
Symbols and Discursive Contestation of Presidential Election in Indonesia

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Abstract

This article will discuss how religion and identity become important factors in elections, especially in presidential elections. It means that this article will discuss how presidential candidates use religious symbols to gain support from religious voters, as well as the impact of the use of religious symbols in political campaigns. The discourse battle between the two candidate pairs shows the contestation between identity and popularity in Indonesian politics. Political identities based on religious symbolism, nationalism and populism can strengthen a candidate's political identity and attract support from certain groups. However, political popularity based on symbolism can trigger polarization and religious intolerance and ignore the interests of the wider community. Symbolism analysis shows how the two pairs of candidates use symbolism to strengthen their political identity. The Prabowo-Hatta pair used religious symbols such as pictures of the Kaaba and verses from the Koran in their campaign as a way to show they were religious leaders and true nationalists. Meanwhile, the Jokowi-Kalla pair uses symbols of nationalism such as the Red and White Flag and the Garuda Emblem as symbols of national pride and inclusive Indonesian identity. The 2014 presidential election in Indonesia shows the contestation between identity and popularity in Indonesian politics. Political identities based on religious symbolism, nationalism and populism can strengthen a candidate's political identity and attract support from certain groups. However, political popularity based on symbolism can trigger polarization and religious intolerance and ignore the interests of the wider community.

Keywords: Symbols, Discourse, Religious Identity, and the 2014 Presidential Election

Introduction

The presidential election is the biggest celebration of democracy in Indonesia. As a country with a system of government that upholds freedom of speech, democratic spaces are wide open and guaranteed by law. Moreover, after the fall of the Soeharto regime through the mechanism of people's power, the role of democracy and freedom of speech has found a glimmer of hope to be nurtured and preserved (Legowo et al., 2013). This also reflects that Indonesia adopts a system of government that mandates periodic presidential elections, held every 5 years, placing the presidential election as a momentum to continuously uphold the principles of justice and dignity in the country.

After Indonesia was led by Soeharto during the era of the New Order (Mackie, 1998; Vatikiotis, 2013), Indonesia began rebuilding the nation's aspirations to build a just and prosperous society based on belief in the One Supreme God. This hope emerged after the direct presidential election in 2004 (Ismanto, 2004). It does not mean that there were no presidential elections before, but in the past, presidential elections were held under a parliamentary system. Such implementation revealed a prominent formation of elite classes at that time. As a result, whoever was elected as president under the parliamentary system, it was merely a game at the elite level, and the role of the people in the context of political participation could be said to be minimal (Asrinaldi, 2013). Therefore, it is not surprising that the resulting government was corrupt, as there was no genuine intention for transparency and creating access for the public at large, both within political parties and mass organizations. Thus, the author personally believes that the presidential election is a platform for the creation and recognition of the people's political rights to determine the future of the nation's development.

Indonesia is a multicultural country, consisting of various ethnicities, languages, and religions (Lestari, 2016; Munif, 2018; Syaifuddin, 2006). According to data from the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS RI, 2015), there are over 1,000 ethnic groups and 6 official religions recognized in Indonesia. Religion is an important part of Indonesia's national identity, as the majority of the population adheres to a religion. Based on (BPS RI, 2010) data, 85.2% of the Indonesian population follows Islam, 10.7% Christianity, 1.7% Hinduism, 0.7% Buddhism, and 0.2% Confucianism. Despite Islam having the largest number of followers in Indonesia, the country is also known for its high religious tolerance, where religious and cultural diversity are part of Indonesia's national identity.

In addition to religion, the national identity of Indonesia is also determined by ethnicity, language, and culture. Indonesia is home to more than 1,000 ethnic groups and over 700 different regional languages. Javanese and Sundanese are the largest ethnic groups in Indonesia, followed by Batak, Madurese, and Minangkabau. Indonesian language is the official language of the country, and regional languages are recognized as official regional languages in the areas where they are spoken. The identity of the Indonesian nation is also shaped by its diverse culture, which varies greatly in each region of Indonesia. Traditional arts, dance, music, and handicrafts are unique and diverse parts of Indonesian culture. For example, the Kecak dance in Bali, Tari Piring in West Sumatra, and Tari Saman in Aceh are recognized as world

cultural heritage by UNESCO and are part of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage.

Religion is often used as a tool to influence voters in general elections. Political candidates use religious symbols to gain support from religious voters. Religious symbols are often utilized as a means to strengthen the identity of a particular group of voters. In the 2014 Indonesian presidential election, religious symbols were frequently employed by both pairs of candidates, namely Prabowo Subianto and Hatta Rajasa from the Gerindra Party, and Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla from the Democratic Party.

Literature Review

Prabowo Subianto and Hatta Rajasa utilized symbols of Islam in their campaign, by attending religious events and using language that resonated with Muslim voters (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2014). They also employed slogans such as "Merajut Kembali Ukhuwah Islamiyah" (Weaving Back the Islamic Brotherhood) and "Menegakkan Syariat Islam" (Upholding Islamic Law) to attract support from Muslim voters. On the other hand, Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla used religious symbols by visiting places of worship of various religions and speaking about religious and cultural diversity in Indonesia.

The use of religious symbols in political campaigns has a significant impact on general elections, especially in terms of voter identity and segmentation. Some impacts of the use of religious symbols in political campaigns are as follows:

- a. Voters are more likely to choose candidates who identify with their religion. The use of religious symbols in political campaigns can influence voters to choose candidates who are perceived as being closer to their religious identity.
- b. Candidate selection based on religious identity can reinforce political fragmentation and polarization. Voters who vote based on religious identity tend to choose candidates who align with their own beliefs, which can further divide religious groups.
- c. The use of religious symbols in political campaigns can lead to the politicization of religion and increase religious intolerance. The use of religious symbols in political campaigns can strengthen religious identities and make it easier for people to view others as "outsiders" or "others" who are different from themselves.
- d. In the long term, the use of religious symbols in political campaigns can undermine democracy. Elections based on religious identity can lead to the restriction of individual rights and freedoms, and neglect the broader interests of society.

As a recap, after Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono won the presidential elections twice in a row, according to the presidential law, a president can only serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms (Aulia & Fahmi, 2022). Therefore, the next president must be a new individual. As a manifestation of continuity in national leadership, the mechanism for presidential elections still follows the existing rules, such as being nominated by a political party or a coalition of political parties with a minimum of 25% of the national legislative election votes.

After a long process of political diplomacy among parties, two presidential candidates emerged to compete for the hearts of the Indonesian people (Nurhuda et al., 2016; Pamungkas et al., 2015). The candidates were Prabowo Subianto paired with Hatta Rajasa, referred to as Prabowo-Hatta, who obtained the number one (1) ballot number in the drawing conducted by the election organizers. Meanwhile, Joko Widodo paired with Jusuf Kalla, referred to as Jokowi-JK, obtained the number two (2) ballot number. Prabowo-Hatta were officially declared as presidential and vice-presidential candidates by six political parties, namely Gerindra, Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS), Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN), Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP), Partai Bulan Bintang, and Partai Golkar. On the other hand, Jokowi-JK were supported by five political parties, namely PDIP, NASDEM, PKB, Hanura, and PKPI, with a total national vote share of 39.97% or 207 seats in the DPR. Meanwhile, Prabowo-Hatta received support from 48.93% of the votes or 292 seats in the DPR (see table 1). Looking at the supporting parties and the national vote share, we may have an idea of who would win, but it is not necessarily a linear correlation. As stated by Yunarto Wijaya, a political analyst from Charta Politika, the correlation between legislative election votes and presidential candidate votes may not always align with what happens on the ground because the militancy of constituents is not always high. According to him, the attachment of constituents to parties is only around 16% to 25% (Wardah, VOA, 19/05/2014 <http://www.voaindonesia.com/content/parpol-dukung-pasangan-prabowo-hatta-dalam-pilpres/1917769.html>).

Table 1 Presidential Candidate Strength Based on 2014 Legislative Election Results

Capres-Cawapres	Partai Pendukung	Suara Nasional		Kursi DPR	Total Suara	
		Jumlah	%		Jumlah	%
Jokowi-JK	PDI Perjuangan	23.681.471	18,95	109	51.105.832	40,9
	PKB	11.298.957	9,04	47		
	Partai NasDem	8.402.812	6,72	35		
	Partai Hanura	6.579.498	5,26	16		
	PKPI*	1.143.094	0,91	-		
	Partai Gerindra	14.760.371	11,81	73		
Prabowo-Hatta	Partai Golkar	18.432.312	14,75	91	61.137.746	48,92
	PAN	9.481.621	7,59	49		
	PKS	8.480.204	6,79	40		
	PPP	8.157.488	6,53	39		
	PBB*	1.825.750	1,46	-		

* PKPI and PBB did not pass the parliamentary threshold, therefore they did not obtain any seats, but their national votes are still recognized to support one of the presidential candidates. *Valid national votes amounted to 124,972,491.

Based on the introduction above, the 2014 presidential election is indeed an interesting and intense battle. With only two pairs of candidates competing, both of which are supported by parties that have gone through historic processes in Indonesia's national journey, the candidates will work hand in hand to prepare their teams, strategies, and tactics to win the hearts of the people. Because presidential elections in Indonesia are not only limited to discussions about political parties, but also about individuals who have desires, aspirations, knowledge, and a desire for change. Therefore, the people will choose who they believe can be trusted to lead them for the next 5 years.

In a presidential election, there are several determining factors for winning, ranging from the political machinery (the work of supporting political parties), the level of trust of voters in the presidential and vice-presidential candidates, and how to manage the "floating voters" who chose not to vote in the previous legislative elections. Therefore, the analysis on paper, which is typically done with a quantitative approach, may not necessarily be accurate as it may not fully represent the reality of a presidential election that is filled with changes. Hence, in this article, the author intends to discuss the political strategies employed by the presidential candidates to win the 2014 presidential election.

Indeed, the use of symbols is a crucial strategy that the author will discuss and focus on in this article, as symbols are an essential component of humanity. As stated by Ernst Cassirer, (1987), humans are beings that communicate through symbols, and symbols are the knowledge woven by humans themselves to understand themselves and their surrounding environment. Additionally, as defined by Erwin Goodenough in his analysis of Jewish symbols in the Graeco-Roman period, "A symbol is an object or pattern that, for whatever reason, works on humans and influences humans, surpassing mere recognition of what is literally presented in the given form." Hence, symbols have their own meanings or values and possess their own inherent power to move us (Dillistone, 2002:19).

The 2014 presidential election can be categorized as the most tightly contested compared to the previous elections in 2004 and 2009, as it was only participated by 2 pairs of candidates. Therefore, each candidate would naturally employ various methods to gain support from the public through different forms of campaigns. One of the most effective campaign strategies is to create or shape the image of the presidential candidates to align with the preferences of the public. As humans, we are always accustomed to symbols in communication and understanding, and therefore, one of the most effective ways to create branding for presidential candidates is through the use of symbols as alternative communication to constituents. In this paper, the author intends to discuss the use of symbols in the 2014 presidential election by the two competing presidential candidates vying to become the 7th President of Indonesia.

Tracing the footsteps of symbols is part of the process of continuously engaging in dialogue or communication with the thoughts that shape them. These symbols have become an individual's existence and at the same time serve as markers of differences from others. When there is competition, symbols become something that must be defended with all efforts as a way to assert those differences. As humans, who possess the characteristic of being culture bearers, we always have a system of knowledge that we have learned since birth. Therefore, communication becomes the most effective means for humans to exchange information and knowledge. In relation to this human characteristic, one suitable definition to explain the role and function of humans in reacting and responding is as described by Ernst Cassirer in his book "An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture" (Cassirer, 1987). He states that symbols become the system of beliefs and knowledge that humans use to interact and communicate, as humans have a system of symbols or a symbolic system.

Indeed, this system of symbols is what ultimately gives meaning to human life and distinguishes it from the lives of animals. Through the system of symbols, the inheritance of knowledge is passed down to the next generation, as explained by (Geertz, 1992). To further complement the theoretical framework used to discuss the use of symbols and their meanings in the 2014 presidential election, the concept of semiotics introduced by Geertz (1992) can be employed. According to Geertz (1992), if humans are animals that depend on the web of meaning they themselves weave, then to achieve such meaning, it should be approached through interpretive science, rather than experimental science aimed at discovering laws (Geertz, 1992:5).

Method

The article utilizes a case study approach in examining visual images as representations of religious symbols in electronic news media. Employing a qualitative method, this study also utilizes media literature as the main data source, including scholarly articles, books, and magazines as supporting data. The analysis is conducted by connecting the images with their context to draw comprehensive conclusions about the significance of religious symbols as a factor in the 2014 presidential election. The symbols will be discussed using an interpretive theoretical framework to uncover the meaning and logic behind the use of a particular symbol in relation to the electability or popularity of a candidate, as well as the branding of a particular candidate to win in a fiercely competitive election.

Results and Discussion

Prabowo-Hatta: Nationalist and Religious Representations

In this section, the writer wants to demonstrate that there are several signs used by the Prabowo-Hatta team in rebranding Prabowo's image, similar to Soekarno's image during the golden era of his leadership before 1965. The photos that the writer will show below will initiate the discussion.



Sumber: Tempo.co Bicara Fakta (Link: <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/855736/soal-tolak-salat-jenazah-sejarawan-sebut-bung-karno-pernah-murka>)



Sumber : Luke Hunt (VOA) (Link : <https://www.voanews.com/a/indonesia-readies-for-presidential-vote/4877819.html>)

From the photo above, it is apparent that the Prabowo-Hatta campaign team is trying to create an identical similarity with Soekarno, who is one of the founding fathers of the nation and also the father of Megawati Soekarno Puteri (Chairperson of the PDI Perjuangan). The use of the traditional cap (peci), white attire, passionate speech style, and body language has become a common sight from Prabowo during his presidential campaign. Furthermore, the use of the red Garuda symbol, which is a national symbol, reinforces the writer's belief that Prabowo wants to portray himself as a nationalist and statesman figure, who can be trusted as a future leader to continue the nation's aspirations that were pioneered by Soekarno.

The "peci," as a symbol representing a statesman, is actually not something new in Indonesian history. A story quoted by the writer from (Repen, reportasependidikan.com, 15/01/2018, accessed 02/03/2023, <http://reportasependidikan.com/kisah-peci-hitam-dalam-sejarah-kemerdekaan-indonesia/>) can illustrate this.

"Sosok Pemuda itu masih berusia 20 tahun. Dia tegang. Perutnya mulas. Di belakang tukang sate, dia mengamati kawan-kawannya, yang menurutnya banyak lagak, tak mau pakai tutup kepala karena ingin seperti orang Barat. Dia harus menampakkan diri dalam rapat Jong Java itu, di Surabaya, Juni 1921. Tapi dia masih ragu. Dia berdebat dengan dirinya sendiri. "Apakah engkau seorang pengekor atau pemimpin?"

"Aku seorang pemimpin."

"Kalau begitu, buktikanlah," batinnya lagi. "Majulah. Pakai pecimu. Tarik nafas yang dalam! Dan masuklah ke ruang rapat... Sekarang!"

Setiap orang ternganga melihatnya tanpa bicara. Mereka, kaum intelegensia, membenci pemakaian blangkon, sarung, dan peci karena dianggap cara berpakaian kaum lebih rendah. Dia pun memecah kesunyian dengan berbicara:

"...Kita memerlukan sebuah simbol dari kepribadian Indonesia. Peci yang memiliki sifat khas ini, mirip yang dipakai oleh para buruh bangsa Melayu, adalah asli milik rakyat kita. Menurutku, marilah kita tegakkan kepala kita dengan memakai peci ini sebagai lambang Indonesia Merdeka."

That is the origin of Soekarno introducing the "peci" as a symbol of a strong and independent nation, representing the qualities of statesmanship and leadership that come from the common people, particularly the workers. Soekarno referred to the "peci" as a symbol of Indonesian nationalism. Since then, Soekarno always wore the "peci" in every activity and when appearing in public.

In addition to being a representation of nationalism, the "peci" has also been interpreted as a symbol commonly worn by Muslim intellectuals. Therefore, the use of the "peci" can sometimes be seen as arbitrary, representing both nationalistic and religious attitudes. According to the writer, the use of the "peci" by Prabowo is seen as a representation of both nationalist and religious ideologies, which is logical considering the political platform of the supporting party for Prabowo-Hatta presidential candidacy. As stated by Prabowo in one of the local online media;

Prabowo menjelaskan, PAN adalah sebuah partai hasil dari gerakan reformasi 1998 yang menjadi pelopor dalam pembangunan demokrasi yang sedang dibangun bersama sampai saat ini. PPP adalah partai Islam yang mempunyai akar dalam sejarah perjuangan Indonesia. "Dia telah menghadirkan kader-kader pemimpin bangsa yang hebat-hebat," ujarnya. Sementara PKS menurut Prabowo adalah partai yang militan. Banyak anak-anak muda yang pintar didalamnya. Begitu pula PBB yang mempunyai akar sejarah bagi Indonesia. Begitu pula dengan kendaraan politik Prabowo sebelumnya yakni Partai Golkar. Dengan begitu, menurutnya, Gerindra adalah keponakan Golkar. Partai ber lambang pohon beringin itu diakuianya bersejarah dan berjasa dalam memimpin Indonesia selama 32 tahun. "Dan, partai yang banyak melahirkan kader-kader terbaik di banyak partai yang ada sekarang ini. Termasuk saya sendiri," demikian kata Prabowo. dalam JPNN.com (28 Mei 2014, link: <http://www.jpnn.com/read/2014/05/28/236974/Inilah-Kelebihan-Partai-Pengusung-Prabowo-Hatta>)

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Sumber: Siaran Media Televisi Swasta

The use of the peci symbol as a winning strategy by the successful Prabowo-Hatta team is becoming increasingly evident, as seen in one of the advertisements targeted at the entire Indonesian population on a private television broadcast. As shown in the image above, the advertisement aims to inform all viewers to vote for the peci (a traditional Indonesian hat) in the presidential election on July 9, 2014. The words peci, Prabowo, and number one are repeated multiple times in the advertisement. From this, we can understand that Prabowo-Hatta want to be known as candidates who use the peci, which represents their nationalism and religiosity. The use of the peci symbol is intended to strengthen Prabowo's image as someone worthy of continuing the nation's aspirations and the ideals of reform. Thus, the peci is considered a suitable symbol to target the diverse Indonesian society consisting of different races and religions. Moreover, as Indonesia is a predominantly Muslim country, this symbol can reinforce the constituents' choice to remain steadfast and confident in choosing the Prabowo-Hatta pair.

The Prabowo-Hatta team not only used the peci as a symbol in their strategy to win their campaign, but they also used the house as a symbol that represents a gathering place and can be interpreted as a place to return for a family. As known, Prabowo is a widower who has been divorced from his wife, so according to the writer, the Prabowo Success Team deliberately branded Prabowo using his house as a symbol of family values. In Indonesian culture, the concept of "home" carries a deep and significant meaning. It is a place to return to, to rest, where everyone knows and trusts each other, and where there are no boundaries for anyone. Polonia House served as the base camp for the Prabowo-Hatta success team, and it was used as one of the symbols of nationalism and patriotism that the campaign team tried to convey.

Jokowi-JK: Representation of Young People

Speaking of Jokowi-JK, the author will show some photos that serve as the starting point of the discussion on the symbols used by the presidential candidate pair to create and inform constituents about the personalities and figures of the candidates. The photos are:



<https://www.voa-islam.com/read/indonesiana/2014/06/01/30711/kasih-rakyat-ditipu-jokowijk-syuting-film-makan-dengan-wong-cilik/>

<https://www.merdeka.com/foto/ramadan/75262/20120803234944-perjalanan-religius-jokowi-ke-tanah-suci-bersama-keluarga-012-mudasir.html>



<https://www.wartantb.com/soal-harga-cabai-presiden-jokowi-musim-kemarin-banyak-yang-gagal-panen/>

<https://www.suara.com/bisnis/2017/01/09/123103/jokowi-akui-kenaikan-harga-cabai-sulit-dihindari?page=1>



The seven images above depict the author and can be interpreted as the use of symbols in various spaces and times. There are several symbols that the Jokowi-JK success team tried to convey to target their constituents and to inform them that Jokowi-JK represents Wong Cilik or leaders who come from the people. The symbols are: Blusukan (groundbreaking visit to interact with the people), Family, Attire, Body Language, and Performing Hajj (Islamic pilgrimage).

The images show how Jokowi-JK dined with ordinary people in open spaces while engaging in free and open dialogues. They also depict Jokowi having a warm family meal at his home, as well as images of him and his family performing Hajj together. There is also a depiction of Jokowi's visit to a traditional market (blusukan) and his use of the two-finger gesture, which symbolizes the rise and spirit of the common people. These images represent different spaces and times during Jokowi-JK's campaign to win the 2014 Presidential Election.

The Kaaba, traditional market, house, and sitting in an open area all become symbolic representations of Jokowi-JK as Wong Cilik (a commoner) who emerged from the people to become a leader. The traditional market, representing the

small-scale economy of common people, was one of the targets of Jokowi-JK's campaign. Jokowi's visit to the traditional market indicated his concern for improving the economic well-being of the common people.

In addition to being portrayed as caring for the common people, Jokowi-JK was also depicted as a religious figure, with the Kaaba and Hajj symbolizing his devoutness to Islam. This was meant to convey that Jokowi is a leader who loves the people, his family, and remains steadfast in his religious beliefs while maintaining tolerance towards other religions. Furthermore, Jokowi-JK's campaign slogan "Jokowi adalah Kita" (Jokowi is Us) was used to appeal to people of different professions, ages, religions, and education levels, emphasizing the unity of "us" and concluding with the reaffirming statement "Jokowi adalah Kita" (Jokowi is Us).

Symbols and Discourse Battles in the 2014 Presidential Election in Indonesia

The 2014 Presidential Election in Indonesia was marked by fierce discourse battles between two candidate camps, namely Joko Widodo (Jokowi) - Jusuf Kalla (JK) and Prabowo Subianto - Hatta Rajasa. This battle was not only centered on political and economic issues, but also involved symbols related to religion and Indonesian culture.

Religious symbols were one of the focal points in the 2014 presidential election. Both candidates utilized religious symbols as a means to garner support from Muslim voters, who make up the majority in Indonesia. Prabowo Subianto employed the "red and white" colors and "nasi tumpeng" (a cone-shaped yellow rice dish) claimed as symbols of Indonesian culture rooted in religious values. Meanwhile, Jokowi utilized the symbol of "t-shirts" and the "Indonesian flag," which were also associated with religious values.

The use of religious symbols in the campaign sparked reactions from religious groups who felt disadvantaged or threatened by both candidates. Some religious groups claimed that these symbols did not align with the religious values they adhere to. This indicates that the use of religious symbols in political campaigns can trigger polarization and conflicts among different religious groups.

Furthermore, the use of religious symbols can also influence political identity and political views of voters. Religious symbols can be employed by candidates to reinforce their political identity and attract support from specific religious groups. However, the use of religious symbols can also limit the political perspectives of voters and disregard the broader interests of the society.

The impact of using religious symbols in political campaigns is not only limited to the short-term, but also has long-term consequences. The use of religious symbols can undermine democracy and trigger polarization among religious groups. Therefore, candidates and campaign teams need to carefully consider the use of religious symbols in political campaigns to avoid causing conflicts and polarization in society. It is important to promote inclusive and respectful campaigning that respects the diversity of religious beliefs and fosters harmony among different religious communities.

The competition between the presidential candidate pairs of Prabowo Subianto-Hatta Rajasa and Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla in the 2014 presidential election in Indonesia was marked by intense discourse battles. One important factor in this competition was the use of religious symbolism, nationalism, and populism by both pairs of candidates. The Prabowo-Hatta pair utilized religious symbolism and nationalism to garner support from conservative and nationalist groups. They used religious symbols such as images of the Ka'bah and verses from the Quran in their campaign as a way to portray themselves as leaders who were devout in their faith and true nationalists. Additionally, they also made populist promises such as increasing the salaries of civil servants and increasing subsidies for the people.

On the other hand, the Jokowi-Kalla pair capitalized on nationalism and populism symbolism to garner support from moderate and progressive groups. They used symbols such as the Red and White flag and the Garuda emblem as symbols of national pride and inclusive Indonesian identity. Additionally, they made populist promises such as improving infrastructure and reducing the cost of living. In this discourse battle, the use of religious symbolism, nationalism, and populism had complex consequences. On the positive side, the use of symbolism can strengthen the political identity of candidates and attract support from specific groups. However, on the negative side, the use of symbolism can trigger polarization, exacerbate religious intolerance, and undermine democracy by basing candidate selection on religious identity rather than broader societal interests.

In the context of Indonesia, where religious identity and nationalism play a significant role in politics, the use of religious and nationalistic symbolism is crucial in political campaigns. However, as a pluralistic democracy, Indonesia must ensure that the selection of leaders is based on leadership qualities and the interests of society, rather than solely on symbolism and political identity. If symbols are interpreted as something that stands alone to explain something else, then symbols are actually interpreted freely and arbitrarily by each person interacting with them. As explained above, when symbols are used as a component of a strategy for winning the presidential election in 2014, both successful teams used different symbols to emphasize the character or figure of a particular pair. This also means that the campaign teams wanted to differentiate their presidential candidate from their opponent. In the discourse battle using these symbols, there was a fierce competition between the two pairs of presidential candidates aimed at asserting the character and figure of a particular pair. This can create an interesting and sometimes confusing picture for floating voters. However, floating voters can also be a challenge if not properly considered. Therefore, the discourse battle using symbols becomes something that must be done by the campaign teams supporting the presidential candidates.

If Prabowo-Hatta is portrayed as a firm, authoritative leader capable of carrying on the nation's aspirations like Soekarno, then Jokowi-JK is portrayed as a humble figure, born from the common people, living with the common people, and supporting one of the most important economic components of the common people, namely the market. If Prabowo's image is created as a representation of nationalist and religious figures with symbols such as the traditional cap (peci), support from certain political parties, and daily activities closely aligned with religious teachings, then Jokowi's image is also created in a similar manner, by using the Ka'bah and Hajj activities to represent a devout Muslim figure.

Therefore, symbols can be effective in reaffirming and projecting a desired image of someone, serving as boundaries, reinforcement, and differentiation from other images. However, the use of symbols as a communication medium may be ineffective when a particular symbol does not convey meaning or when the meaning of the symbol has changed among the public. Thus, the discourse battle using specific symbols must be accompanied by providing additional information that aligns with the intended image. Therefore, the person who will win the presidential election in 2014 is the one who consistently and sporadically reaffirms themselves in line with the image projected by their own team.

Conclusions

The use of religious symbols in political campaigns in Indonesia can trigger conflicts and polarization among different religious groups. Candidates and campaign teams need to carefully consider the use of religious symbols to avoid damaging democracy and neglecting the broader interests of the society. The author concludes that the use of the peci (traditional cap) as a symbol for the Prabowo-Hatta pair can have a significant impact in winning the presidential election, as Indonesia has a majority of moderate Muslim population. The peci, which represents the spirit of Indonesian nationalism and is associated with the common people, has a historical significance as described above. The space and utilization of the peci in the campaign are particularly effective when voters are in the polling booth. However, if Jokowi-JK is eventually inaugurated as the President of Indonesia in October 2014, the author assumes that the Prabowo-Hatta pair may not be able to play a sporadic role in providing information and history related to the peci as a symbol of nationalism, religiosity, and the common people.

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