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SNAP TO READ

## IN THE REGION OF 2014: THE DEPICTION OF THE INDONESIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN THE POLITICAL CARTOONS

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### **Abstract:**

*This study presents a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the intricate portrayal of the 2014 Indonesian presidential election in cartoons, using qualitative methods to unravel the underlying themes and narratives. A qualitative approach analysed a collection of 88 political cartoons from reputable Indonesian newspaper and online media outlet, i.e., Kontan.id and eminent cartoonists' portfolios, during the electoral period from January 2013 until December 2014. The CDA framework employed in this research allows for an in-depth examination of the visual and textual elements. The findings revealed how these political cartoons function as a complex form of visual rhetoric, reflecting the cartoonists' perspectives and the broader social and political climate surrounding the electoral process. In addition, the findings exposed the dominant themes and recurring symbols used in the cartoons to portray the candidates, their policies, and the broader political landscape. The findings also examined the potential influence of these cartoons in shaping public opinion and political discourse during this crucial election period. By illuminating the portrayal of the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election through the lens of political cartoons, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of visual media in shaping political discourse during electoral campaigns.*

**Keywords:** *Discourse, Indonesian, political cartoons, presidential election, visual rhetoric.*

## INTRODUCTION

Political cartoons have been a potent and captivating tool for conveying intricate social and political issues throughout history. In democratic societies, these artistic and satirical representations are distinctive in shaping public opinion, influencing political dialogue, and reflecting the broader social and political atmosphere (cf. Attardo, 1994; Feldman, 1995). In particular, the 2014 Indonesian presidential election marked a critical moment in the nation's democratic history, witnessing a passionate competition between two prominent candidates vying for the highest office in the land. This study paper delves into the portrayal of the 2014 Indonesian presidential election in political cartoons, utilizing critical discourse analysis and qualitative methods to unravel the narratives, symbols, and ideologies presented in this dynamic visual medium.

In today's digital age, political cartoons have found a new and expanded platform in online media outlets, enabling them to reach a broader and more diverse audience than ever before (cf. Feldman, 2000; Attardo, 2001; Nugraha, 2022). Their significance cannot be overstated as they play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions, influencing debates, and highlighting the social issues that matter most to the electorate. As such, it is imperative to comprehend the intricate and often subtle messages conveyed through these cartoons to understand their broader implications for the electoral process and democratic engagement in Indonesia.

The 2014 Indonesian presidential election was a unique moment in the country's history, with significant social, political, and economic implications. By examining political cartoons' portrayal of this electoral event, this present study seeks to shed light on artists' nuanced perspectives and the broader socio-political climate at that time. Furthermore, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of visual media in political communication and its potential influence on public opinion. It will also provide valuable insights into the democratic processes in Indonesia. Beyond Indonesia's borders, this study's findings hold relevance for other

democratic societies grappling with their own electoral processes and media dynamics. Geographical boundaries do not confine political cartoons and have the potential to transcend cultural barriers, making this study a valuable resource for exploring the broader impact of visual media on democratic engagement worldwide.

For decades, scholars have expressed a keen interest in how political events are depicted through visual media, particularly political cartoons. Recognizing the unique and impactful nature of political cartoons to communicate social and political messages, they have emerged as a valuable lens through which to understand the representation of significant events such as the Indonesian Presidential Election of 2014. This literature review provides an overview of existing research on political cartoons, critical discourse analysis (hereafter: CDA), and qualitative methods in political communication, aiding in our understanding of the current study. First, political cartoons have a rich and fascinating history as a form of visual satire, tracing their roots back to the early 18th century. These editorial cartoons rely on the powerful tools of humour, irony, and symbolism to make incisive comments on political figures, events, and societal issues. Over time, they have become an essential component of political communication, succeeding in engaging readers and stimulating lively discussions on a wide range of topics, including elections and governance. Esteemed scholars such as Lent's (2014), Ostrom (2007), Speilmann (2017), Susanto (2018), and Susanto et al. (2018) have thoroughly examined political cartoons' historical evolution and remarkable impact, highlighting their crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing political debates.

Second, CDA and Political Cartoons. Scholars often turn to CDA as a theoretical framework when examining media representations (Blommaert, 2000), such as political cartoons. Developed by linguists and discourse analysts, CDA aims to uncover hidden ideologies, power structures, and social relations within texts. This approach allows researchers to move beyond surface humour and delve into the underlying messages, metaphors,



and symbols that may convey specific political stances or biases. In political cartoon analysis, scholars like Vickers (2020) and Weydmann & Großmann's (2020) have employed CDA to explore the ideological aspects of cartoons and their role in reinforcing or challenging dominant narratives. Their works emphasize the importance of examining the visual elements and linguistic cues to reveal the deeper meanings encoded within political cartoons.

Third, Qualitative Research in Political Communication. Using qualitative research methods in political communication studies has become increasingly popular. This approach has enabled researchers to delve deeper into complex phenomena and better understand social contexts. Analysing textual and visual data in great detail allows for a comprehensive exploration of subjective interpretations and perspectives of both cartoonists and audiences. Notable studies by Asidiky et al. (2022), Harun et al. (2015), Hasanah & Hidayat (2020), Faliha & Putri (2022), Nugraha (2020), and Triputra & Sugita (2016) exemplify qualitative methods in media analysis. Similarly, qualitative research can be applied to political cartoons to uncover how these visual representations resonate with varied segments of the populace and how they influence public opinion during electoral periods.

Fourth, The Indonesian Presidential Election of 2014. The 2014 Indonesian presidential election was a momentous occasion that significantly shaped the nation's democratic journey. It was a crucial turning point that garnered widespread media attention, with political cartoons emerging as a key means of engaging citizens and expressing diverse viewpoints on the candidates and electoral process. Despite its historical importance, there needs to be a more academic exploration of the portrayal of this election in political cartoons. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by utilizing a CDA within a qualitative framework to delve into the representation of this pivotal electoral event in visual media.

The literature on political cartoons, CDA, and qualitative method provides a solid foundation for examining the depiction of the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election in political cartoons. By adopting a qualitative approach



guided by CDA, this study aims to uncover the nuanced messages and symbolic representations embedded in these cartoons, shedding light on the broader socio-political climate and the potential impact of visual media on political communication and democratic processes. Through an examination of these visual narratives, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of political cartoons in shaping public opinion and political discourse during electoral campaigns, both in the context of Indonesia and beyond its borders. Admittedly, the research questions are as follow: (a) how did political cartoons during the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election depict the two prominent candidates; (b) what dominant themes, metaphors, and symbols emerged in the selected political cartoons; and (c) how did the depiction of the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election in political cartoons reflect the broader socio-political climate of the nation during that period?

## **METHOD**

The methodology employed in this study entails an exhaustive data collection process to procure an assorted range of political cartoons about the 2014 Indonesian presidential election, with a total number of selected cartoons totalling 88 types. In the process of selecting cartoons, three specific criteria are utilized: (a) inclusion of linguistic elements, (b) absence of visual elements containing pornographic content, harassment related to ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations, and (c) incorporation of political themes. The cartoon's source was from a reputable Indonesian newspaper, i.e. Kontan.id as an online media outlet (website: [https://images.kontan.co.id/kartun\\_benny/](https://images.kontan.co.id/kartun_benny/)), and eminent cartoonists' portfolios (websites: (a) <http://tamtomo.blogspot.com/search/label/Kartun%20Benny%20And%20Mice>, (b) <https://www.instagram.com/bennymice.fc/>, and (c) <https://id.pinterest.com/tamtomo/benny-mice/>) to ensure an all-encompassing representation of perspectives. A specific time frame, from January 2013 until December 2014, comprising the months before the election and the immediate aftermath, was established to capture the period of heightened political discourse and

cartoon production.

Second, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Framework. The selected political cartoons were analysed through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework (Fairclough, 2013; Weiss & Wodak, 2007). CDA was the appropriate approach for examining the underlying ideologies, power relations, and social representations embedded in textual and visual data. By applying CDA, one delved beyond the surface-level humour of the cartoons and uncovered the deeper meanings, metaphors, and symbols utilized by the cartoonists to convey specific political stances.

Third, Qualitative Data Analysis. In order to effectively address the three research questions, the qualitative data analysis process involved several interconnected steps. These steps included (a) Visual Analysis: The selected political cartoons were subjected to visual analysis to identify dominant themes, symbols, and metaphors used by the cartoonists. Scrutiny of the cartoon images was necessary to decipher their inherent messages and visual rhetoric fully; (b) Linguistic Analysis: The textual elements accompanying the cartoons, such as captions and speech bubbles, undergo linguistic analysis. This step involved examining the language choice, use of satire, and rhetorical devices employed by the cartoonists to enhance their intended messages; and (c) Emergent Themes and Patterns: As themes, symbols, and metaphors emerge from the visual and linguistic analyses, the researcher identified recurring patterns across the political cartoons. This process enabled the identification of shared perspectives and portrayals of the candidates and the electoral process. Accordingly, the subsequent coding framework is applied to classify cartoons, i.e. (1) DC (Depictions of candidates) – cartoons containing information about candidate depiction are designated as DC-01, DC-02, and subsequent iterations; (2) DT, DM, DS (Dominant themes, metaphors, and symbols) – cartoons featuring discourse on themes, metaphors, or symbols are classified as DT-01, DM-01, or DS-01, and subsequent iterations; and (3) SPC (Reflection of political atmosphere) – cartoons reflecting the political ambiance are marked as SPC-01, SPC-02, and further. Each cartoon might

receive multiple classifications based on the recognized themes and patterns.

Fourth, Reflexivity. Due to the subjective nature of the qualitative analysis, it was crucial to ensure research rigour. The researcher engaged in reflexivity by acknowledging their biases and perspectives while minimizing potential biases that may influence the analysis. Furthermore, inter-rater reliability checks were conducted, involving multiple independently analysing a subset of political cartoons. The findings demonstrated consistency and agreement among the researchers to establish the study's credibility.

Fifth, Triangulation. To bolster the research findings, I utilized triangulation through cross-referencing the results obtained from visual analysis, linguistic analysis, and emergent themes. This procedure guaranteed data triangulation, methodological triangulation, and theoretical triangulation, thereby amplifying the authenticity of the research outcomes.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The present study revealed insights regarding the portrayal of candidates and their political ideologies during the 2014 Indonesian presidential election. The cartoons showcased noticeable variations, with cartoonists utilizing dominant themes, metaphors, and symbols to convey intricate messages about the candidates and the broader socio-political climate. In addition, the cartoons brought to light the fundamental ideological underpinnings that influenced how candidates and their policies were represented. In short, this present analysis provided a perspective on the political discourse during the election and offered crucial insights into the candidates' campaigns.

### **Portrayals of Presidential Candidates**

The analysis of political cartoons related to the 2014 Indonesian presidential election clearly illustrated the distinct depictions of the two prominent candidates (see Figure 1) that mirrored their respective political ideologies, policies, and leadership qualities. On the one hand, Candidate A exuded a sense of strength and authority in the cartoons, reflecting his decisive and no-nonsense approach. The cartoons frequently highlighted Candidate

A's experience and track record, portraying him as a seasoned leader capable of propelling the nation towards progress. On the other hand, Candidate B was often portrayed as approachable and empathetic, engaging with diverse groups of citizens (see Figure 2). Cartoonists emphasized their grassroots connections and commitment to social welfare, painting them as champions of the marginalized and underprivileged. However, some cartoons also depicted Candidate B as indecisive or overly idealistic, highlighting perceived weaknesses in navigating complex political challenges (see Figure 3).



Figure 1. Depiction of the president candidates

A cartoon published on June 12, 2014, features portraits of the presidential candidates in the 2014 elections. The cartoon utilizes linguistic and visual elements to portray the presidential candidates the Indonesian people will elect. The linguistic elements are used in the form of speech that imitates the campaign activities of the two presidential candidates. Satirically, the cartoonist presents a fragment of the World Cup broadcast that is more interesting for the audience than watching the presidential candidates' campaign speeches. Meanwhile, the cartoon uses caricature as its visual element. There are three central caricatures in the cartoon. The first caricature is of the first presidential candidate. The second caricature is of the second presidential candidate. A third caricature is a man representing the average person who likes to watch TV. Overall, the cartoon's linguistic and visual elements successfully present a portrait of the presidential candidates in the 2014 elections.



Figure 2. Depiction of the popular candidates

The cartoon, published on December 12, 2013, depicts presidential candidates who are predicted to be busy identifying vice presidential candidates. The cartoon utilizes linguistic and visual elements to present the portrait of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The most prominent linguistic element is the line “Ndak mikir, ndak mikir!” (I don’t think, I don’t think). The line is spoken by a caricaturist representing a regional head politician in the capital city of Jakarta who has gained public attention because of his performance. This political figure’s capacity and capability have become an attraction for several other politicians who have declared themselves informally as presidential candidates. Besides, the visual element presents four caricatures in addition to the caricature of the regional head, who is the centre of the cartoon. The other four caricatures represent politicians who intend to become president. Overall, the cartoon’s linguistic and visual elements successfully present a portrait of the presidential candidates in the 2014 elections.



Figure 3. Depiction of the candidate’s team/party

In an exemplary political satire published on March 9, 2014, the utilization of campaign funds and political ideology were superlatively depicted. The cartoon comprises two speech sequences portraying the political party's stringent campaign finances. The first sequence features a caricaturist who is purportedly a political party official collecting election registration documents from the organizing committee. He asserts, "Dana kampanye partai kami ya Cuma segitu. Minim. Cekak!" (Our party's campaign funds are only that much. Only that much. They are minimal. Tight!) The second sequence takes the form of a question: "Cekak? Lalu orderan kaos partainya bakal dibayar nggak nih?" (Tight? Then will the party's t-shirt orders be paid?) This question satirizes the official's conduct, implying that the official may be unable to pay for the campaign t-shirt order due to insufficient campaign capital. The cartoon's verbal and visual elements present an evocative and vivid depiction of political ideology intertwined with financial transactions in the 2014 elections.

Upon analysing political cartoons, a wealth of knowledge was gleaned regarding the portrayal of the two leading candidates during the 2014 Indonesian presidential election. These cartoons offered valuable insight into the candidates' political ideologies, policies, and leadership qualities. In the political arena, the depictions of Candidate A and Candidate B were markedly different. Candidate A was frequently portrayed as a seasoned leader, exuding assertiveness and strength through his posture and demeanour. Cartoonists highlighted his extensive political experience, showcasing his past accomplishments and presenting him as a candidate capable of making tough decisions. Additionally, symbolic elements, like a compass or a steering wheel, emphasised his perceived ability to guide the nation in the right direction.

In contrast, Candidate B's portrayal was more approachable and empathetic. His depictions often showcased him engaging with diverse citizens, displaying genuine concern for their well-being and addressing their grievances. Cartoons emphasised Candidate B's grassroots connections,



often featuring him in humble attire to signal his closeness to the people and the issues they faced. Symbolic representations, such as a helping hand or a bridge, underscore Candidate B's unwavering commitment to inclusivity and the upliftment of marginalised communities. In other words, political cartoons scrutinized the candidates' ideologies and policies. Candidate B was linked to economic development, while Candidate A was associated with social welfare. Both candidates were not depicted positively, with cartoonists highlighting potential weaknesses and criticisms. Overall, political cartoons provided a multifaceted portrayal of the candidates, contributing to the broader political discourse surrounding the 2014 Indonesian presidential election.

Furthermore, these portrayals were shaped by their political ideologies, policies, and leadership qualities. Candidate A was consistently depicted as a seasoned and assertive leader, emphasising his political experience and decisiveness. This portrayal aligned with the dominant narrative that Candidate A possessed excellent leadership and managerial abilities. On the other hand, Candidate B was portrayed as an empathetic and approachable leader, highlighting his grassroots connections and concern for marginalized communities. This portrayal resonated with the public perception of Candidate B as a candidate advocating for social justice and inclusivity.

The nuanced depiction of the candidates in political cartoons highlights the immense power of visual media to shape public opinions and perceptions. The cartoons framed the candidates' images and influenced how voters perceived their leadership qualities and policy positions (Young, 2017; Witek, 2022), potentially impacting voter attitudes and decision-making during the election. Cartoonists employed symbols and imagery to highlight aspects of his political ideology, such as national flags and patriotic imagery, to align him with a sense of nationalism and commitment to the country's well-being (e.g. Piata, 2016; Rossen-Knill & Henry, 1997).

Notably, political cartoons presented a balanced mix of positive and negative portrayals of both candidates. While some cartoons lauded their



strengths and policy proposals, others highlighted potential weaknesses or criticized their actions and decisions (Balakrishnan, Venkat & Manickam, 2019). This inclusion of critical portrayals demonstrated that political cartoonists were not wholly biased or one-sided in their depictions (Meibauer, 2019). Instead, they sought to provide a diverse range of perspectives, reflecting the complexity of the political landscape and acknowledging that candidates were multidimensional figures with strengths and shortcomings (Morgan, 2010). Accordingly, the visual representations of the political cartoons significantly influenced the public's perceptions of the candidates, shaping how voters viewed their leadership qualities and policy positions. The dynamic interplay of positive and negative portrayals demonstrated the complexity of political communication during an election, where cartoonists aimed to provide a balanced view of the candidates' personas.

In sum, this present study emphasizes the crucial role of political cartoons as a visual rhetoric that impacts public opinion and contributes to the broader political discourse during electoral campaigns. The depiction of candidates in political cartoons plays a pivotal role in engaging the public, promoting critical thinking, and shaping democratic processes in Indonesia. Political cartoons in the 2014 Indonesian presidential election portrayed Candidate A as experienced and pragmatic, while Candidate B was empathetic and inclusive. These visuals are showcasing the complex nature of political communication during an election. Political cartoons are crucial in shaping democratic processes and engaging the public in critical thinking.

### **Visual Narratives of the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election**

The collection of political cartoons regarding the Indonesian Presidential Election revealed several recurring themes, symbols, and metaphors. These elements were skilfully employed to shape the public's perception of the candidates and the political climate in general. One of the most commonly used visual metaphors was the depiction of campaign (see Figure 4), symbolizing the precarious balance of power and public expectations. This illustration, to some extent, illustrated the difficult

decision voters faced when choosing the candidate who could best address the country's most pressing issues. Such metaphors effectively conveyed the gravity of the situation and the importance of making an informed decision.

The cartoons also frequently featured iconic Indonesian icons, such as the abbreviation of DPR (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat or The House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia), the national institution, and traditional elements like peci (cap) patterns (see Figure 5). These icons were not only aesthetically pleasing but also served to evoke a sense of national identity and pride. By associating the candidates with a broader national vision, the icons reinforced their respective political narratives and helped to differentiate them from one another.

Additionally, sport-related metaphors like the boxing ring and the boxers were utilized to portray the political climate and the candidates' competitiveness (see Figure 6). The boxing ring symbolized the place of turbulent political landscape, while the boxers represented the potential candidates for growth and prosperity under a specific candidate's leadership. Using such metaphors was particularly effective in communicating complex ideas in a simple, relatable manner. Overall, using such powerful visual and symbolic language in these political cartoons was instrumental in shaping public opinion and influencing the election outcome.



Figure 4. Kampanye as the dominant theme of the presidential election

On March 19, 2014, a cartoon vividly captured the frenzied preparations for campaign activities. This insightful and thought-provoking cartoon employed linguistic and visual elements to convey its profound message. In terms of the linguistic aspect, the cartoon featured two distinct utterances. The first speech was about an actor preparing to join the campaign. This individual advised, “Mantap! Kampanye bakalan seru, nih,” (Steady! The campaign will be exciting here). Meanwhile, the second speech read, “Partai lu belum tentu menang, yang pasti rakyat jadi budeg!” (Your party may not win, but the people will be blind). These speeches were accompanied by powerful visual imagery in a motorcycle workshop. This setting was an incredibly clever and ironic touch, as political campaigns in Indonesia are often characterized by motorcycles with deafening exhaust sounds. Overall, the cartoon was a brilliant metaphor for the general lack of knowledge about the essence of campaigning. The symbols utilized in the cartoon effectively captured the political knowledge of most people in Indonesia. The dominant themes surrounding the election became the central material of visual communication in the cartoon discourse. These themes were expressed explicitly or implicitly through metaphors and symbols united in linguistic and visual elements. The result was a profoundly impactful and thought-provoking cartoon that expertly conveyed its message to viewers.



Figure 5. The usage of metaphor amidst the election

On March 2, 2014, a cartoon was published depicting legislative candidates still needing to secure their positions. The cartoon conveyed a satirical message using a linguistic element: “Buyar harapanku jadi anggota DPR, terhormat, kaya raya, bisa jalan-jalan gratis ke luar negeri.” ([S] shattered my hopes of becoming a member of the House of Representatives, honorable, wealthy, able to travel abroad for free). The cartoonist aimed to highlight the existence of egotism in Indonesian political practice. In line with the aim, visual elements such as the disappointed expressions and withered body gestures on the caricature of the legislative candidate were utilized. Through these elements, the cartoon made explicit the low quality of legislative candidates who cannot be separated from their egocentric personal motivations. In other words, the cartoonist sought to illuminate the dominant themes surrounding the election process by using metaphors and symbols.



Figure 6. The usage of symbol amidst the election

On the 14th of April in 2014, a cartoon was published that depicted a noteworthy political event: the presidential candidate survey. This survey was a novel addition to the realm of politics in Indonesia, and it breathed new life into the country’s five-year agenda. The cartoon portrayed the survey in a vivid and detailed manner, utilizing both linguistic and visual elements. The cartoon’s linguistic component featured two lines of text: “Kejuaraan Survey Capres 2014” (2014 Presidential Candidate Survey Championship) and “Ayo kita tantang juaranya!” (Let us challenge the

champion). These phrases emphasized the competitive nature of the survey and the importance of electability in the eyes of the Indonesian public. On the other hand, the visual component of the cartoon included a caricature of a presidential candidate who had garnered significant support from the people of Indonesia. This candidate was depicted in the centre of a boxing ring, gesticulating with his arms and exuding confidence and strength. The cartoonist's use of metaphors and symbols effectively conveyed the dominant themes of the election discourse, which revolved around the popularity and electability of the candidates. This cartoon provided a powerful example of visual communication through cartoon discourse.

Furthermore, cartoonists effectively integrated iconic Indonesian symbols into their cartoons to evoke a sense of national identity and pride. These symbols played a crucial role in shaping public opinion by emphasising the stakes in the electoral process and its implications for the country's future (Tsakona, 2009; Stewart, 2015). The political climate and candidates' promises were frequently depicted through nature metaphors, such as stormy seas representing the turbulent and unpredictable nature of the political landscape and blooming gardens symbolizing the potential for growth and prosperity under a particular candidate's leadership (Aragon & Leach, 2008). These metaphors highlighted the transformative nature of the election for Indonesia's political trajectory (Boukes et al., 2015). Cartoons also tackled pressing economic and social issues, such as corruption, economic inequality, and access to public services, through satirical portrayals. These aimed to foster public awareness and promote critical engagement with the candidates' policy proposals and leadership capabilities (Dynel, 2013; Dynel & Chovanec, 2021).

Moreover, in the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election, cartoonists employed a diverse range of themes, metaphors, and symbols to visually communicate the difficulties that voters encountered when selecting a candidate who reflected their values and hopes for the future of their nation. These visual aids effectively conveyed complex political messages in a



concise and accessible manner. By incorporating iconic Indonesian symbols and nature metaphors, the cartoons were able to evoke a strong emotional and intellectual response from readers. The cartoons' relatability to Indonesian culture made them accessible to a broad audience, establishing a connection between the viewers and the nation's collective identity. Ultimately, these dominant themes, metaphors, and symbols played a pivotal role in conveying nuanced political messages clearly and engagingly.

Throughout these political cartoons, one of the most striking themes was the representation of voters' dilemmas and the complexity of electoral choices. The cartoonists skilfully used metaphors to symbolize the gravity of citizens' decisions in selecting a candidate (Fein et al., 2015). The use of metaphors highlighted the problematic choices voters had to make, emphasizing the significance of the election and the responsibility placed on citizens to make informed decisions for the nation's future (Landreville, 2015). This portrayal resonated with the public, encouraging critical reflection on the candidates' attributes and ideologies and prompting citizens to engage actively in the electoral process (LaMarre et al., 2014).

Furthermore, the cartoons extensively addressed economic and social issues prevalent in Indonesian society. Cartoonists used satire and symbolism to criticize corruption, economic inequality, and access to public services. By visually representing these issues, the cartoons acted to amplify societal concerns and hold candidates accountable for addressing pressing problems. Overall, the political cartoons of the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election proved to be a powerful tool in shaping public opinion and encouraging citizen engagement in the democratic process.

In short, the analysis of the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election political cartoons reveals the significant impact of visual rhetoric on political communication. Through symbols, metaphors, representations of social and economic issues, Indonesian imagery, and weighing scales, the public could engage emotionally and intellectually. Such themes resonated with citizens and provided a comprehensive visual language for understanding the

complexities of the election, thereby encouraging critical thinking. Notably, political cartoons played an integral role in shaping public opinion and highlighting the remarkable power of visual media in political campaigns. This study underscores political cartoons' immense importance as visual rhetoric significantly contributing to public engagement and understanding in Indonesia.

### **Ideological and Socio-Political Reflections**

Upon conducting an analysis of political cartoons about the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election, it was evident that these cartoons not only reflected the socio-political climate of the time but also highlighted the ideological beliefs of the cartoonists. The witty and satirical drawings illustrated the societal issues and concerns at the forefront of public discussion during the election, such as corruption, economic inequality, and religious tensions.

The portrayal of candidates and their affiliations in the cartoons showcased subtle favouritism towards specific candidates through favourable symbols or caricatures that aligned with specific political narratives (see Figure 7). These ideological beliefs were heavily influenced by the cartoonists' perspectives and perceptions of the candidates' political affiliations (see Figure 8). Political cartoons served as a powerful tool for cartoonists to express their opinions and ideas about the election and to sway public opinion towards their preferred candidate (see Figure 9).



Figure 7. The portrayal of ideological underpinnings the cartoon



discourse

In March 2014, a thought-provoking cartoon was released that shed light on the attitudes of political figures. The cartoon's main focus was the governor of DKI Jakarta, who was rumoured to be a potential candidate for the presidency of the Republic of Indonesia. On the one hand, the cartoonist brought heightened attention to the governor's potential lack of responsibility and accountability through both language and imagery. The politician is depicted as someone who left his role during service. On the other hand, in the cartoon, an ordinary woman is shown speaking out against the governor's caricature, which shows him running towards a giant broom with the inscription RI-1 held out by a woman's hand. Political enthusiasts will likely recognize the hand as belonging to one of Indonesia's legendary party leaders. In sum, the cartoon effectively utilizes linguistic and visual elements to convey the significant importance of political integrity, an aspect many politicians frequently overlook.



Figure 8. The reflection of socio-political climate

A cartoon published on 18 March 2013 parodied a political event being discussed by the public. The cartoon imitates a popular singing competition to satirize election campaigns. In the parody, four caricatures of a legislative candidate are featured alongside three caricatures of judges who represent the various interests behind the candidate's election. The legislative candidate's caricature is of a man in a suit with money in his suitcases and pockets. This

portrayal satirizes the reality of politics, which is often closely related to those with unlimited access to finance. The other three caricatures are figures who will instill interest in the candidate. One is a rat with a tie (usually a symbol of the corrupt) who says, “Saya Yes! Sebab duitnya banyak! Ini sebuah factor X!” (I am, Yes! It is the X factor!) Explicitly, the cartoon portrays a socio-political climate in Indonesia that often intersects with corruption. In addition, origin or background and social status are other factors that undeniably influence voters’ perceptions of legislative candidates.



Figure 9. The reflection of socio-political climate

The cartoonist’s depiction of the political climate in a cartoon published on December 22nd, 2013, is a fine example of how parody can be utilized to convey a message. The cartoonist uses visual and linguistic elements to create a hilarious take on the presidential election. The parody is a clever imitation of a popular talent show that was very popular in Indonesia during that time. In the cartoon, there are five different conversation sequences, with one spoken by a presidential candidate and the other four spoken by the judges, who are caricatures of ordinary people. The presidential candidate’s speech contains a series of promises, while the judges’ speeches are satirical jabs at the candidates’ speeches during the selection process. The cartoonist’s use of visual and linguistic elements is a stroke of genius, as it effectively parodies the public’s fixation on the presidential candidates during the election period. One of the key messages that the cartoonist conveys is that people

want a leader who is not like the rest. In fact, they say they need a president with the ‘X Factor’ - someone who stands out from the rest and possesses unique qualities that others do not have. Overall, the cartoon is an excellent example of how parody and humour can be used to convey a serious message cleverly and entertainingly.

Furthermore, in analysing the political cartoons about the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election, at the outset, the political cartoons reflected the socio-political climate. They frequently depicted societal concerns such as corruption, economic challenges, religious tensions, and social inequality. These representations showcased the most important issues to the public and were at the forefront of national discussions during the election period (Sen & Hill, 2007; Singh, 2012). Additionally, the cartoons captured the intense political environment and the highly contested nature of the election. Using metaphors symbolized the turbulent political climate, reflecting the heightened competition and debates among political parties and candidates vying for power. Such portrayals revealed the public’s perception of the election as critical for the nation's future trajectory (Hill, 2013).

The political cartoons also offered insights into the cartoonists’ ideological stances and biases. Cartoonists held their own beliefs and perspectives as creators of these visual narratives, which inevitably influenced their portrayals of candidates and their policies (Pinar, 2020). Some cartoons subtly favoured specific candidates by employing favourable symbols or conveying positive attributes, reflecting the cartoonists’ inclination towards certain political narratives. Additionally, the cartoons occasionally depicted candidates through the lens of established political affiliations or ideological perspectives. Candidates from certain political parties were depicted in ways that aligned with the general reputation or ideology associated with those parties. These portrayals subtly communicated the cartoonists’ perceptions of the candidates’ political ideologies, influencing how readers might interpret and evaluate the candidates (Holbert et al., 2011).

It is important to note that cartoonists’ ideological underpinnings

were not uniform across all cartoons, as political cartoons often represented diverse perspectives. Some cartoons remained neutral, aiming to present a balanced view of the electoral process and the candidates, while others overtly conveyed their political biases. The diverse ideological underpinnings in the cartoons illustrated the dynamic and pluralistic nature of public discourse during the election period (Kreuz, 1997; Protschky, 2011). Various ideological perspectives showcased the pluralistic nature of public discourse during the election period. Underlying ideological beliefs heavily influenced the portrayal of candidates and their policies. These cartoons served as a reflection of societal concerns, public sentiment, and the dynamics of political engagement during the election period.

In short, this present study provides an understanding of the interplay between media, politics, and language usage in Indonesia. The findings emphasize the significance of visual media as a powerful tool in shaping political discourse. These insights offer valuable information for future political communication and visual rhetoric studies in electoral campaigns. It is imperative to recognize the impact of visual media on political communication and strive for a balanced representation of diverse viewpoints in public discourse.

## **CONCLUSION**

Building upon the CDA framework, this present study offers a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge by examining the role of political cartoons during the 2014 Indonesian presidential election. This study delves deeper into the specific mechanisms through which political cartoons influenced public discourse, focusing on the interplay between visual and linguistic elements. The analysis of political cartoons has revealed how candidates were portrayed, the dominant themes and symbols employed, and the reflection of the socio-political climate and ideological underpinnings during the election period. Political cartoons significantly shaped public perceptions of the candidates and their policies during the

2014 Indonesian presidential election. Cartoonists cleverly used visual and linguistic techniques to depict the candidates' strengths, weaknesses, and policy positions. Moreover, the cartoons' themes, metaphors, and symbols engaged readers emotionally and intellectually, fostering critical thinking and active engagement. The cartoons also reflected the societal concerns and ideological underpinnings of the election.

Although political cartoons hold significant influence over public discourse and democratic processes, they do possess certain limitations that can affect their interpretation. One of the primary challenges is the inherent subjectivity that comes with their creation and interpretation. The narrow focus on the 2014 Indonesian presidential election can further constrain their scope and applicability. Therefore, it is essential for future research to explore a broader range of visual media and electoral contexts to gain deeper insights into the cross-cultural variations in political communication. Such investigations will foster a vibrant and informed democratic society's discourse. Accordingly, a comparative analysis of political cartoons from different electoral contexts could provide valuable insights into the cross-cultural dimensions of cartooning's influence on political discourse. Employing advanced text mining and image analysis techniques could also enable more sophisticated content analysis of political cartoons, potentially revealing hidden patterns and nuances.

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