among those with big egos. One is left to wonder how they managed to proceed with the annual conferences. With Tabrani's resignation at the 1941 conference in Jogjakarta, the Perdi decided to reorganize its structure. Sjamsoeddin St. Ma'moer took the chairpersonship, while Parada Harahap served as vice chairperson. Regional branches of the Perdi were strengthened – Djakarta, Bandoeng, Solo, Soerabaja. The Perdi set their eyes on how to survive as an organization in the period of oncoming war.

Conclusion

As I have described in the paper, there were two distinct journalist associations in the twentieth century Indies. Both associations did not have solid organizational

structures and bases, but were loosely networked associations of activist and professional journalists. Social and political positions of journalists were different in the 1910s and the 1930s. In the 1910s the mobilizational politics was the trend and the newspaper functioned as a political weapon, whereas in the 1930s journalists became less politically active, became more concerned with the survival of newspaper business in general, and published “neutral” papers for their audiences. In both periods, journalists were sensitive to political issues and understood what to say and how to write. One can argue that the discourses, symbols and styles available to journalists of each period shaped their political behavior as associational forms. It appears that the politics of the time shaped the journalists as much as, if not more than, they shaped politics.

The IJB was Marco’s personal enterprise and exercised the politics of confrontation against the colonial authorities. Its organ, *Doenia Bergerak*, was their weapon, which recalled for the authorities the socialist propaganda in the Netherlands, as well as the radicalism that appeared in the Indische Partij’s organs and Tirta’s *Medan Prijaji*. Marco attempted to engage with mobilizational politics by making use of available political tools known to him. By so doing, he expanded his network to the radical Dutch socialist Sneevliet, whose influence made Marco more radical and more leftist. The core motivation for Marco was his anger towards Dutch colonialism. He exemplified the politics of contention. But when he was imprisoned in 1915, the IJB and *Doenia Bergerak* ceased to exist.

On the other hand, the Perdi in the 1930s was an association of political opportunists. Their intention was to organize and maintain their version of journalists association. While the IJB partook in real contentious politics, the Perdi only had the appearance of contention, in that the claims they made economic sovereignty did not bear on the interest of the colonial state. The Perdi did not have a solid organization, but managed to organize annual conference for journalists. Colonial authorities were present at every single conference and watched every move that the association took. Journalists who attended the conferences were well aware of these surveillance and pressures from the authorities, which might have curtailed their political aspirations. So their political opportunities were also limited. It was understandable in the context of political circumstances in the 1930s Indies. Radical political parties and organizations were banned, newspapers were closely monitored, and not only journalists were penalized with *persdelict* but publishers and printers also got shut down by *persbreidel*. The age of mobilizational politics had gone. And Indonesian journalists took a different turn. As the Perdi exemplified, as far as the journalists only discussed Indonesian economic and financial independence (as opposed to political independence), they were safe. Making points of the economic backwardness of the people was safe, as was discussing how to develop the people and make them support the newspapers. Management, modernization, and self-support appeared to dominate the Perdi as well as most

journalistic discourses in the 1930s – and they were meant to be nationalistic.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this manuscript was presented at the Kyoto-Berkeley Seminar on Indonesia, Kyoto University, 10 January 2014. My gratitude goes to the participants at the seminar as well as Elizabeth Chandra for her comments. This is a partial result of two research projects funded by Keio University: “Revisiting Journalism and Media: Philosophy, Market, and Regulations,” and “The Politics of Detective Story.”
2. The Indies was the first colony in Southeast Asia that experienced the mobilizational politics in the region. In the early 1920s the Dutch as well as the Indies governments called for exchange intelligence information to the British. But the British declined the request. Since 1925, however, due to the political development in China, the colonial cooperation began to take shape informally among the British, the Dutch and the French (Yamamoto 2014).
3. Historical developments of the vernacular press and censorship regimes in the Indies are drawn from Yamamoto (2011).
4. Tribuana Said (1988) claims that the IJB had its branch that opened in Medan, North Sumatra, in 1918 under the initiatives of R. K. Mangoenatmodjo and Mohammad Joenoes. According to Said, it changed the name to the *Inlandsche & Chineesche Journalisten Bond* with Mohammad Joenoes as the chairperson and Parada Harahap as its secretary (Said 1988: 44). But I do not have obtained any supporting evidence of this claim, nor do I find any personal connections between Marco who focused his activities in Java around the middle of the 1910s, and Mangoenatmodjo and Joenoes whose active base was Medan.
5. Soebagijo (1981) is the well-written biography of 111 journalists in Indonesia. He investigated many materials and sources when he wrote the book. The only problem is that he did not disclose his sources in the book, although he consulted many colonial documents and conducted interviews as a member of national project for the history of Indonesian newspapers from 1976-1978 (*Proyek Penelitian Pengembangan Penerangan* 2002).
6. Shiraishi (1990: 82-85) analyzed Marco’s attack against Rinkes appeared in the first issue of *Doenia Bergerak* in 1914.
7. Adviseur voor inlandse zaken (D. A. Rinkes) aan gouverneur generaal (Idenburg), 7 juni 1915 in no. 119, *Geheim, Afschrift*, Vb. 17 sept 1915 no. 46 (Van Der Wal 1967: 380).
8. Notulen van de vergadering van vertegenwoordigers van organisaties, welke zich bereid verklaard hebben tot deelname aan de actie tegen de artikelen 63 en 66 Indisch Wetboek van Strafrecht, gehouden op Zondag, 29 Augustus 1915 ten huize van den heer Sneevliet te Semarang, opgestuurd door G. Topee,

secretaries-penning-meester van het Comité van Actie tegen de artikelen 63 en 66 Indisch Wetboek van Strafrecht, Semarang, aan het bestuur van de SDAP, Amsterdam, zonder datum. Kopie, SDAP-archief, ingekomen 26-11-1915, no. 9715; gepubliceerd in: Bijvoegsel van het weekblad Modjopait, 9-10-1915, Sneevliet-archief, 1664/1 (Tichelman 1985: 263-271).

9. Some Tribunist had anarchical orientation, which threatened the Dutch government. Anderson (2005) describes how at the end of the nineteenth century Europe anarchical activities and network expanded.
10. Roughly speaking, before the Russian Revolution of October 1917, the terms of Social Democrat, Socialist, and Communist were used interchangeably to denote a Marxist ideology.
11. Marco composed this poem while he was in jail in Weltevreden in 1917, and published in *Sair Rempah-rempah* (Semarang: Druk. N. V. Sinar Djawa, 1918) (Shiraishi 1990: 88-90).
12. The congress was organized at the same time with the congress of Persatoean Sepakbola Seloeroeh Indonesia (Association of All Indonesian Footballs).
13. Finding and making connections with pro-Japan local journalists and inviting them to Japan were parts of Japan's cultural policies in the 1930s. In November 1933, for instance, Parada Harahap undertook a study and sightseeing tour of Japan. The Japanese consulate-general praised Harahap's essays in his newspaper, *Bintang Timoer*, by saying "his essays promoting study in Japan of Japanese culture receive considerable attention, and his recommendation that natives go and study in Japan seems to causing some anxiety among the Netherlands East Indies authorities" (Goto 2003: 112).
14. According to Harahap (1941: 138-145), there were 42 vernacular newspapers in the Indies. Java had 24 newspapers including 7 in Batavia, 5 in Bandoeng and Soerabaja, and 4 in Semarang. If one newspaper sent one delegation to the Perdi conference, nearly 80 percent of the vernacular press was present at the conference.
15. There used be another conference designed to the newspaper directors. It was called Persatoean Harian Indonesia (Association for Indonesian Dailies), and the conference was held in 1932 in Soerakarta. It was headed by Dr. Soetomo from Soeara Oemoem, and Parada Harahap from *Bintang Timoer* served as a secretary and Saeroen as a commissioner (Harahap 1941: 205-206).
16. The CJI also were required to invite colonial officials at the conference and even received the congratulatory telegram from the governor general (Lauw 1931).
17. Adviseur voor inlandse zaken (G. F. Pijper) aan gouverneur-generaal (Tjarda van Starckenborgh Stachouwer), 4 mei 1939 in no. 585/K-I geh. Afschrift. Vb. 30 dec. 1940 Ir. Y 31 (Kwantes 1982: 632-633).

18. In particular Chinese journalists appeared to have quarrels among themselves all the time (Djati dan Anderson 2010).

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