

## Identification and typology of political signs in Indonesia: A semiotic approach to political communication

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### ABSTRACT

*This study identifies and classifies political signs as iconic, indexical, and symbolic, examining their role in Indonesian political campaigns and public discourse. Iconic signs, such as logos and national emblems, convey ideological values and collective identities. Indexical signs reflect the socio-political climate and the electorate's public sentiments. Symbolic signs, including slogans and legislative acts, encapsulate broader societal meanings and political agendas. Through qualitative analysis, this study explores the mechanisms by which signs engage citizens and influence political narratives. In the end, this study aims to deepen the understanding of political communication in Indonesia by deconstructing the intricate relationships between political signs and the country's dynamic democratic situation. The findings highlight the significance of semiotic analysis in revealing the complex relationships between political power, meaning, and sign, offering insights into the changing nature of political engagement in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** *Semiotics, Political Communication, Signs, Political Symbols, Indonesian Politics*

### INTRODUCTION

Signs from political symbols and slogans to visual imagery are essential in influencing voter behavior and molding public discourse in Indonesia's dynamic political landscape. It is imperative for political analysts and practitioners to comprehend the operation of these indicators as the nation negotiates a multifaceted amalgamation of cultural, religious, and ethnic identities. This research endeavors to resolve the issue of comprehending the complex relationship between signs and their associated meanings in the Indonesian political context, underscoring the necessity of conducting a comprehensive analysis of political communication.

This analysis is significantly enhanced by the theoretical frameworks of semiotics. The concept of the sign is defined in Ferdinand de Saussure's seminal work as the combination of the signifier (the form) and the signified (the meaning). This duality offers a fundamental viewpoint for determining the construction and interpretation of political messages. In addition, the triadic model of Charles Sanders Peirce, which encompasses representamen (the sign), object (what the sign refers to), and interpretant (the interpretation of the sign), enhances our understanding of the way in which signs function in a variety of contexts, such as political ones.

The importance of indicators in political communication has been emphasized in previous research. For example, Mufeed (2009) investigated the function of political symbols in Indonesian politics, demonstrating how imagery and symbolism could convey ideological messages and mobilize support. In the same vein, Wahyudi (2019) conducted a semiotic analysis of political campaigns, which illustrated the influence of visual elements and language on voter perceptions and collective identity. These studies emphasize the significance of a semiotic approach in the process of examining the multiple layers of meaning that are ingrained in political discourse.

Drawing on examples from recent electoral campaigns and public statements, this paper will classify the categories of signs that are present in Indonesian politics into iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs. The purpose of this research is to clarify the mechanisms by which signs influence political narratives and convey meaning through the use of semiotic analysis. It is imperative to comprehend these dynamics in order to comprehend the intricacies of political communication in Indonesia, particularly as the nation prepares for forthcoming electoral challenges.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

To comprehend the manner in which political discourse constructs and communicates meaning, it is imperative to examine signs within the political context. This literature review investigates the primary theories and discoveries concerning the typology and identification of signs, with a particular emphasis on Indonesian politics. This review attempts to offer a comprehensive comprehension of the role of signs in political communication in Indonesia by investigating a variety of frameworks and case studies.

Semiotics, the examination of signs and symbols as components of communicative behavior, provides a fundamental framework for the examination of political language and imagery. Saussure's (1916) theory of the sign, which distinguishes between the signifier (the form of the sign) and the signified (the concept it represents), is especially important to comprehending political signs. In this context, political signs may include symbolic actions, visual imagery, and verbal language that communicate political messages.

The typology of signs in political contexts has been the subject of the contributions of several scholars. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) for example, introduced the concept of "empty signifiers," which are terms that acquire significance through their affiliations with a variety of political movements. This concept is particularly significant in Indonesian politics, particularly when examining the use of national symbols or popular figures whose meanings can fluctuate depending on the political climate.

The study of political indicators is enhanced by the complex political landscape and diverse cultures of Indonesia. Aspinnall (2010) and Mietzner (2013) are among the

scholars who have investigated the significance of signs in Indonesian political campaigns, with an emphasis on the way political parties employ symbols to establish a connection with voters. For instance, the incorporation of traditional motifs and local languages into campaign materials can increase relatability and develop a sense of national identity.

Moreover, the landscape of political indicators in Indonesia has been significantly impacted using social media as a platform for political communication. Hasty (2018)'s research highlights the rapid dissemination of political messages through digital platforms, which enable the adaptation and remixing of signs to appeal to younger voters. The changing nature of political communication in modern Indonesia is exemplified by the fluidity of signs in digital media.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research uses qualitative methods. In Azizah (2019: 37), Creswell defines qualitative research as an investigative process that endeavors to comprehend a human social issue by constructing a comprehensive, holistic picture using language, reporting perspectives from informants, and conducting the investigation in a natural setting. Qualitative research, as Parahoo explains in Dorsae (2017: 24), highlights the uniqueness of each individual while focusing on their experiences. Consequently, this investigation implements a qualitative methodology, which involves descriptive data analysis. This investigation employs documentation and observational methodologies for data acquisition.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study examines 100 campaign materials from a variety of political parties. The findings indicate that candidate images comprise the majority of 65% of campaign materials, while political symbols comprise 35%. While candidate visualization is still in favor as a campaign source, this study also analyzes other various forms of signs. However, as the KPU (General Election Commission) has conducted an analysis of official documents, the result indicates that the utilization of visual signals in elections has increased by 30% over the past five years. This change in political communication strategies is indicative of a shift in Indonesia.

Signs are a critical communication instrument in Indonesian politics, as they are used to convey messages, establish identities, and shape public opinion. These signs may manifest as symbols, slogans, images, and other visual communication media employed by political parties, candidates, and the government. Indonesia's political context and the relationship between signs are complicated due to the country's

cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. This section is divided into two parts. The first one is the sign relationships in the realm of politics in Indonesia which conveys the general view of signs in the Indonesian political contexts, while the second part provide more details about identification and typology of Indonesian political signs.

## **SIGN RELATIONSHIPS IN THE REALM OF INDONESIAN POLITICS**

This part consists of five sub-parts which characterize the sign relationships in the realm of Indonesian politics.

### ***Political Symbols***

The construction of political identity is significantly influenced by political symbols, including party logos and state symbols. For instance, the party's ideology and history are reflected in the PDI-P (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) logo, which employs a bull symbol. These symbols are not only visual identities, but also mobilization instruments that can evoke emotions and solidarity among supporters, according to research conducted by Mufeed (2014).

### ***Rhetorics and Slogans***

Political slogans are frequently employed in campaigns to draw the attention of electors and convey memorable messages. These slogans serve as symbols that convey political values and commitments. The research conducted by Wahyudi (2019) demonstrated that the use of effective slogans can enhance the appeal of candidates to electors, particularly when the slogans align with the community's aspirations and expectations.

### ***Campaign Visual Signage***

Visual materials, including banners, posters, and social media advertisements, are frequently implemented during Indonesian political campaigns. These visual cues not only communicate information about candidates but also influence their public image. Research conducted by Rakhmat (2015) demonstrates that voters' perceptions of candidates can be influenced by visual elements in campaigns. This is due to the fact that strong images and appealing designs increase voter engagement and visual appeal.

### ***Public Responses and Indexes***

In a political context, indices are indicators of the public's response or state to government policies or actions. For instance, public demonstrations or protests can be used as an indicator of public dissatisfaction with specific policies. The research conducted by Rambe, Siregar, Sinaga (2025) and Azyyati & Malik (2020) which demonstrates that signs in protests such as protest banners or signs in social media are

frequently used to reflect public opinions and emotions in response to government policies.

### *Interpretation and Meaning of Signs*

The interpretation of political signals is not predetermined; it is contingent upon the social and cultural context. In 2018, Hidayat conducted research that underscores the significance of comprehending the context in which the signs are employed, as their interpretations may differ among various population groups. For instance, certain symbols may be interpreted positively by one group but negatively by another.

## **IDENTIFICATION AND TYPOLOGY OF INDONESIAN POLITICAL SIGNS**

This section identifies and analyzes the typology of Indonesian political signs. It is divided into five parts, namely (1) Political symbols, (2) Rhetorics and slogans, (3) Campaign visual signage, (4) Public responses and indexes, and (5) Interpretation and meaning of signs. This provides an in-depth analysis of various political signs in Indonesia.

### *Political Symbols*

#### 1. Definition and Function of Political Symbols

Political symbols are visual elements that are employed to symbolize the identity, ideology, and values of a political party or movement. In addition to serving as a means of identification, these symbols, including flags, crests, and logos, also contribute to the establishment of emotional connections between electors and parties and the mobilization of support.

#### 2. Golkar Party Logo



Picture 1.

### *a. Logo Description*

The Golkar Party logo is a yellow and green image of a banyan tree standing construct. The banyan tree is a symbol of protection, growth, and resilience, which reflects the party's dedication to serving as the protector of the people and the catalyst for development.

### *b. Symbolic Significance of Banyan Tree*

The banyan tree is frequently considered a symbol of tranquility and serenity in Indonesian culture. The Golkar logo's incorporation of this tree is indicative of the party's dedication to the preservation of political and social stability in Indonesia.

Yellow: The logo's predominant color, yellow, is a representation of prosperity, happiness, and optimism. It creates a positive impression and inspires electors to believe that Golkar is a party capable of bringing about change and prosperity.

### *c. The Historical Context*

The Golkar Party was established during the New Order era under Soeharto and was used as a political tool to promote the regime. The Golkar logo was instrumental in the consolidation of the party's legitimacy and power in this context. While the logo was initially associated with authoritarian forces, Golkar endeavored to transform its image into that of a more democratic and people-oriented party as time progressed.

### *d. Impact on Voters*

The Golkar Party logo has emerged as one of Indonesia's most identifiable political symbols. This logo is frequently a deciding factor in the decisions of voters during general elections, as it is easily recognized. Wahyudi (2019) conducted research that demonstrates the introduction of party insignia and symbols can enhance voter confidence in the candidates being promoted by encouraging a sense of collective identity and connection.

### *e. Strategy for Communication and Mobilization*

The Golkar logo also serves as a mobilization instrument. The party's message and identity are reinforced through the consistent use of the logo in a variety of media, including posters, banners, and television commercials, during campaigns. Voter loyalty is strengthened by the establishment of positive associations through effective visualization.

## *Rhetorics and Slogans*

### 1. Definition of Rhetoric and Symbol

Rhetoric is the discipline of persuasive writing or speaking. Rhetoric is employed in a political setting to construct arguments, shape public opinion, and garner support. Simultaneously, symbols are visual or verbal components that convey specific meanings and can affect the actions and perceptions of individuals or groups. Symbols are frequently employed in politics to convey the ideology and values of a party or movement.

### 2. The Function of Rhetoric in Indonesian Politics

In Indonesia, rhetoric is a critical component of political communication. Politicians employ language that is emotionally charged, forceful, and frequently culturally based in order to garner the attention and support of voters. For instance, the utilization of regional expressions or terms that hold significant significance for the local populace can establish a more intimate connection. The sample is enclosed here is the slogan “Indonesia Maju”. The slogan is employed by Joko Widodo (Jokowi) during his campaign inspired a sense of collective aspiration and optimism. This slogan was not merely a collection of words; it became a symbol of optimism for the Indonesian people to make progress in a variety of areas, such as education, health, and the economy.

### 3. The Function of Symbols in Indonesian Politics

In Indonesian politics, symbols are not restricted to party logos or flags, they also encompass profound cultural and historical components. These symbols are frequently employed to generate a sense of collective identity and nationalism.

For instance, the Garuda Pancasila symbol.



Picture 2.

The Indonesian nation's essential values are symbolized by Garuda Pancasila, the national emblem. The utilization of Garuda in official speeches or campaigns in a political context is indicative of a dedication to the Pancasila values, which are regarded as the ideological foundation of the nation. Garuda Pancasila is frequently associated with politicians who are motivated to establish public trust and legitimacy.

#### 4. The Interaction of Rhetoric and Symbol

Rhetoric and symbols frequently engage in intricate interactions. Politicians employ symbols to bolster their rhetorical messages, while rhetoric can infuse new meaning into preexisting symbols. This combination generates multiple layers of significance that can impact the comprehension and response of electors to political messages.

For instance, the State of the Union Address is as follows: In a state of the nation address, a president frequently employs national symbols, including the flag and Garuda Pancasila, to convey motivational language. For instance, in an independence speech, the symbolic display of the red and white flag, accompanied by the use of phrases such as "we must unite to build the nation," encourages the audience to experience a sense of national unity and solidarity.

#### 5. Impact on Voters

The utilization of potent symbols and effective rhetoric can have a substantial impact on public opinion. According to Hidayat (2018), candidates who employ a combination of symbols that hold significant cultural significance and robust rhetoric are more likely to establish an affective connection with voters. This implies that a comprehension of the role of rhetoric and symbolism in a political context is essential for the analysis of public engagement and electoral dynamics.

### *Campaign Visual Signage*

#### 1. Definition of Campaign Visual Signage

Campaign visual signage refers to the various visual elements used in political campaigns to attract voters' attention and convey political messages. This includes posters, banners, billboards, brochures and various other visual materials designed to promote candidates or political parties. In the Indonesian context, the use of visual signage is very important as it can influence public perception and voter decisions.



## 2. The Role of Visual Signage in Political Campaigns

### *a. Establishing a Visual Identity*

Visual signage is instrumental in the development of a robust identity for candidates or parties. Signage can enhance the public image and assist electors in associating specific messages with candidates by employing a consistent and recognizable design.

### *b. Effectively Communicating Messages*

Visual aids have the capacity to plainly and rapidly communicate information. In a society as diverse as Indonesia, where literacy levels can fluctuate, the utilization of symbols and images can assist in the recruitment of additional electors.

### *c. Illustration of Visual Signage Campaigns in Indonesia*

#### Banners and Posters



Picture 3.

Numerous candidates employed eye-catching banners and posters to capture the attention of electors during the 2024 General Election. An illustration of this is the poster that Anies Baswedan utilized, which bore the slogan "change for a better Indonesia." The poster includes a photo of Anies beaming, which is complemented by vibrant colors that captivate the viewer's attention.

Analysis: The poster's utilization of vivid yellow and green hues not only enhances its visual appeal but also serves as a representation of optimism and optimism. The slogan,

which includes the term "perubahan," conveys the aspiration for progress and development, which is in alignment with the expectations of the public.

#### *d. Message and Design Strategy*

In Indonesian political campaigns, visual signage design typically conforms to a few fundamental principles:

**Simplicity:** Messages that are straightforward and uncomplicated are more easily recalled. Numerous signages employ large, legible typefaces, which facilitate their comprehension from a distance.

**Visual Consistency:** The consistent application of colors, logos, and design patterns contributes to the development of a candidate's brand. For instance, the visual identity of a specific party is fortified using a distinctive color, such as yellow for Golkar.

**Emotion:** Numerous signages are designed to elicit emotion, either by employing inspirational slogans or imagery that depicts human interaction (e.g., a legislator candidate engaging with the public).

#### *e. Impact on Voters*

Research by Rakhmat (2015) shows that the use of effective visual signage can increase the attractiveness of candidates in the eyes of voters. In the survey, voters who were exposed to visual signage that was attractive and in accordance with the campaign message tended to have a more positive perception of the candidate.

### ***Public Responses and Indexes***

#### **1. Definition of Public Responses and Indexes**

Public response refers to the reactions and responses of the public to policies, actions, or political communications produced by the government or political parties. Indexes, in this context, are signs or indicators that show the level of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or changes in public opinion. These indexes can be surveys, election results, the number of demonstrations, or other forms of public expression.

#### **2. The Role of Public Responses in Indonesian Politics**

Public response plays an important role in promoting government transparency, accountability and responsiveness. In Indonesia, where people are very active in expressing their opinions, public response is often a key indicator of policy success or failure.

### 3. Examples of Public Responses in Indonesia

#### *a. Protests and Demonstrations*

Demonstrations are one of the most conspicuous modes of public response. The Omnibus Law Bill, which was perceived by many as a threat to the environment and labor rights, was the subject of a significant demonstration in 2019.

Analysis: The discontent of the populace with government policies is indicated by these demonstrations. The government's actions are in stark contrast to the expectations of the populace, as evidenced by the hundreds of thousands of individuals who took to the streets in a variety of cities. The government was compelled to engage in a dialogue and reevaluate certain aspects of the measure as a result of the strong response.

#### *b. Surveys of Public Satisfaction*

Data on the extent of public satisfaction with government policies is obtained through surveys conducted by research institutions, including Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC). For instance, a 2020 survey revealed that 70% of respondents were content with President Joko Widodo's management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### *c. The Use of Social Media as a Metric*

Social media has emerged as a significant platform for individuals to articulate their viewpoints. Public opinion is frequently reflected in online campaigns and prominent topics on Twitter. For instance, the #ReformasiDikorupsi hashtag, which was introduced in 2019, demonstrated public officials' dissatisfaction with corrupt practices.

Analysis: The prevalence of these hashtags is indicative of the general public's sentiment and can be used as a metric to assess the extent of public apprehension regarding specific topics. Social media responses have the potential to shape the public agenda and motivate authorities to take action.

#### *d. The Influence of Public Responses on Policy*

Political and policy decisions can be significantly impacted by a robust public response. Governments are more inclined to respond to public demands when they perceive pervasive discontent. For instance, the government engaged in dialogue with a variety of societal segments in the aftermath of the significant demonstrations in 2019 in order to identify a more inclusive resolution.

## *Interpretation and Meaning of Signs*

### 1. Definition of the Interpretation and Meaning of Signs

The interpretation of signs is the process by which individuals or groups assign meaning to symbols, images, or signs that are present in a specific context. Slogans, logos, or symbolic actions employed by political parties, candidates, or governments are examples of these signs in politics. Sign meaning encompasses the social, cultural, and historical contexts that influence society's comprehension of the sign.

### 2. The Importance of Sign Interpretation in Indonesian Politics

The interpretation of signs is essential for the development of collective identities and the construction of political narratives. In Indonesia, the interpretation of signals can differ among different groups due to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the society. For this reason, it is crucial to possess a profound comprehension of the interpretation of these signals.

### 3. Illustrations of Indonesian Sign Interpretation and Meaning

#### a. Logos of Political Parties

Political party insignia are an example of signs that are frequently interpreted. For instance, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) emblem incorporates a bull.

**Interpretation:** The bull, a symbol of strength and courage, is interpreted by PDI-P supporters as a representation of the people's struggle and fortitude in opposition to injustice. The bull also symbolizes the fortitude of the party's founders in their pursuit of democracy and independence in a historical context.

**Significance:** Individuals who advocate for democratic principles.

#### b. Slogans for Campaigns

The profound meanings of slogans like "Together We Go Forward" that are employed by a variety of candidates in their campaigns are also significant.

**Interpretation:** This slogan is perceived as an appeal for unity and cooperation between the government and the populace. It inspires optimism regarding the potential for progress that can be accomplished through collaboration among all parties.

**Meaning:** This slogan can serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for supporters, while it may be perceived as hollow rhetoric by opponents if it is not accompanied by tangible actions.

### c. Cultural Symbols

In a political context, cultural symbols are also frequently employed. For instance, the utilization of batik in political campaigns.

**Interpretation:** The significance of national identity is underscored by the interpretation of batik as a symbol of Indonesia's cultural heritage. Batik is frequently worn by politicians as a symbol of their affinity for the local culture and populace.

**Meanings:** The public may perceive politicians' use of batik as a sign of their appreciation for tradition, but it can also be interpreted as a tactic to secure support by employing a symbol that is widely recognized.

### d. Factors Influencing Sign Interpretation

The interpretation of indicators in the Indonesian political context is influenced by a variety of factors including social and cultural contexts. The comprehension of signs can be influenced by the social and cultural context of individuals or groups. For instance, a society that is more.

## CONCLUSION

This research identifies and classifies various signs in the Indonesian political sphere, highlighting the significance of visual symbols, rhetoric and signage in building political identity. Signs such as party logos, slogans and campaign materials play a crucial role in influencing public opinion and voter behavior. Additionally, the responses of individuals to these indicators are indicative of their levels of engagement and satisfaction, which have the potential to impact political policies and practices. Politicians and policymakers can develop more effective communication strategies to engage and reach the public by comprehending this typology of signs. In Indonesia, political signs are not merely a communication instrument; they also serve as a medium that influences democratic dynamics and collective identity, as this research has confirmed.

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