

A Hermeneutical Study of Mass Media Cartoons in The Political Year of 2024

I Wayan Nuriarta*, Ida Ayu Dwita Krisna Ari

Program Studi Desain Komunikasi Visual, Fakultas Seni Rupa dan Desain, Institut Seni Indonesia Bali, INDONESIA

*Penulis korespondensi

Article Info:

Submitted: October 13, 2025

Reviewed: November 28, 2025

Accepted: January 7, 2026

Corresponding Author:

I Wayan Nuriarta

Program Studi Desain Komunikasi Visual, Fakultas Seni Rupa dan Desain, Institut Seni Indonesia Bali, Jalan Nusa Indah Denpasar Timur, Denpasar, Bali 80235, INDONESIA
Email: nuriarta@isi-dps.ac.id

Abstract

Mass media cartoons are works of visual communication that have the 'task' of conveying opinions or criticism of socio-political discourse with a touch of humor. This research aims to describe the visual structure of political cartoons and the role of humour in these cartoons in conveying opinions in mass media. The research design utilises a qualitative approach, with data sourced from the KOMPAS newspaper cartoons by cartoonist Thomdean, published on February 14 and April 24, 2024, and weekly cartoons from TEMPO magazine by Yuyun Nurrachman, from the issues of January 15-21 and January 22-28, 2024. Theories applied in this research include visual communication design, humour theory, and hermeneutics. The results show that the political cartoons in KOMPAS and TEMPO are conveyed through a single-panel storytelling format and utilise humour to communicate political messages. This political cartoon focuses on the general election with an explicit narrative as a representation of visual power. This humour is evident in the visual elements and the written text. The intended message becomes more acceptable to diverse audiences, including those critiqued for using this political humour.

Keywords: cartoons, interpretation, mass media, elections, visual structure.

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Introduction

Opinions in mass media can be expressed in verbal texts, including words, and cartoons, commonly referred to as editorial cartoons or political cartoons. Editorial cartoons are cartoon's whose purpose is to convey criticism, opinions, or editorial perspectives on issues currently being discussed by the public. They are also known as political cartoons because they often discuss political issues. In conveying their opinions, cartoons always contain a touch of humor. In Indonesia, 2024 holds a special place in political cartoons, as it is designated a political year.

Mapping out the political year reveals at least three factors that act as catalysts. First, the political year is the most crucial moment in managing conflict between parties, presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the General Election (Pemilu) or between regional heads in the Regional Head Election (Pilkada). Second, it relates to the branding and political marketing of politicians throughout 2024. All forces with an interest in popularity and electability in the lead-up to the election will naturally employ several persuasive strategies. These include political publicity, the construction and reconstruction of public opinion, and the optimization of political communication channels. This ranges from informal face-to-face engagements and the utilization of traditional social structures to political input and output channels, and the mass media. The Indonesian political landscape is saturated with a series of messages of socialization, publication, and propaganda. Political messages dominate media coverage and public discourse. Third, throughout the political year, actors will build political communication across forces (Heryanto, 2018: 129-130). The media also frequently highlights political discourse because it is the most sought-after news by the public. Political cartoons are also widely published in the media, both print and electronic media.

Many studies related to cartoons have been conducted previously. For instance, Ajidarma (2012) conducted a study in his book, *Antara Tawa dan Bahaya, Kartun dalam Politik Humor* (Between Laughter and Danger: Cartoons in Political Humor), which discusses the ideologies carried by cartoon characters. The cartoons discussed range from Doyok cartoons to Ali Oncom cartoons. Still, this discussion does not include cartoons by cartoonist Thomdean (Koran

KOMPAS) and cartoons by cartoonist Yuyun Nurrachman (Majalah TEMPO). Second, another study was conducted by Sunarto (2019) in his book entitled *Soekarno dalam Kartun, Mitos dan Kontra Mitos* (Soekarno in Cartoons, Myths and Counter Myths). This study discusses the mythification of Soekarno and his ideology, a phenomenon in national political history, as well as the use of political caricatures as a form of communication and the myths in these caricatures, along with their style of expression. This study uses Barthes's myth theory. Third, the survey conducted by Sani (2021) entitled *Wacana Kartun Karya Nuriarta: Kajian Pragmatik* (Cartoon Discourse by Nuriarta: A Pragmatic Study). This dissertation discusses the discourse structure of Nuriarta's cartoons, the meaning and function of speech acts, and the ideology contained in Nuriarta's cartoon discourse.

The cartoon studies conducted by Ajidarma, Sunarto, and Sani are related to this research because they both discuss cartoons. However, the differences are (1) this research discusses political cartoons from the mass media of the KOMPAS newspaper (cartoons by cartoonist Thomdean) and political cartoons from TEMPO magazine (cartoons by cartoonist Yuyun Nurrachman), (2) this research discusses cartoons from the visual structure of cartoons using visual communication design theory to discussing cartoon messages with humor theory and hermeneutic theory, and (3) this research focuses on discussing political cartoons published in 2024.

This study discusses political cartoons in the mass media, specifically in the KOMPAS newspaper and TEMPO magazine. These two mass media were chosen for three reasons. First, both mass media consistently present political cartoons in their publications. KOMPAS newspaper, which is published daily consistently, presents political cartoons every Wednesday and Sunday, while TEMPO magazine, which is published weekly (published on Sunday), also always presents political cartoons. Second, KOMPAS newspaper and TEMPO magazine have a reputation for analytical depth and a neat writing style, which means these qualities also apply to the depiction of political cartoons. Finally, the visual and expression of political cartoons in these two mass media are very different: KOMPAS newspaper cartoons have a black and white appearance, while TEMPO magazine cartoons are in color.

Previous hermeneutic studies on cartoons have generally emphasized the interpretation of symbols, visual style, or general social critique. This paper makes new contributions by examining cartoons specifically in the context of the 2024 political year, where the intensity of visual propaganda, polarization, and framing strategies is increasing. Connecting hermeneutics with an analysis of political media ecology, so that interpretations focus not only on visual symbols but also on power relations, media bias, and persuasive strategies.

This paper expands the scope of Visual Communication Design scholarship by demonstrating that political cartoons function as layered visual communication designs, combining humor, visual metaphors, and ideological critique within a single framework. Certain design patterns (line choices, panel formats, colors, character gestures) systematically influence the interpretation of meaning, beyond mere artistic style. These findings introduce a new mapping of the visual rhetorical strategies used by cartoonists during political contestation, thus providing a basis for new theories in the study of political visuals

Methods

This research is a qualitative study with data sources consisting of political cartoons from the KOMPAS newspaper and TEMPO magazine. Data collection used library and documentation methods. Data analysis was conducted based on formulated theories, specifically examining the visual structure of the cartoon using visual communication design theory and analyzing the cartoon's message through humor theory and hermeneutics theory.

Visual communication design theory is the science that studies the concept of communication and the expression of creative power, which is applied in various visual communication media by processing graphic design elements consisting of images (illustrations), letters (typography), colors, and layout (Tinarbuko, 2015: 5). Visual communication design is the art of conveying information or messages using visual language delivered through media in the form of design.

Today's humor theory is available in various classifications packaged practically. Koestler divides types of humor into categories (1) verbal humor and (2) situational humor. Verbal humor, for example, is discussed in terms of satire, which is described as a verbal caricature that deliberately presents a distorted image of a person, institution, or society. A cartoonist's approach is to exaggerate traits considered characteristic of the personality of his "victim," and simplify by ignoring anything irrelevant to his interests. In the context of situational humor, specifically practical humor, where someone wants to sit down but unknowingly finds their chair has been moved intentionally, this is discussed in terms of humor in visual art that reflects a logical framework (Ajidarma, 2015: 24).

Hermeneutic theory is known as the theory of interpretation, specifically the understanding of meaning. A text not only has meaning within itself, but also refers to meaning beyond itself, namely in human life. According to Ricoeur, if the

meaning of the text is revealed, the interpreter will face two alternatives: a direct path or a circular path. Ricoeur's hermeneutics is understanding the text through a circular path. Ricoeur stated that in interpreting the meaning of the text, distance is possible, allowing the reader to interpret the text in a new way without being obliged to adjust their understanding to the author (Hardiman, 2015: 236-262). The three theories used in this analysis are used in tandem. The data presentation method employs a formal approach with images and an informal approach with detailed words.

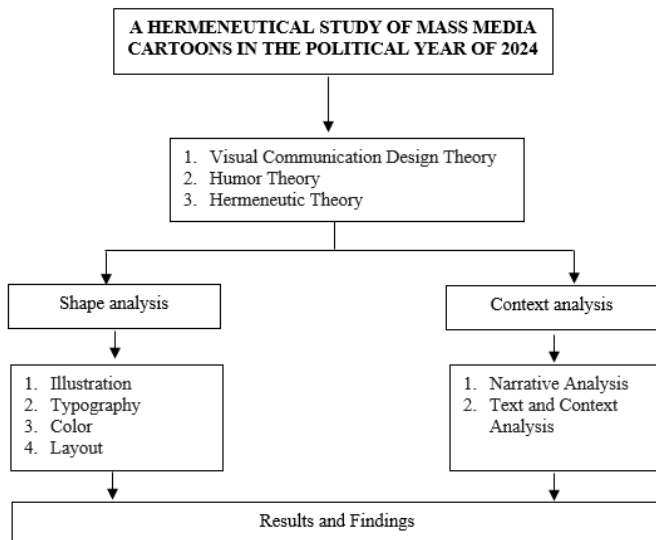


Figure 1. Analytical Structure

Results and Discussion

2024 is considered the most complex political year in the world, with simultaneous elections for the president and vice president, members of the House of Representatives (DPR), Regional Representatives Council (DPD), provincial and district/city DPRD, and regional heads. Amidst increasingly heated political competition at the elite level, cartoonists whose work has been published in Indonesian media have creatively "reduced political tension" by presenting humorous political cartoons. For readers, elite political competition should not be viewed with tension but with laughter, yet with seriousness. People can still laugh and smile in the heated atmosphere of national politics by enjoying cartoon images that comment on current events. These political cartoons are seen in the works of cartoonist Thomdean and cartoonist Yuyun Nurrachman. The following is an analysis of the visual structure, humor, and meaning contained in the cartoons.

Cartoon 1

The visual structure of the cartoon by cartoonist Thomdean in KOMPAS daily on February 14, 2024, can be explained by describing the elements of visual communication design, namely illustration, typography, color, and layout. The illustration that appears depicts the atmosphere of the general election at the Polling Station (TPS). Four groups of people appear, namely, first, the general public as voters waiting for their turn to exercise their right to vote. There are also people conducting the voting process in the booth, and a female figure is the center of attention in the cartoon. This female figure is right in the middle among the other characters. When viewed from the composition and layout of the image area, the female figure wearing a floral-patterned dress also occupies the middle area. This female figure has a loud voice, which is indicated by the typography/writing that says *...Pak...Bu... Tolong surat saya dijaga ya... Jangan sampai: nyasar, ditilep, diutak-atik, ditambahi, dikurangi, di,,,,,,.* (... Sir ... Ma'am ... Please take care of my letter ... Don't let it: get lost, stolen, tampered with, added, reduced, in,,,,,,.)

Second, the election organizers are the KPPS (Voting Organizer Group). The KPPS's duties include announcing the final voter list at the polling stations (TPS), handing it over to the election participants' witnesses and TPS supervisors, and carrying out voting and vote counting at the TPS. Three KPPS officers are seen receiving direct messages from a woman who is the center point in the image. Other KPPS members are on duty accepting voter registrations to get their turn to vote, some are directing voters to the voting booth, and some are inking voters' fingers as proof that voters have exercised their right to vote.

Third, the illustration depicts two male figures serving as security personnel in full uniform. These figures appear to be observing the election process at the polling station (TPS). One of these two figures is depicted as having a thin build, while the other appears overweight. Fourth, the figures also depict figures serving as medical personnel at the polling

station (TPS). These health workers sit behind the polling station (KPPS); the female health worker is seen carrying a medicine box, and the male is holding a stethoscope. The health team is also supported by an ambulance and a driver. The entire image is rendered in black and white with an equal balance layout.

Using a single-panel storytelling, this cartoon constructs a narrative about voting taking place at a polling station (TPS). This voting process serves as a social representation of the community participating in the 2024 elections. Approximately 203 million voters nationwide are eligible to vote at approximately 820,000 polling stations. They are choosing presidential and vice-presidential candidates, as well as members of the People's Representative Council (DPR), the Regional Representative Council (DPD), and the Regional People's Representative Councils (DPRD) at the provincial and district/city levels. Honest and fair elections are expected. Various parties have advocated the implementation of elections with integrity as a key to achieving the legitimacy of the election results and the elected government.

KOMPAS, RABU, 14 FEBRUARI 2024

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Figure 2. Cartoon from the KOMPAS newspaper, February 14, 2024 edition
Source: KOMPAS newspaper

The 2024 General Election, held this Wednesday, has the most crucial stage after voting: the vote count. The vote-counting process is a matter of great public interest. The election results will not only impact people's lives for the next five years but also determine the fate of the nation. When they enter the voting booth, the public must be serious about making their choice for the future of this country.

Besides depicting the election atmosphere, cartoons also contain information, messages, and public opinions conveyed through images. These cartoons demonstrate the power of pictures and words in communicating their message. The photos and words mutually reinforce the intended message. Using humor and hermeneutics, these cartoons provide laughter for their readers while simultaneously illustrating public expectations regarding the importance of honesty in elections.

Humor is presented in this cartoon to provide criticism. Wrapped in humor, criticism becomes more easily accepted by anyone (including the criticized). The humor arises from the oddity in the words of a woman who speaks loudly in front of the KPPS. Her words are written *...Pak...Bu... Tolong surat saya dijaga ya... Jangan sampai: nyasar, ditilep, diutak-atik, ditambahi, dikurangi, di,,,,,,*. (... Sir ... Ma'am ... Please take care of my letter ... Don't let it: get lost, stolen, tampered with, added, reduced, in,). It becomes odd because this sentence carries two messages at once. First, this woman is one of the people who has the right to vote. To ensure fairness, the KPPS provides ballots to choose election participants. The definition of a ballot, in the minds of many people, is, of course, a sheet of paper containing a photo or picture of the election participants to be chosen, whether the presidential and vice-presidential pair or the DPD, DPR, or DPRD. After making a choice, the ballot is placed in the ballot box, and then the number of valid votes in the election is counted.

Second, the word "letter" in this cartoon has a different concept when connected to the phrase "nyasar." "Nyasar" usually occurs in letters with unclear addresses sent by one person to another via courier or postal service. The clash of

concepts between the first and second concepts indicates an oddity, and in this oddity also comes humor, laughter for those who read it. Besides humor, this clash of concepts also contains an element of criticism. The interpretation of the letter as "nyasar," "dilep," or "dial-aktar" suggests a feeling of doubt and a lack of full trust in the vote count. Therefore, the public is reminded firmly and in a loud tone that this election must be conducted honestly, without any cheating. This woman's statement also means that voters' votes must align with their choice and not be altered during the vote-counting process.

In addition to these statements, this cartoon also criticizes money politics. This criticism can be seen by observing one of the voters waiting in line, depicted in the bottom right of the panel. A man is seen holding an envelope with money inside. This signifies that money politics also occurs in elections. Indonesians often refer to this as a dawn attack, which involves giving envelopes containing money in the morning before voting begins at polling stations. The winning candidates in the election give money to voters. Still, their choices are directed to one of the candidate pairs or candidates currently participating in the political contest. The criticism of the dawn attack atmosphere, symbolized by the envelope in this cartoon, still strongly overshadows the 2024 election.

Cartoon 2

Figure 2 is a cartoon from the KOMPAS newspaper published on April 24, 2024, immediately after the Constitutional Court (MK) ruled on the election results following a lawsuit over the presidential election dispute. Using a single panel, the illustration in this cartoon is divided into three groups of figures. First, the illustration on the far left represents the group present in the MK trial, including the General Elections Commission (KPU), the MK judges, and the coalition party that won the presidential election. The MK judges raise a gavel with the word SAH written on it, the KPU carries a ballot box, and the coalition figure representing the combined supporting parties that won the presidential election appears happy with his fist clenched.

Second, the characters depicted in the largest size are two male characters dancing happily. These two figures dancing happily have facial shapes that resemble Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka as the presidential election pair. Prabowo Subianto as the elected president and Gibran Rakabuming Raka as the elected vice president of the February 14, 2024, election. Third, the characters depicted on the right side of the panel are community leaders/farmers or ordinary people. These figures are represented by a family consisting of a father, mother, and child. The male character, as the father or head of the family, says *Selamat Bertugas. Penuhi Janji!* (Good luck with your duties). Keep your promises! This typography is made with a sans-serif typeface or a letter without feet in a large size. Other writing, depicting the children's characters' words, is also displayed. The writing is *Horeee makan siang gratis ya Mak?* (Hooray, free lunch, right Mak?) This cartoon uses a symmetrical balance layout.

KOMPAS, RABU, 24 APRIL 2024

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Figure 3. Cartoon from the KOMPAS newspaper, April 24, 2024 edition
Source: KOMPAS newspaper

This cartoon tells the story of the Constitutional Court (MK) decision and the atmosphere of joy for the party declared the winner in the Presidential Election. The Constitutional Court considered all petitions filed by presidential candidates Ganjar Pranowo and Anies Baswedan regarding disputes over the results of the presidential and vice presidential

elections. The Constitutional Court's decision on April 22, 2024, accompanied by a dissenting opinion from three Constitutional Court justices, validated the victory of Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka in the 2024 presidential election. The Constitutional Court considered that the allegations of structured, systematic, and massive (TSM) election fraud, which were the basis for the petitions of the 01 and 03 pairs, could not be proven in the trial.

The Constitutional Court (MK) judges ruled on the dispute filed as a general election result challenge by the losing party. Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka were declared the legitimate winners of the 2024 presidential election with 96,214,691 votes. The Constitutional Court's decision impacted the declared victorious pair. The winning party expressed their victory by jogging happily. The implications of the decision also showed joy for one small family. This joy was evident in the child's comment about wanting to try the free lunch, one of the flagship programs of the presidential and vice presidential elect's initiatives.

This cartoon conveys criticism with a touch of humor. The humor arises from two paradoxical sentences uttered by the figures on the bottom right. The first sentence conveys enthusiasm, conveying congratulations. This sentence signifies that the elected president and vice president have received a mandate from the people to lead the country. This mandate is accompanied by the power coveted by many politicians and the general public. This mandate makes the president and vice president, Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, feel happy and dance.

At the same time, the joy is reminded of promises that must be realized immediately. The pleasure is suddenly reminded of the many tasks that must be completed. This reminder is evident in the words "fulfill promises" and emphasized by a small child who said, *Horeee makan siang gratis ya Mak?* ("Hooray, lunch is free, isn't it, Mom?") This sentence appears because the promise of the winning presidential candidate was a free lunch. Cartoonist Thomdean, in cartoons 1 and 2, uses humor to criticize the illustrations and typography. The politics of humor in conveying criticism is very strong in cartoons.

Cartoon 3

The weekly TEMPO magazine cartoon by Yuyun Nurrachman is presented in full color. The cartoon edition of January 15-21, 2024, presents two character illustrations: one resembling the 7th president of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, commonly known as Jokowi, and another resembling the presidential candidate participating in the 2024 presidential election, Prabowo Subianto. These two characters illustrate and explain the narrative of the one-panel cartoon in TEMPO magazine. The position of this character can be interpreted as Jokowi, who is portrayed as very dominant. With his appearance depicted as half his body, this character appears very strong in dominating the image area. The other character can be read as Prabowo Subianto. The layout of this cartoon uses hidden balance.

The illustration depicts Prabowo Subianto looking weary, discouraged, and seemingly devoid of passion. His left hand holds the microphone helplessly as he stands on a podium marked with the number 2, his eyes weary and his eyebrows slanted downwards. He stands on the floor like a chessboard. Behind Prabowo Subianto is Jokowi, who offers encouragement by saying, *Kita Menang, Pasti Menang! Ayo Semangat...!* ("We Win, We Will Win! Let's Go! Let's Go!")

The signs displayed are fraught with symbolic meanings. Jokowi's position is depicted behind Prabowo Subianto, and the floor is shaped like a chessboard. This sign can be interpreted in three important ways. First, President Jokowi clearly supports Prabowo Subianto as a presidential candidate and hopes that both Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka (Jokowi's son) will win the presidential election. Jokowi encourages Prabowo Subianto in facing the presidential election. Throughout various processes during the campaign —such as going out into the field to meet the public (usually called *blusukan*), participating in the presidential and vice presidential debates, and facing various netizen attacks on social media in the run-up to the election —Jokowi continues to encourage. Jokowi gives full support to this pair, and the public sees Jokowi as an active president who is actively "campaigning" for the victory of the candidate pair number 2. Jokowi is seen as more active in campaigning than Prabowo Subianto as a presidential candidate.

President Jokowi's strong signal of support for the second presidential and vice-presidential candidate pair, Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, is indeed evident. Indonesians can interpret the news signals on television and social media about President Jokowi's meetings with Prabowo Subianto, both in public and in private conversations at a restaurant in Jakarta. Their meetings, which are often in the public spotlight, are a deliberate attempt to convey to voters during the election that Prabowo Subianto is Jokowi's "man," not his rivals, Ganjar or Anies. These meetings are a strong signal to show Jokowi's total support for Prabowo.

Second, the chessboard-shaped floor signifies political moves to win the election, as if it were a chess game. These moves are referred to as political moves or strategies for winning the battle. Jokowi's position is like that of a chess

piece. The public perceives Jokowi as the one who orchestrated much of the winning strategy for presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka. The third meaning is evident in Jokowi's statement, "We Win, We Will Win!" As president, Jokowi possesses extraordinary power, compounded by his political experience. He has never lost since serving as Mayor of Solo, Governor of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta (in 2012), and as president for two terms. His electoral "battle" strategies are well-known, with various terrains meticulously calculated.



Figure 3. Cartoon from TEMPO Magazine, January 15-21, 2024
[Source: TEMPO Magazine]

Public opinion in this cartoon depicts the socio-political life that occurs in Indonesia ahead of the 2024 election. The political portrait, shown as a battle arena for presidential and vice-presidential candidates filled with tension, seriousness, and various conflicts of interest, is humorously portrayed in political cartoons. The humor is evident in the contradictory facial expressions of the characters: Jokowi, full of enthusiasm, and Prabowo Subianto, who appears tired and lacks passion. The excitement for campaigning is dominated more by the supporters than by the competing candidates. Visually, the distortion of the characters also illustrates the position of humor in the cartoon.

Cartoon 4

The political year is synonymous with the campaign of candidates or candidate pairs who are "fighting" in the five-yearly political contest. This cartoon 4 presents an illustration of two characters: the character on the left wears a peci, is dressed in a suit and red tie, and carries a loudspeaker. This character is in a safe full of money, using a loudspeaker to say, *Tes... Tes... Tes... Tes... Siap Kampanye... Dipilih... Dipilih!* ("Test... Test... Test... Test... Ready to Campaign... Chosen... Chosen!") The other character is on the right, wearing a hat that says PPATK. This character glances at the character on the left, his gaze full of questions, depicted by a question mark icon (?) and an exclamation mark (!) with short lines surrounding them.

The two characters stand on a brown board filled with scattered red banknotes. Pipes, like intricate water channels, branch out to a safe containing the money. The construction of the water pipes supports the platform on which the characters are standing. This one-panel cartoon is rendered in full color, and the layout is balanced equally.

The narrative constructed in this cartoon is a campaign atmosphere. The campaign period for the three presidential and vice-presidential candidates, along with thousands of legislative candidates in the 2024 House of Representatives (DPR), Regional Representatives Council (DPD), and provincial and district/city DPRD (Regional Legislative Councils), is inextricably linked to money politics to win votes. The prevalence of money politics has been known to occur in every election, and similar practices may occur in the 2024 simultaneous elections.

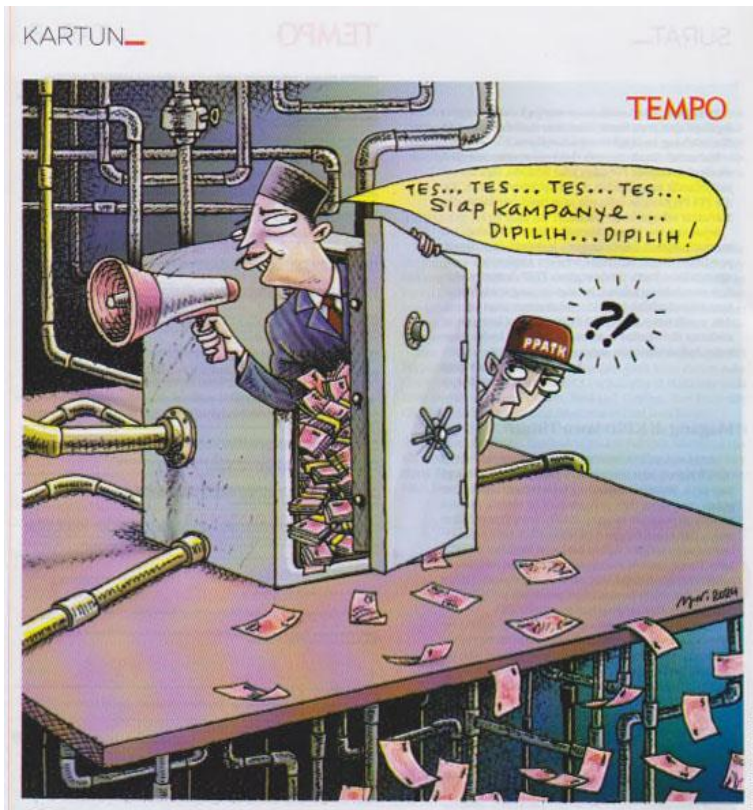


Figure 4. Cartoon from TEMPO Magazine, January 22-28, 2024
Source: TEMPO Magazine

Fierce political competition, anticipation of fraud, and an open, proportional election system are several factors influencing campaign financing. The substantial budget required for both legislative and presidential elections necessitates extensive logistical resources, particularly financial capital, to win. Beyond campaign expenses, legislative and presidential candidates must also budget for the recruitment of witnesses tasked with monitoring their votes on election day. These witness costs cannot be deferred. Their role is crucial amid the potential for election fraud.

The cartoon depicts a person wearing a PPATK hat. This figure represents the Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center (PPATK), which oversees financial transactions during elections. PPATK findings indicate a significant increase in economic transactions in the accounts of political party treasurers and the personal accounts of legislative candidates during the 2024 election campaign. Large expenditures are also generally required to reach constituents. Every campaign gathering requires operational costs, from providing food to pocket money for residents. This situation tends to create a transactional society. Campaigns and money are inseparable in every election. Cartoon 4 humorously critiques this situation.

The humor in this cartoon is evident in the perspective of the two characters. It's as if the two characters are glancing at each other as if they were criminals (those engaging in money politics during the campaign) and security forces (PPATK). The two characters, who are close, glance at each other suspiciously. Using the theory of superiority humor, readers can laugh at the sight of a victim about to be arrested by security forces because of their proximity. However, there's also a strangeness that arises because, in reality, it's difficult to prove money politics in campaigns. Despite complaints and cries against money politics in elections, the scent of it continues to linger throughout every campaign in an election year.

Humor becomes political in cartoons. According to Aristotle, politics is an effort or method to obtain something desired (Sakti, 2020: 2). The humor presented in the political cartoons of these two Indonesian media outlets is political, a way for cartoonists to represent society by conveying their opinions to the audience with laughter, thus achieving the goal of conveying a message through images. The message is conveyed, criticism is heard, and everyone enjoys reading the cartoons because of their humor.

Mass media cartoons represent the socio-political representation of Indonesian society. First, they reflect social and political realities. Political cartoons reflect various current issues in society, such as corruption and political conflict. Through symbols, character caricatures, and humor, cartoons convey people's perspectives on power and the social situations they experience. Second, they serve as a means of social criticism and control. Political cartoons serve as a

sharp yet light-hearted tool of critique. Their satirical and hyperbolic visual language allows them to convey political messages without resorting to lengthy narratives or formal rhetoric. Thus, they function as a form of social control over the government, public officials, and state policies.

Third, as a vehicle for political education. Through easy-to-understand visual symbols, political cartoons help the public (especially the younger generation) understand complex issues in simple terms. They foster political awareness and citizen participation in the national situation. Fourth, as a representation of Indonesian identity and critical culture. Political cartoons in Indonesia often combine local styles and folk humor, making them a unique medium of cultural expression. They demonstrate how Indonesians use humor and satire as a distinctive way to convey criticism without confrontation.

Fifth, as part of the dynamics of mass media. Within the mass media ecosystem, political cartoons strengthen the media's function as a conveyor of information and public opinion, a guardian of democracy, and a channel for public aspirations. Cartoons serve as visual elements that capture readers' attention and add an interpretive dimension to political reporting. Overall, political cartoons in Indonesian mass media serve as a reflection, critique, and socio-political education for the public. Cartoons depict the dynamics of democracy and serve as a means of communication between the people and those in power, offering a creative, satirical, and reflective view of the nation.

Hermeneutics helps uncover hidden meanings in political cartoons through an interpretive process that views images not simply as visual objects but as cultural texts rich in symbols, context, and ideology. In the context of the 2024 political year—when political issues are moving rapidly and the media are constructing their own narratives—a hermeneutic approach is crucial because it reveals the media's ideology and attitudes.

Political cartoons often serve as a medium for editorial opinion. Through hermeneutics, we can understand how the media positions certain figures (victims, perpetrators, leaders), how humor is used to construct certain images, and how visual framing reinforces media ideology. Hidden meanings emerge from the way figures are depicted, their expressions, proportions, positioning within panels, and even the use of color. The meaning of political cartoons never stands alone. 2024 is full of campaigns, political polarization, the fight for candidate image, and strategic issues such as the economy, integrity, and social media. Hermeneutics connects visual elements to these actual contexts, so readers can understand what is being satirized, who is being targeted, and what criticism is being directed.

Conclusion

Elections, which take place every five years, are always the most discussed political discourse by the public and the mass media. News in the mass media is also increasingly sought by the public to read about the political situation in this country. In addition to news in the form of journalistic works, works in the form of political cartoons are also the most sought-after information by the public. In the political year (2024), political cartoons play a crucial role in conveying criticism. Despite the boisterous atmosphere full of tension, political cartoons can still be present, conveying criticism with laughter through their humorous mix of visuals and text. Political cartoons use political humor to express opinions, bringing smiles or even laughter along with criticism, so the message is more easily accepted by the public or those criticized for their actions. Cartoons become a symbol of criticism of the dominance of power. Cartoons, as a way to simplify political events, are more easily understood by the public. Political cartoons are an important record of the nation's journey, especially in visual display, particularly during the political year 2024.

Suggestions for other researchers include continuing research on political cartoons by incorporating cartoon works from different cartoonists. This type of research can also be further developed by utilizing research theories from various disciplines, such as communication science, sociocultural science, or political science. Updates in the Hermeneutic Approach to Cartoons. Previous hermeneutic studies on cartoons have generally emphasized the interpretation of symbols, visual style, or general social critique. This paper makes new contributions by examining cartoons specifically in the context of the 2024 political year, where the intensity of visual propaganda, polarization, and framing strategies is increasing. Connecting hermeneutics with an analysis of political media ecology, so that interpretations focus not only on visual symbols but also on power relations, media bias, and persuasive strategies.

Contribution to Visual Communication Design Studies. This paper expands the scope of Visual Communication Design scholarship by demonstrating that political cartoons function as layered visual communication designs, combining humor, visual metaphors, and ideological critique within a single framework. Certain design patterns (line choices, panel formats, colors, character gestures) systematically influence the interpretation of meaning, beyond mere artistic style. These findings introduce a new mapping of the visual rhetorical strategies used by cartoonists during political contestation, thus providing a basis for new theories in the study of political visuals.

This research is limited to analyzing cartoons in Kompas and TEMPO during the 2024 election year. Therefore, it does not cover all national media outlets or cartoons circulating on alternative platforms such as social media, independent

portals, or political memes. The interpretation takes place within the highly dynamic political context of 2024. The results could differ if the political context changes or if the cartoons are analyzed outside of the election period.

Recommendations for future research include expanding the media sources. Future research could include cartoons from social media, independent digital channels, online political comics, or visual memes to provide a broader picture of political cartoons. Further research could also examine how readers from different social groups interpret political cartoons and measure their impact on the formation of political opinions or attitudes.

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