

*Contemporary Issues in*

# ISLAMIC COMMUNICATION

Editor

**Mohd Yusof Hussain**



**IIUM Press**

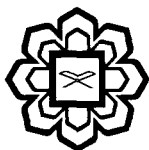
**International Islamic University Malaysia**

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# Towards a Press Theory of Accountability to Allah

MOHD YUSOF HUSSAIN

The four theories of the press described by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in 1956 are well-known to Muslim communication scholars and media practitioners. Two of the theories in particular, the Libertarian (free press) and Social Responsibility theories, have been studied carefully and diligently because of their assumed relevance to Islam and could be readily adopted by Muslim countries.

This chapter examines the four theories and argues that all the four theories fall short of the criteria of an acceptable Islamic theory or philosophy of the press. An alternative press theory that meets the Islamic criteria of an acceptable theory will thus be presented.

## The Four Theories of the Press

### Authoritarian Theory

The authoritarian theory is the oldest theory of the press. It was developed in sixteenth and seventeenth century England and was the product of the invention of the moveable type printing press by Guternberg that could quickly produce large quantities of pamphlets, book and newspapers thus ending the monopoly of knowledge by the church and the state.

Realising the potential power of the new technology, King Henry VII who held absolute power in sixteenth century England made a proclamation that all printing press and publications would be under crown control and must be used to support, strengthen and advance the interest and policies of the crown.

Under this policy owners of printing press and publication were required to apply for a license or a patent from the crown. Publications also