

Political Dynasty Representation in The 2024 Presidential and Vice Presidential Election Candidates in Kompas Daily Editorial Cartoons

Antonius Sulistyo Prabowo^{1*}, Bertha Sri Eko Murtiningsih¹, Ambang Priyonggo¹

¹Communication Science, Universitas Multimedia Nusantara, Tangerang, Indonesia

e-mail: antonius.sulistyo@student.umn.ac.id^{1*}; bertasri@umn.ac.id¹; ambang@umn.ac.id¹

*Corresponding author

ABSTRACT

Political dynasties have emerged as a significant concern in Indonesian politics, particularly in the context of the 2024 presidential election. This study aims to analyze the representation of political dynasties in editorial cartoons published by the Kompas daily newspaper during the 2024 Presidential Election period. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, this study examines four editorial cartoons published between October 19, 2023, and February 10, 2024, focusing on their denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings. The results show that the cartoons represent power and dominance through the manipulation of visual size, contain criticism of the political system through various symbols such as tornadoes and the Constitutional Court building wrapped in an octopus, and depict society through various crowd expressions that reflect Indonesian pluralism. The research findings identify three main myths: the myth of power and political elites that reflects the Javanese cultural concept of centralized authority; myths related to money politics that represent the influence of economic power; and the myth of democracy without people that highlights low party identification among voters. This study demonstrates how editorial cartoons use symbolism, exaggeration, distortion, stereotypes, caricatures, and humor to deliver sharp political criticism. This research contributes to understanding how editorial cartoons function as an effective medium for social criticism by visually representing important issues in the Indonesian democratic process, inviting readers to reflect on the challenges of democracy while encouraging improvements toward a more substantive political system.

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INTRODUCTION

In addition to money politics, the issue of political dynasties has become the center of attention in mass media coverage and public discourse around the 2024 elections in Indonesia. Editorial cartoons and opinion pieces have also highlighted this issue. Dynastic politics is seen by many as a major challenge to the integrity and fairness of the election process, as it can restrict competition and serve the interests of only a few individuals.

However, political dynasties are not a new phenomenon. It has been a recurring theme in various eras of Indonesian government. Since the reform era, which marked a significant change in the Indonesian political system, the existence of dynastic political activities has been seen, starting from the government of President Abdurrahman Wahid to the leadership of Joko Widodo. According to Rusnaedy (2020), there are various terms to describe family involvement in politics, such as political dynasties, dynastic politics, kinship politics, political families, and clan families. Among these terms, 'political dynasty' is most often used to describe the cycle of power where power is passed down from one family member to another. Dal Bó et al. (2009) define a political dynasty as the involvement of politicians who have family ties with previous politicians. This can take various forms, such as the inheritance of political positions, domination by a single family, or strong political influence exerted by one family.

In Indonesia, political dynasties often arise as a result of opportunistic behavior, where those in power seek to capitalize on their positions to benefit themselves and their family members. As Mukti & Rodiyah (2020) note, when officials come to power, they often hand over their authority to relatives, creating a system in which power is centered around a particular family, creating a closed circle of power that primarily serves the interests of the ruling family rather than encouraging broader political participation. Political dynasties can still be seen in the 2024 Election, and this has become a public discourse, namely with the appointment of the son of Indonesian President Joko Widodo as a vice presidential candidate. In addition, sons-in-law and brothers-in-law also occupy strategic positions in government, the judiciary, and the scope of political parties (Kompas, 2023).

The term 'political dynasty' has gained more attention after a judicial review resulted in the Constitutional Court (MK) lowering the age requirements for presidential and vice presidential candidates, paving the way for Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the 36-year-old son of President Joko Widodo, to run for vice presidential candidate. Political dynasties are not unique to Indonesia; they exist in many democratic countries such as India, Japan, the Philippines, and the United States. Famous examples include the Kennedy family in the United States, the Gandhi family in India, and the Aquino family in the Philippines (Querubin, 2016). The success of a political dynasty is measured by its ability to extend influence and authority over time through strategic succession planning. According to Purdey et al. (2016), this succession can be intra-generational (e.g., spouse or sibling) or intergenerational (e.g., child or in-law), often accelerated in Indonesia due to term limits.

As Indonesia prepares for the 2024 elections, newspapers, in particular, have been at the forefront of discussions about dynastic politics, with editorial cartoons becoming a vehicle for

political critique. Editorial cartoons, which have appeared on newspaper opinion pages since the colonial era, use visual features and minimal text to convey complex political ideas through satire, irony, or exaggeration. This form of media aligns with the definition of mass communication by Littlejohn & Foss (2009), who define it as the process by which media organizations create and disseminate messages to a large audience—messages that are actively sought, interpreted, and have the potential to influence public perception. Rivers (2004) in Chandra & Sudarmanti (2021) argues that in more sophisticated and complex cultures, interpersonal communication alone is not enough to achieve collective understanding. As a result, the mass media—including editorial cartoons in newspapers—play an important role in shaping political discourse by making complex issues such as dynastic politics more understandable and thought-provoking for the general public.

Editorial cartoons possess several advantages over written editorials. These illustrations have the power to capture complex issues in a single, thought-provoking image that can evoke a strong emotional response from the audience. The difference, as stated by Ellefritz (n.d.), is the fact that editorial cartoons are often contributed by a small group of the same people, even by just one person. Meanwhile, editorials in the form of writing are often contributed by a large group of different people. Not everyone has the artistic talent to condense a series of complex ideas into a small number of images and text, and, furthermore, to do so in a somewhat humorous way.

Wigston (2007) has a similar opinion. He said that political cartoons are a complex system of symbols, images, and words that help readers understand the issue raised by the cartoonist. Oetama (2001) adds that these cartoons contain criticism, mockery, jokes, and elements of surprise, making them particularly effective at conveying political messages. The tradition of editorial cartoons in Indonesian media shows its relevance as a form of political commentary. As Nares & Montaña (2022) said, editorial cartoons effectively convey political issues by providing an overview of the current political situation that stimulates readers' minds. Chikaipa (2019) states that in newspapers, editorial cartoons are an important form of opinion that discusses social issues through a unique visual medium.

Ghilzai (2020) revealed that editorial cartoons or political cartoons are made primarily during general elections. This is because these cartoons can reconstruct or update readers' views about a politician. Based on this background, this research focuses on the representation of dynastic politics in editorial cartoons in the Kompas daily. Kompas was selected because it has consistently published editorial cartoons since July 12, 1967, and regularly reports on political issues. These cartoons use symbols full of meaning to communicate events to readers, often employing humor and satire to make political messages more accessible to the public. This is reinforced by the opinion of Hoffman & Howard (2007) in Fiankor et al. (2017). First, cartoons provide a format in communication that can contain complex messages expressed through a single image. Second, editorial cartoons serve as a format that can simplify complex political situations and thus help the public understand current events.

Previous studies on editorial cartoons and political discourse have been conducted from various perspectives, examining their influence on public opinion (Khoo, 2020) and how they

reveal and criticize ideological stereotypes (Chikaipa, 2019). Zakaria & Mahamood (2018) examined political issues in editorial cartoons by Rosedi Semail (Rossem), employing a theoretical framework combining Edmund Feldman's descriptive analytical approach to visual art with E.H. Gombrich's principles. Feldman's approach analyzes visual art through four stages: description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation (Jamaludin & Ibrahim, 2022).

Meanwhile, many studies have explored the concept and advantages of editorial cartoons. These include their use for effective communication (Okon & Samuel, 2018), the role of cartoons in identifying socio-political issues (Achin et al., 2023), and the analysis and interpretation of editorial cartoons in newspapers (Mendoza, 2016). Content analysis is a dominant approach emerging in research on editorial cartoons, with researchers consistently using this analytical framework to understand media representations. By analyzing the visual elements, symbols, and messages contained in these cartoons, researchers can identify recurring patterns and themes that reflect a particular media editorial stance or perspective. This analytical approach helps illuminate the broader context of media framing and its role in shaping public discourse through visual commentary. Complementing content analysis, semiotics is a valuable tool for analyzing how editorial cartoons convey political messages through symbolic imagery. By deciphering visual signs, symbols, and metaphors, researchers can uncover the layers of meaning that cartoonists embed in their work. This approach reveals how cartoons function as complex visual communication systems and powerful instruments of political discourse.

This study will focus on the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings associated with dynastic politics and reveal the representation of dynastic politics in the 2024 Presidential and Vice Presidential Elections in editorial cartoons in the Kompas daily. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic method, researchers can identify the meaning and message that are intended to be conveyed through cartoons. The dynastic politics discussed in the editorial cartoons is also an important topic because it raises concerns about the disparities in the distribution of political power and may reflect imperfections in democracy.

The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to determine the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings related to dynastic politics displayed in editorial cartoons in Kompas daily; and (2) to determine the representation of dynastic politics in the 2024 Presidential and Vice Presidential Election in editorial cartoons in Kompas daily. The methodology used in previous research on editorial cartoons tends to vary. Most studies use content analysis to examine the trends of mass media in depicting an event in a certain period. On the other hand, several studies adopt a semiotic approach to analyze symbols in cartoons as a means of conveying messages through reading the visual codes that appear in cartoons.

What distinguishes this study from previous studies is its focus, namely on the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. This is a period marked by discourse around dynasty politics, which is then depicted in editorial cartoons in Kompas, Indonesia's largest newspaper, based on data from 2024 SCImago Media Ranking. While previous studies have used historical, discourse analysis, or content analysis frameworks to analyze political cartoons, This study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic model (denotation, connotation, myth) with five reading codes (hermeneutic, symbolic, semic, proairetic, and cultural). This allows for deeper reading and meaning of editorial

cartoons. Furthermore, this study provides insight into how a cartoon can help construct and challenge political legitimacy in contemporary Indonesian democracy—especially in relation to elite power succession and institutional manipulation.

Building on this semiotic approach, this study offers significant contributions to both theoretical and practical domains by deepening our understanding of the influence editorial cartoons exert on shaping public discourse surrounding elections and political dynasties in Indonesia. This underscores the important role of editorial cartoons as a medium for expressing political criticism and reflecting the sentiments held by the general public. The insights gained from this study can be used to inform and guide initiatives undertaken by the mass media to enhance the educational and critical functions that editorial cartoons can perform.

By delving into the visual and symbolic representation of political dynasties as portrayed in editorial cartoons, this study sheds light on the prevailing concerns and perceptions regarding the distribution of political power and the imperfections that exist within Indonesia's democratic system. It provides a deeper understanding of how the public perceives and responds to the concept of political dynasties, and how editorial cartoons can serve as a barometer for gauging public opinion on this issue. Furthermore, the findings of this study can contribute to the development of more effective strategies for using editorial cartoons as a tool for political education, encouraging critical thinking, and promoting a more transparent and accountable political system in Indonesia. This aligns with what Eveland Jr. et al. (2005), as cited in Zempi et al. (2023), stated that political knowledge may be learned through political discourse and the media, which play a significant role in informing the public and raising awareness of political concerns.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative methodology to examine and interpret the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In defining descriptive research, Neuman (2014) characterizes it as a study that presents a portrait of human types or social activities, with a particular emphasis on addressing questions of 'how' and 'who.' The research is situated within a constructivist paradigm, which posits that individuals actively construct their understanding of the world based on personal experiences (Creswell, 2017).

The object of analysis consists of editorial cartoons concerning the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election published in the *Kompas* daily. The study employs Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, which conceptualizes meaning-making across three levels: denotation, connotation, and myth, as illustrated in Figure 1. Denotation refers to the literal or primary meaning of a sign, connotation involves culturally and emotionally embedded interpretations, and myths function as a system of metalanguage that naturalizes particular ideologies through symbolic representation.

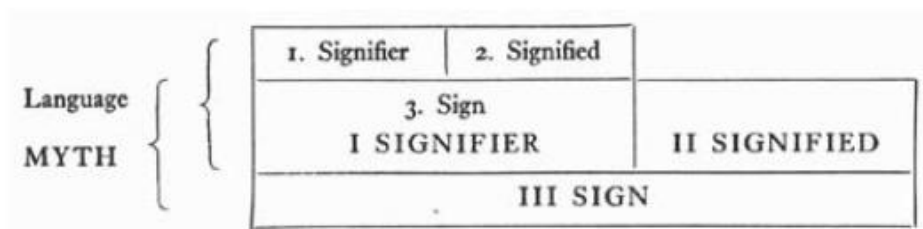


Figure 1 Roland Barthes' Semiotic Model

Source: Barthes, 1972

The analysis was conducted qualitatively on four cartoons published on page 6 of *Kompas* every Wednesday, that were selected purposively during the period from the start of the presidential and vice presidential nominations on October 19, 2023 – until the election campaign period ended on February 10, 2024. Primary data consist of the cartoon texts themselves, while secondary data include supporting literature such as academic journal articles, books, and news media coverage. This analysis refers to Barthes' five interpretative codes, which are summarized by Kaelan (2009): the hermeneutic code, semic code, symbolic code, proairetic code, and gnomic (cultural) code. These analytical tools facilitate a multilayered reading of the cartoons, enabling the identification of both explicit content and embedded cultural narratives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the period from the start of the presidential and vice presidential nominations in the 2024 Election on October 19, 2023, until the end of the 2024 presidential and vice presidential candidate campaign period on February 10, 2024, the Kompas daily published four editorial cartoons criticizing dynasty politics. The four cartoons were published in the October 25, 2023, November 1, 2023, November 22, 2023, and February 7, 2024 editions.

To ascertain the significance of the symbols in the cartoon text, this study employs both syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis methods, as outlined by Hoed (2014). Syntagmatic analysis examines how the various signs and symbols within each cartoon are deliberately arranged in a specific linear sequence. This ordered structure is crucial to conveying the intended message, as rearranging the components could significantly alter the overall meaning. Conversely, paradigmatic analysis explores the associative relationships between the symbols, even if they are not directly adjacent to each other within the cartoon's spatial layout. These connections exist on a conceptual level or within one's memory, similar to how words like educator, education, student are mentally linked despite not always appearing together. Identifying these underlying paradigmatic relationships provides further insight into the cartoon.

Using both syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis methodologies, researchers may comprehensively dissect the intricate meanings of these four political cartoons satirizing dynastic politics in the run-up to the election. The purposeful arrangement of symbols, as well as the linked notions they suggest, works together to convey a multi-layered message to the

audience from late 2023 to early 2024. The following are four cartoons that were studied in Table 1.





Number	Date	Image	Source
1	October 25 th , 2023		Kompas Daily
2	November 1 st , 2023		Kompas Daily
3	November 22 nd , 2023		Kompas Daily
4	February 7 th , 2024		Kompas Daily

Table 1 Unit of Analysis

The denotative meaning of the first cartoon is three pairs of big-headed characters. Each pair is in a car-like vehicle with a certain symbol on the front, a bull's head logo and a Garuda bird. The word "START" is written in front of the three cars, along with two small figures—one wearing a KPU hat and painting the word "START", the other sweeping.

The hermeneutical code in the cartoon published in the Kompas daily on October 25, 2023, is related to the campaign period for the 2024 Presidential and Vice Presidential elections. The

candidates are depicted driving cars with coalition party symbols, arranged in the order in which each pair registered with the KPU: Anies-Muhaimin, Ganjar-Mahfud, and Prabowo-Gibran. This cartoon raises the question, "Who will ultimately run for president and vice president?"

Furthermore, in this cartoon Prabowo is seen dancing, which illustrates his nonverbal communication style that he often shows to the public. Meanwhile, Gibran, who is seen sitting in a child's car seat, cannot be separated from the Constitutional Court's ruling on October 16, 2023, which allowed regional heads under the age of 40 to compete in the vice presidential election. This decision was controversial because Gibran was only 36 years old and had little political experience. He was also accused of nepotism, as he was the son of President Jokowi and the nephew of Anwar Usman, the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court (Mahkamah Konstitusi) at that time.

Proairetic code is the ability to logically predict the results or consequences of an action, which implies the existence of human behavioral logic. In the context of the end of the registration period for presidential and vice presidential candidates for the 2024 General Election, the three pairs of figures on the vehicles preparing at the starting line are a representation of a series of moments and events that will occur during the presidential election process in Indonesia. The representation of the situation depicted as a race indicates the existence of fierce competition that will occur among competitors. The existence of the KPU figure is a representation of the actions of this institution in regulating and supervising the election process.

The symbolic code in this cartoon consists of a car shaped like a party logo, which serves as a strong representation of the "political vehicle" used by the presidential candidate. According to Ufen (2022), full presidentialism has changed the organization of existing parties, changed the discourse on candidates and parties, and even changed the political discourse and coalition building in civil society. This has resulted in the formation of parties that only function as vehicles for presidential candidates. Political parties have become personalized and temporary political vehicles with ready-made programs, and their centers of power revolve around a charismatic leader, even though this should not be the case.

However, the depiction of a figure depicted larger than the vehicle indicates that the identity of the figure is more prominent than the vehicle or the party driving it. In Heryanto (2019), Thomas Carothers defines Indonesian political parties as organizations centered on leaders and led by a limited circle of political elites. The party is very dependent on its primary personality. Loyola & Aiswarya (2023) define leader-centric as a term that focuses on the quality, behavior, and activities of leaders in the context of leadership. Politicians appear to portray themselves as people who are very different from their party's identity. They deviate from their party's insignia, even appearing to contradict what the public understands about the party to which they belong (Arriane, 2022).

Meanwhile, Gibran sitting in a child car seat is a striking symbol of his political inexperience, nepotism, and the controversies surrounding his candidacy. According to Mochtar (2023b), the controversy surrounding Gibran brought attention to the practice of "dynastic politics" and harsh accusations that the Constitutional Court (MK) was nothing more than a

"family court (mahkamah keluarga/MK)". Bakti (2023) emphasized that if President Jokowi or his supporters force Gibran to become a vice presidential candidate, this will not only constitute political manipulation and will not accelerate the regeneration of national leadership, but can also be accused of nepotism and dynasty politics through legal and political engineering.

Furthermore, the semic code in the first cartoon depicts the position of the presidential and vice presidential candidates who are more dominant than the KPU. This can be seen from their much larger body sizes, which reflect the campaign's emphasis on the candidate's image rather than the institution. The KPU also faces obstacles in maintaining its independence. According to the Chairman of Bawaslu RI Rahmat Bagja, S.H. LL.M in Tanjung (2023), one of the obstacles is the large role of Bawaslu which not only supervises the election process, but also decides on election violation cases by using new legal authorities granted by laws and regulations. This attitude often gives rise to differences of opinion between Bawaslu and KPU as election organizers, thus disrupting the smooth running of the election process.

The editorial cartoon of the October 25, 2023 edition published in the Kompas daily contains a cultural code that refers to the Javanese political system and power. The depiction of the presidential and vice presidential candidate pairs on vehicles can be interpreted as a representation of Javanese paternalistic and feudalistic political culture. In Javanese culture, there is a term 'Gusti-Kawula', which describes an unequal relationship between the ruler (*gusti*) and the people (*kawula*), where the ruler is considered to have a much higher position and must be fully worshiped by the people. According to Sutarto in Irawanto et al. (2011), the concept of '*kawula gusti*' implies that the people should obey, while the king has an obligation to be responsible for the world and holds power like a god, protector of law, and supreme authority.

The myth that appears in this editorial cartoon is clientelism and the political power of 'kawula-gusti' in Javanese culture. Muhtadi (2021) said that clientelism is an intrinsic element of "third world" politics that plagues relatively poor countries with low literacy rates. According to Aspinall & Sukmajati (2016), some candidates rely on party machines during the election. However, most politicians prefer to organize voters through informal networks based on patron-client ties. Moreover, nowadays, as written by Faisal (2021), the general public in the reform era only knows political parties through various symbols, logos, flags, and pennants that are often present to enliven the political campaign period.

Furthermore, the absence of other political groups or the general public in the cartoon emphasizes how patronage democracy tends to exclude or marginalize those outside the circle of power. The term 'patronage democracy' has been widely accepted to describe democracies where electoral mobilization primarily takes a clientelistic form (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). Thus, the cartoon critically illustrates how patronage culture remains a central feature of Indonesian politics, where political success is determined more by personal loyalty and connections than by meritocracy or representation of the broader public interest.

Moving on to the next editorial cartoon, published on November 1, 2023. The denotative meaning of this cartoon depicts a crowd of people reading a note with the words *2024* written on the back of the note and *PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES' TRACK RECORD, VISION-MISSION, PROGRAM* on the front cover. Above the crowd, there are several

hashtags such as #CORRUPTION ERADICATION?, #JOBS?, #EDUCATION?, #ENVIRONMENT, #ECONOMY (with an upward arrow)? and #INTEGRITY? In the crowd, several individuals with certain characteristics are seen, including someone using a magnifying glass looking at a paper with the CV of CALEG PARTAI ANU written on it, someone carrying a book on HOW TO BE A CALEG, and someone wearing a 'GEN Z' t-shirt.

The hermeneutic code in the second cartoon is in the hashtags #CORRUPTION ERADICATION?, #JOBS?, #EDUCATION?, #ENVIRONMENT, #ECONOMY (with an upward arrow)? and #INTEGRITY? The hashtags highlight the main issues ahead of the 2024 Election. Corruption eradication is at the top because the corruption index in this country has continued to decline in recent years. In the last five years, it has been shown that Indonesia's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) has tended to decline. In 2019 with a score of 40 and then plummeted to 34 in 2022 (International, 2024). The hashtags reflect the condition of democracy and public expectations. The crowd looking at the big notes not only depicts the plurality of society, but also the importance of political literacy. This cartoon reflects the maturity of Indonesian democracy, which is marked by a society that is increasingly critical, but still colored by challenges.

The cartoon's proairetic code is shown by a crowd of people reading and seeking information. The numerous facial expressions indicate diverse reactions to the information they receive, creating a narrative about the dynamic democratic process in which people actively seek and digest information before making political decisions. However, Fossati (2019) said, this information search does not always correlate with rational decision making. People are often trapped in a situation where Indonesian politics is more dominated by patron-client relationships and pragmatic interests than program competition.

The symbolic code of this cartoon is in the note *2024 - TRACK RECORD, VISION-MISSION, PROGRAM OF PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES* which represents the future of Indonesia. The note not only shows the year of the election, but also becomes a source of information for voters. The crowd reflects the diversity of society, while the hashtags represent hope and skepticism towards political promises. This is supported by the results of research released by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies/CSIS (2022) which shows that corruption, job availability, education, the environment, economic certainty and the integrity of leaders are the concerns of most respondents in the 2024 Election.

The semic code in this cartoon is in the crowd of people reading a large note that says *2024 - TRACK RECORD, VISION-MISSION, PROGRAM OF PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES* depicting the Indonesian people who are observing and evaluating the vision and mission of the presidential and vice presidential candidates ahead of the 2024 general election. In addition to implying public interest and concern for the democratic process, this crowd also shows Indonesia's pluralism and the complexity of people's political preferences. The varying facial expressions depict uncertainty, curiosity, and skepticism towards the political process.

The figure holding the book HOW TO BE A CALEG implies political opportunism, where some parties focus more on how to become legislative candidates than on the substance of the program. This is reflected in the research of Aspinall & Mietzner (2019a) which shows that the

great need for finance for politics has created a gap between parties and candidates. This phenomenon illustrates an extreme form of political opportunism. He emphasized that political parties prioritize the financial capabilities of candidates over the quality of their programs or the integrity of their own cadres. Meanwhile, a figure wearing a T-shirt that says GEN Z shows that this year's election is dominated by young voters. Badan Pusat Statistik (2021) data shows, the results of the 2020 Population Census recorded that the majority of Indonesia's population is dominated by Generation Z (born in 1997 - 2012) and the Millennial Generation (born in 1981 - 1996). The proportion of Generation Z is 27.94 percent of the total population and the Millennial Generation is 25.87 percent. Regarding this data, it is undeniable that Gen-Z will be a political target because the upcoming election will be their first time. At the same time, political elites will compete for the votes of these first-time voters (Robin et al., 2022). This year's election is the first time we've seen more Gen Z's get involved in the election. Meanwhile, this demographic is also widely considered politically apathetic (BBC, 2023).

Regarding Gen Z and the Election, at least three key issues that have emerged. First is Gen Z's participation as voters. The organizers of the 2024 Election must make a strong effort to encourage their involvement. As Gen Z constitutes the majority in Indonesia's population, the results of the 2024 Election should reflect their aspirations and preferences. Second, the programs offered by the 2024 Election contestants must accommodate Gen Z's opinions. Third, Gen Z tends to choose to learn and have dialogues with their peer groups to find solutions. Because Gen Z uses social media a lot, the meaning of peer groups (friends) for learning is expanded, including learning from figures in cyberspace (Harmadi, 2022).

The cultural code in this cartoon is political pragmatism which is quite strong in the context of the Election in Indonesia. Political pragmatism assumes that involvement in politics is an easy path to achieving high status, position, and office in society (Ekowati, 2019). According to this viewpoint, political decisions and actions are assessed according to their effects and ability to accomplish objectives rather than their conformity to doctrines or values (Heywood, 2021). By weaving together various codes, the cartoon serves not just as a political critique but also as a reflection of the hopes, fears, and intricate complexities of Indonesian society during a pivotal political period.

The editorial cartoon published in Kompas daily on November 1, 2023, illustrates the myth of democracy as a cure-all, portraying general elections as the ultimate answer to the nation's challenges. This is depicted through a crowd focusing on a large note 2024 – *TRACK RECORD, VISION-MISSION, PROGRAM OF PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES*, symbolizing the public's high hopes for transformation via democratic means. The myth of the ideal leader is further emphasized by hashtags like #INTEGRITY? and the spotlight on candidates' visions and missions, highlighting the inclination to search for a political "savior."

The image of people trying to understand the candidate's program implies political transparency, as if all political information is easily accessible and understandable. The diverse crowd depicts equal public participation, ignoring the reality of inequality of participation in society. The focus on 2024 depicts the myth of rapid change, as if significant change can occur in one election cycle. The diversity in the crowd also reflects the myth of equality in democracy.

These myths show how concepts such as democracy, leadership, and public participation are naturalized in Indonesian political discourse, often obscuring the complexities and contradictions that exist in everyday political realities. This reality, for example, is about money politics. This is reinforced by the study by Virananda et al. (2021), which shows that campaign spending has a significant influence on a candidate's chances of being elected in elections in Indonesia.

Another reality is the issue of dynasty politics or kinship politics, which until now we can still see in the 2024 Election, and this has become a public discourse, namely with the appointment of the son of Indonesian President Joko Widodo as a vice presidential candidate. In addition, sons-in-law, even brothers-in-law, occupy strategic positions both in the government, judiciary, and political party circles (Kompas, 2023). This phenomenon has an unbreakable connection to the myth of the leader, which holds that leadership and leadership abilities can be passed genetically. This viewpoint has substantial historical origins, given that in the early twentieth century, most countries were headed by the "ruling class". This thinking then gave rise to the widespread belief that only a handful of people were gifted with special abilities and traits to become leaders, and that these traits could only be inherited, not developed or learned (Kippenberger, 2002).

This is further complicated by the demographic shift in voters for the 2024 election, which will be dominated by young voters, particularly Generation Z. However, Batalipu (2024) said that from the results of the 2024 Election, we can assume that Gen Z is less exposed to political education, resulting in weak critical thinking. In the third editorial cartoon, published in *Kompas* on November 22, 2023, a figure is depicted with the head of the Constitutional Court (MK) building, identified by its dome, the letters 'MK', pillars, judge's attire, judge's gavel, and scattered documents. The figure appears unsteady, entangled by an octopus with one tentacle written "LEGAL UNCERTAINTY OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION." In the lower right corner, a small man holding a cell phone gazes out of the frame, accompanied by the text: "...DON'T LET THE ELECTION BECOME SAD...."

The hermeneutic code in this cartoon is the figure of a judge headed by the Constitutional Court building wrapped in octopus tentacles, representing the Constitutional Court after deciding on the judicial review of the minimum age requirements for presidential and vice presidential candidates, and reading out the decision on the maximum age on Monday (10/23/2023). The Constitutional Court is asked to consistently state that the issue of age is an open legal policy, which is the realm of legislators. An open legal policy is a concept in the legal and political system where lawmakers (legislators) are given the freedom or broad space to determine legal policies in a statutory regulation. Another hermeneutic code in this cartoon is the small figure on the bottom right, wearing a t-shirt, holding a smartphone, and looking out of the frame (towards the reader) with the sentence, "...DON'T LET THE ELECTION BECOME SAD...". With a confused or worried expression, this figure seems to represent the people who hope that the 2024 Election can run with legal certainty and happily like a democratic party.

The proairetic code in this image depicts the weakening of the Constitutional Court (MK): the octopus tentacles symbolize the takeover attempt, the wrapped judge's gavel indicates the

manipulation of decisions, and the distortion of the building reflects the change in the ideal form and function of the institution. All of these things make the lay public who is lying in the small figure on the bottom right worried and feel helpless in facing the condition. The overall picture in this cartoon builds a plot about the crisis in the legal (and political) system related to the presidential election.

The symbolic code in this cartoon is an octopus, which often symbolizes great power that is manipulative and has a wide influence. The octopus's tentacles gripping the Constitutional Court building shows that legal institutions are influenced and manipulated from various sides. This symbol emphasizes the existence of organized manipulation that threatens the legal system and democracy. With this symbolism, the message becomes stronger in conveying the complexity of the challenges faced by the legal system and democracy when faced with great power. Regarding this, in an interview on October 23, 2024, Political Communication Expert, Lely Arrianie, said,

"Politics should be under the law, but the power of influence of power is sometimes so dominant that in the name of justice, for example, they think it is fair. Even though those who see it are the actual verses. Like Gibran with the Constitutional Court's decision, he has legal certainty, but the legal certainty is not equal to its determination at the KPU, which has not changed its PKPU first. But power seems more dominant". Furthermore, this image shows a rich and complex semiotic code in the context of the polemic of the Putusan MK No. 90/PUU-XXI/2023. The giant octopus with the label "LEGAL UNCERTAINTY OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION" not only symbolizes general chaos, but specifically criticizes the Constitutional Court's legal interpretation of Article 169 letter q of Law No. 7 of 2017. This case is a re-test of the previous Constitutional Court decision, reflecting an effort at "legal resistance" and adding to the complexity of the ongoing legal uncertainty.

The flying papers with number 141 show how this legal uncertainty continues despite previous decisions, creating a bad precedent in the Indonesian constitution. This is in line with the opinion expressed by Mochtar (2023a), that excessive political movements have made the Constitutional Court's decision like this. The decision illustrates how independent the judiciary is in making decisions, including entering into issues that should not be the business of the judiciary. Furthermore, the phrase "...DON'T LET THE ELECTION BECOME SAD..." reflects the concern that the democratic process that should bring hope actually has the potential to bring sadness or disappointment. Meanwhile, the dominance of the octopus in the frame shows how massive the impact of this legal uncertainty is, threatening to drown the entire democratic process.

Cultural code refers to the Indonesian political and legal system, particularly the role of the Constitutional Court (MK) in the presidential election. This cartoon responds to the spotlight on the Constitutional Court after receiving an ethics complaint regarding ruling 90/PUU-XXI/2023, in which the Constitutional Court stated that even though they are not yet 40 years old, a person can nominate themselves in the presidential election contest as long as they have held or are currently holding an elected position, including regional head elections. The ruling was not unanimous: two judges stated different reasons, four dissented. The octopus metaphor

refers to the hidden forces that are widespread in politics. The statement "...Don't let the election become sad..." reflects public concerns about the integrity of the election process.

The text in the editorial cartoon of the November 22, 2023 edition raises the myth of a "hidden power" or "mastermind" behind the scenes that is often believed to control politics and law in Indonesia. This resonates with the popular narrative about the existence of oligarchic power or political elites who are able to manipulate the system for their own interests. Regarding this, Lely Arrianie said, "Ahead of the 2024 Election, political dynamics emerged starting from the KMK lawsuit regarding the age limit and Bahlil's efforts to encourage young leadership. This was the beginning of Gibran's emergence as Prabowo's vice presidential candidate. Supported by the power relations between Jokowi-Prabowo and various elements of the government, until finally the Constitutional Court's decision which we consider to have hurt the people's feelings, the punishment of the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court himself, and so on. That was part of the political scenario that then succeeded in placing Gibran as a vice presidential candidate.

The Constitutional Court depicted small in the grip of an octopus represents the myth of "institutional weakness" in the face of great powers, a recurring theme in Indonesian public discourse. It reflects deep skepticism about the ability of state institutions to truly uphold justice and protect democracy. The small figure with the cellphone in the corner of the picture represents the myth of the helpless common people. This confirms the perception that the general public can only be passive spectators in a larger political drama, even though in the digital era they have access to information (symbolized by cellphones). The writing "DON'T MAKE THE ELECTION A MISTAKE" raises the myth of "fragile democracy", reflecting the collective anxiety that the democratic process that should bring hope can actually turn into a source of sadness or disappointment. This is related to the myth that politics must submit to the law, not the law to politics. That is why there is an adage that emphasizes *Politiae legius non leges politii adoptandae*, which means that politics must submit to the law, and not vice versa, the law must be forced to obey and provide a "stamp" of approval for political will (Prasetio & Disantara, 2021).

The fourth cartoon shows the denotative meaning of three human characters who are defending a pole with the word 'DEMOCRACY' written on it and a flag on top. The background depicts a storm, with black clouds, whirlwinds, and sheets of paper or money flying. The figure of a woman in a kebaya shirt on the left says, "...HOPE THE STORM WILL PASS SOON..." The hermeneutic code in this cartoon is in the visual of a storm or tornado that dominates the background, representing various challenges to Indonesian democracy. The human figures trying to hold the pole from the wind symbolize the persistence in maintaining democratic values, including facing the practice of money politics symbolized by the scattered bills around the storm. The proairetic code or action code in this cartoon shows a series of main actions, namely the struggle of the figure to defend the flagpole from the storm, representing the effort to maintain democracy amidst political chaos. Meanwhile, the movement of the storm that rotates and threatens to sweep everything is a continuous antagonistic action, creating tension and urgency in the narrative of this cartoon. The money flying around the storm can be seen as

a consequence of the action of money politics. The writing "Hopefully the storm will pass soon" implies an action of hope that everything will go well.

The cartoon's symbolic code is seen in the large tornado as a symbol of political chaos, corruption, and the threat to democracy. Its size that dominates the image emphasizes the magnitude of the challenges faced. The pole with the words "DEMOCRACY" held by human figures symbolizes the resistance to the chaos. The flying money signifies the corruption and money politics that permeate the system. The flag at the top of the pole symbolizes hope and resilience. The contrasting colors reinforce the battle of good vs. evil. The words "...HOPE THE STORM WILL PASS SOON..." symbolize hope and vulnerability, showing that even though the situation seems critical, there is still optimism for a better future.

This cartoon contains a semiotic code in the form of a tornado that dominates the image, symbolizing political chaos and various issues that threaten democracy, such as polarization, disinformation, and potential electoral fraud. The size of the tornado indicates the scale of the major threat to Indonesian democracy. The pole with the words "DEMOCRACY" held by several figures depicts the foundation of the political system that is being tested and the struggle of elements of society to maintain the integrity of democracy, even though their positions seem vulnerable and require greater collective strength. The money flying around the tornado highlights money politics, such as vote-buying, misuse of state resources, and the dominance of business interests in politics, which are depicted as endemic problems. The flag at the top of the pole, although swaying, continues to fly as a symbol of the people's hopes and national sovereignty that must be maintained. The phrase "...HOPE THE STORM WILL PASS SOON..." has a double meaning, as a hope for post-election stability as well as a criticism of a passive attitude without real action.

The cultural code of the cartoon is the representation of the tornado as a major threat to democracy, drawing on cultural understandings of the challenges facing the Indonesian political system, such as corruption, identity politics, and societal polarization. The money flying around the tornado activates cultural knowledge about the practice of money politics that has long been an issue in every election in Indonesia, reflecting the common perception of corruption that is deeply rooted in the political system. The figures holding onto the pillars of democracy draw on cultural narratives about the power of the people in defending democracy, reminiscent of the active role of civil society and the reform movement that have shaped the Indonesian political landscape.

This cartoon reflects the myth of democracy as a fragile ideal system. The flying money symbolizes money politics, emphasizing public concerns about corruption in elections. In addition to money politics, another myth that appears in this cartoon is democracy without people. This is in line with Winters (2013), argument that oligarchic power, rooted in the ownership of enormous and unequal material resources, has dominated and distorted the process and results of general elections in Indonesia after the New Order. Instead of being a vehicle for substantive political participation for the people, electoral democracy has become an arena for oligarchs to maintain and expand their wealth and political power.

Symbolism, exaggeration, distortion, stereotype, caricature, comedy, and captions were employed in four editorial cartoons published in the Kompas daily during the Presidential-Vice Presidential Elections of 2024. This is clarified by Fetsko (2001) who states that while most people think of cartoons as a type of comedic art that tries to entertain, editorial cartoons are distinct in that they offer thoughts about real-world events. Editorial cartoons address specific public issues, persons, events, or trends in the real world and make statements about them.

The connotative meaning of the four editorial cartoons is that, first, the presidential and vice presidential candidates are in a stronger position than the KPU. This is evident from the large difference between the figures of lawmakers and the KPU. This huge disparity reflects the dominance of well-known political figures in the presidential race, where three candidate pairs - Anies-Muhaimin, Prabowo-Gibran, and Ganjar-Mahfud - have received the majority of popular and media attention. The emphasis on the candidates' large figures demonstrates how political campaigns and narratives prioritize the candidates' personalities and images above the KPU, which is institutional and role-based. This also emphasizes the KPU's problems in performing its tasks independently and effectively in the face of adversity.

The connotative significance of the second editorial cartoon, which was published on November 1, 2023, reflects the public's interest in the democratic process while also demonstrating the diversity and complexity of the public's political views. The many facial expressions show inquiry and skepticism about critical subjects such as corruption, education, and the economy, as represented by hashtags with question marks. According to Aspinall & Mietzner (2019b), the figure carrying the book "HOW TO BE A CALEG" symbolizes political opportunism, in which the party emphasizes candidates with substantial capital over program quality or internal cadres. The practice of "shopping" for candidates, as well as the prevalence of personal campaigns, both benefit the party. Meanwhile, the presence of a figure wearing a "GEN Z" t-shirt indicates that young voters will play a significant role in the 2024 election, since Badan Pusat Statistik (2021) data suggest that Gen Z and millennial demographics are dominant. Gen Z is a crucial target because many of them will be voting for the first time, despite the fact that this demographic is frequently regarded as apathetic. As a result, election organizers and contestants must accommodate their goals through dialogue-based initiatives, social media, and peer group interaction.

The third editorial cartoon depicts the connotative meaning of a giant octopus with the words "LEGAL UNCERTAINTY OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION" gripping the Constitutional Court Building, as a symbol of legal chaos and criticism of the Constitutional Court's interpretation of Article 169 letter q of Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning the age requirements for presidential and vice presidential candidates. The dominance of the octopus illustrates how political interference erodes legal independence, especially after Anwar Usman, Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court and uncle of Gibran Rakabuming, decided the case in favor of his nephew. Paper 141 refers to case 141/PUU-XXI/2023, a re-examination that highlighted a flawed precedent in the Indonesian constitution. This is in accordance with the opinion put forward by Mochtar (2023a), who argued that excessive political activity influenced the Constitutional Court's decision. The verdict shows how independent the judiciary is in making decisions,

including investigating subjects that should not be within its scope of authority. Meanwhile, the small figure holding the telephone depicts public anger over the legal instability that threatens democracy. The phrase "... DON'T LET THE ELECTION BECOME SAD..." expresses anxiety that aspirations for democracy could be dashed.

The fourth editorial cartoon's connotative meaning is shown by the figure of a big cyclone, which represents political chaos as well as the buildup of numerous threats to the integrity of democracy. The tornado's size and ferocity suggest that Indonesian democracy is in jeopardy. The pole with the words "DEMOCRACY" held by many individuals represents the efforts of various members of society to maintain the political system. The flying money emphasizes the subject of money politics, which includes vote-buying, the use of public resources for elections, and the dominance of commercial interests in politics. At the top of the pole, the flag that is still flying despite being damaged by a storm represents democracy's dreams and ideals, which are alive yet fragile. Meanwhile, the phrase "...HOPE THE STORM WILL PASS SOON..." has two meanings: it is a yearning for stability and a satire on the public's passive mentality of simply waiting without taking action.

Connotative reading of 4 editorial cartoons related to the dynastic politics in 2024 Election shows several findings. First, these cartoons represent power and dominance through the play of visual size. Candidate figures depicted large signify the relationship between rulers and people representing the dominance of personality in politics. Second, these cartoons contain criticism of the political system, including issues of legal manipulation as in the case of the Constitutional Court. This criticism is conveyed through various symbolism and metaphors, such as tornadoes as a symbol of democratic chaos, and mirrors symbolizing duality or contradiction.

Another important aspect is the representation of society displayed through crowds with diverse expressions, showing Indonesian pluralism. Hashtags with question marks depict public unrest, while small figures who keep smiling symbolize the resilience of society. This reflects the high interest and concern of the public towards the democratic process, as well as showing the complexity of the political preferences of Indonesian society.

Overall, these cartoons raise crucial issues in the 2024 Election, such as money politics, dynastic politics, image politics, and clientelism. These findings show how editorial cartoons play a role as an effective medium of social criticism in raising and criticizing various problems in the Indonesian democratic process. Through visual play and symbolism, these cartoons not only summarize crucial issues surrounding the 2024 Election but also become a reflection of the hopes and vigilance of the Indonesian people towards the ongoing democratic process.

From the results of the analysis of the text of editorial cartoons containing the 2024 Presidential-Vice Presidential Election, the following myths were found. First, the myth of power and political elites. The myth of political power in Javanese culture emphasizes the signs of centralized power, which is reflected in the depiction of dominant large figures. This myth is closely related to the concept of "fatherism" and patronage, where the leader is seen as a paternal figure. This is reinforced by the myth of "the wise but cunning ruler," which reflects the ambivalence of society towards the figure of the leader. The myth of "hidden power" or

"mastermind" behind the scenes also emerges, resonating with the narrative of the power of the oligarchy that is able to manipulate the system.

Second, myths related to money politics and economic power. The myth that "money is power" becomes central, which illustrates the reality that politics in Indonesia is dominated by the power of money. This can be seen from the depiction of money scattered and the practice of "cow trading politics," which implies an exchange of interests. Voters' votes are seen as commodities that can be bought, indicating how money politics has taken root in the Indonesian political system. Money politics is a sickness that plagues any country's democracy. Pahlevi & Amrullohi (2020) said that corruption develops when leaders are elected at substantial political costs, usually by bribing voters. Bribing the public with money politics during the electoral process unintentionally elects crooked politicians. In line with that, money politics becomes the primary means of establishing leaders who prioritize personal and group interests. Money politics inflate a leader's political costs during the election campaign (Syauket, 2022).

Third, the myth of democracy without the people is one key indicator of which is the level of party identification. Party identification is "one's affective orientation, attitude, or feeling towards a political party in society". In other words, party identification is a person's emotional and psychological closeness to a party and their tendency to choose that party from election to election. The level of party identification is classified as very low in Indonesia.

The findings in this study strengthen and complement several previous studies on political editorial cartoons. In terms of the representation of power and dominance, the research findings are in line with the research of Nares & Montaña (2022) which identified myths in editorial cartoons about the Philippine elections, including myths about political hostility and abuse of power. The use of visual symbols to depict the dominance of power also reinforces the findings of Zakaria & Mahmood (2018) about how editorial cartoons raise various political issues with a distinctive style of criticism.

The aspect of community representation in the findings of this study complements the study of Fiankor et al. (2017) on political cartoons in Ghana, which show how cartoons can reflect political polarization but also become a medium for voicing people's aspirations. This is also in line with the findings of Okon & Samuel (2018) about how editorial cartoons are a powerful way to convey messages about serious public issues. In terms of revealing crucial issues for the 2024 Election, this research strengthens the findings of Akbar & Hidayah (2023) about the role of the media in framing news according to the political interests of voters. However, this research provides a new perspective by focusing on editorial cartoons as a medium of criticism that uses Barthes' semiotic approach, different from previous studies that have used more content analysis or descriptive approaches.

CONCLUSION

Through the interplay of signs and symbols, these editorial cartoons not only summarize crucial issues, such as dynastic politics in the 2024 Election, but also reflect both the hopes and anxieties surrounding the democratic process. These cartoons invite readers to contemplate the nature and challenges of democracy in Indonesia and encourage efforts to improve the political

system towards a more substantive and integrity-driven direction. Thus, editorial cartoons become an effective medium for discussing complex issues around elections in a satirical, entertaining, yet critical way. Academic suggestions for future research include examining editorial cartoons from micro, meso, and macro perspectives to obtain more comprehensive findings. Researchers are encouraged to use a critical discourse analysis approach to uncover the power structures, ideologies, and interests operating behind the text of editorial cartoons. Such studies can also serve as a reference for other research in political communication, particularly regarding the role of mass media in shaping public discourse about elections in Indonesia.

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