



## **Dissecting the Political Persona of the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election through Visual Framing Analysis**

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### ABSTRACT

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Public interest in political battles is constant, and the Indonesian presidential election in February 2024 is no exception. The three presidential candidates, who have been declared, aggressively establish their political personas and gain exposure and notoriety using Instagram, including @aniesbaswedan, @ganjar\_pranowo, and @prabowo. This study aims to dissect the political persona of the 2024 Indonesian presidential candidates using the visual framing analysis method, studying how certain points of view are emphasized or made prominent through visual messages. While other framing studies focus on textual analysis, visual framing analysis is rarely employed even though visual elements have the power to build emotional affection and can last longer in memory. The study's data set comprises Instagram posts from the officially declared presidential contender (@aniesbaswedan from October 3, 2022; @ganjar\_pranowo from April 21, 2023; @prabowo from August 12, 2022) to May 21, 2023. The research findings indicate that the political persona built by each presidential candidate still revolves around aspects of their own inherent identity such as religion, race, ethnicity, tribe, customs, habits, education level, economic status, social status, family background, and political stance, rather than providing a clear picture of their priority policy programs when in office.

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## INTRODUCTION

Political contestation always captures public attention, including the Indonesian presidential election in the upcoming February 2024. The public's focus is on three contestants who have been declared as presidential candidates, namely Anies Rasyid Baswedan (Partai Nasional Demokrat/Nasdem), Ganjar Pranowo (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan/PDIP), and Prabowo Subianto Djodjohadikusumo (Partai Gerakan Indonesia Merdeka/Gerindra) (listed in alphabetical order). Apart from being declared by their respective endorsing parties, these three figures consistently rank highest in the Indonesian survey institutions as presidential candidates with the highest electability. As of May 3, 2023, data from three survey institutions recorded the following figures: Poltracking Indonesia (1. Prabowo 30.1%; 2. Ganjar 28.3%; 3. Anies 20.4%); Saiful Munjani Research and Consulting (1. Ganjar 20.8%; 2. Prabowo 15.8%; 3. Anies 11.4%); Indikator Politik (1. Ganjar 36.8%; 2. Prabowo 27.0%; 3. Anies 26.8%) (Sulthoni, 2023).

The three presidential candidates have begun to engage actively to garner public sympathy. Each of them has been intensifying their exposure and publicity,

including through social media. This new form of media has proven to be quite effective in increasing the popularity and electability of political figures (Supit et al., 2020), building political image, political branding (Purwanti et al., 2022), establishing reputation (Sjoraida et al., 2021), gaining public sympathy (Maharani & Nurafifah), and increasing the participation of the millennial voter group, which accounts for 55% or 108 million out of the total potential voters of 204 million in Indonesia (Hamid et al.; Yusrin & Salpina; Mantalean). This number is undoubtedly significant and can be considered the majority of voters. Hence, political figures actively utilize social media as a campaign tool (Riauan et al., 2022; A. Setiawan et al., 2021).

To enhance their popularity and electability, political figures generally portray themselves as individuals with positive images. This study aims to dissect the political personas of Indonesian presidential candidates for 2024 using the visual framing analysis as a theory, which is a study of how a specific perspective is emphasized or made prominent through visual messages (Rodriguez et al., 2023). While other framing studies have focused on textual analysis, the question arises as to why messages conveyed singularly



through visuals or text supported by visual elements are rarely examined. However, visual elements possess the power to evoke emotional affect and have a longer-lasting impact on memory (Rodriguez & Dimitrova; Parveen & Showkat). Visuals can vividly depict events, offering a closer representation of reality compared to words (Rodriguez & Dimitrova; Brantner et al.; Parveen & Showkat), and can exert a stronger influence on perception than text (Mansour, 2021). In fact, within the field of photography, numerous composition techniques enable photographers and editors to position and emphasize elements deemed necessary, as well as select and remove objects that are considered unnecessary within the frame of a photograph (Taylor et al., 2015; Tjin, 2014).

## METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach using the visual framing analysis method. Similar to textual framing analysis, visual framing aims to examine how an issue or individual is selected and emphasized, leading to mass media constructing a fabricated reality (Goffman, 1974). The difference lies in the fact that visual framing focuses on the framing constructed through visual images (Rodriguez et al., 2023). In the past, when the internet era had not yet proliferated, framing analysis was primarily used to observe mass media such as

television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and other journalistic products to examine media bias and how an issue is highlighted (priming) (Syahputra; Alyatalathaf & Putri; Woda et al.). However, in today's era where mass media has become mass culture, framing analysis is highly relevant for depicting the construction of individual images through personal social media platforms such as Instagram.

Ontologically, visual framing analysis is a method used to observe how a particular perspective is highlighted or made 'significant' through visual messages such as photographs, images, 3D, videos, or other visual elements that impact public opinion in terms of cognition, behavior, decision-making, and actions (Bock, 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2023; Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Methodologically, it is still considered relatively nascent and has not been extensively studied. Nevertheless, some researchers such as Mary Angela Bock (2020), Katy Perry (2010), as well as Rodriguez & Dimitrova (Rodriguez et al., 2023; Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011) have formulated suitable analytical models for dissecting issues encoded through visuals. In this research, the model proposed by Rodriguez and Dimitrova is utilized as it encompasses not only the framing elements but also delves into the ideological aspects accommodated within the following four levels of analysis.

Table 1. Four Levels of Visual Framing Analysis

| Visual Framing Levels | Operational Definition |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
|-----------------------|------------------------|



|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Visuals as Denotative Systems</b>          | Objects and discrete elements shown in the visual are identified and grouped into “themes” following some principles of. Categories or themes emanating from this process constitute visual frames.   |
| <b>Visuals as Stylistic-Semiotic Systems</b>  | Encompasses how editorial, design, and pictorial conventions in visual presentations evoke social meanings. Visual modality results from the degree to which certain means of pictorial expression (size, color, representational detail, depth, tonal shades, visual subordination, point of view, etc.) are used to enhance realism.  |
| <b>Visuals as Connotative Systems</b>         | In this content-driven tier, news visuals are analyzed as signs, and their relationships with other signs within the sign system are assessed. Images are not only seen as denoting people, places, or objects but also as signifiers or concepts attached to them. Here, frames are identified by analyzing the presence of symbols (abstract: shapes and objects; figurative: person, places, and things with symbolic value) and metaphors in the pictorial field. |
| <b>Visuals as Ideological Representations</b> | Ascertain those underlying principles that reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion. The ideological level draws together the symbols and stylistic features of an image into a coherent interpretation, which provides the “why” or the underlying philosophy behind representations.   |

Source: Rodriguez et al. (2023); Rodriguez & Dimitrova (2011)

The posts were collected from the time the candidates were announced as presidential candidates (Anies on October 3, 2022, Ganjar on April 21, 2023, Prabowo on August 12, 2022) until May 21, 2023. The data collection period was chosen to

ensure that the most recently declared presidential candidate (Ganjar) had a one-month (30-day) gap, allowing the posts on their Instagram accounts to reflect the construction of a political persona relevant to the Indonesian presidential election in 2024.

Table 2. The Quantity and the Period of Instagram Posts

| No | Presidential Candidate Name | Number of Posts | Period  |
|----|-----------------------------|-----------------|---|
| 1  | @aniesbaswedan              | 210             | 3 October 2022 - 21 May 2023 (7 months 18 days) |
| 2  | @ganjar_pranowo             | 96              | 21 April 2023 - 21 May 2023 (1 month 0 day)     |
| 3  | @prabowo                    | 93              | 12 August 2022 - 21 May 2023 (9 months 9 days)  |

Source: Researchers’ Compilation (2023)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the posts portraying the political personas of the three Indonesian presidential candidates for 2024 are analyzed using visual framing analysis, which

consists of four levels of analysis. The analysis will be conducted one by one, starting with the @aniesbaswedan account, followed by @ganjar\_pranowo, and finally @prabowo.



**@aniesbaswedan's Instagram Posts Visual Framing Analysis**

**Table 3. Visual Framing Analysis @aniesbaswedan**



|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Denotative</b>         | @aniesbaswedan visually displayed: performance/showcase of work, personal achievements, closeness to the people, closeness to community figures, closeness to family, closeness to NU, embracing pluralism, mosque safaris, popularity, attention to communities and micro, small, and medium enterprises, and concern for death.   |
| <b>Stylistic-Semiotic</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Editorially, the photos displayed are primarily single photos and the first photo in carousel posts. Almost all @aniesbaswedan's posts include Anies in the photo frame, except for two posts.</li><li>• Pictorially, the @aniesbaswedan posts are captured using technical photography, employing composition techniques, varied photo angles, framing techniques, selection of picturesque locations/spots, accompanied by lenses that support depth of field, wide-angle lenses, the use of artificial lighting, and post-processing retouching.</li></ul> |
| <b>Connotative</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Performance/showcase of work: figurative symbols</li><li>• Personal achievements: figurative symbols</li><li>• Closeness to the people: figurative symbols</li></ul>  |



|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
|                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Closeness to community figures: figurative symbols</li><li>● Closeness to his family: figurative symbols</li><li>● Closeness to NU: figurative symbols</li><li>● Embracing pluralism: figurative symbols</li><li>● Mosque safaris: figurative symbols</li><li>● Popularity: figurative symbols</li><li>● Concern for death: figurative symbols</li></ul>   |
| <b>Ideological Representations</b> | Anies successfully led the capital city of Jakarta and is ready to ascend to the presidency, a leader with global leadership, environmental leadership, technocratic leadership, closeness to people from all backgrounds, enjoys dialogues with the people, a compassionate spouse and family figure, upholding pluralism, closeness to Islamic figures, closeness to NU figures, valuing various professions, and showing empathy towards death. |

Source: Researchers' Compilation (2023)

The total number of posts related to the political persona by @aniesbaswedan is 210, which are grouped into denotative-level themes. At the stylistic-semiotic level, the posts are examined in terms of editorial and pictorial aspects. Editorial refers to the opinions or views of the editor or editorial board that reflect the focus or purpose of publication (Nundy et al., 2022), while pictorial refers to the description of content through a set of complex features such as size, color, detail, depth of field, angle, framing, composition, and visual dominance and subordination (Kulvicki, 2020; Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011).

In the editorial aspect, @aniesbaswedan's posts frequently use the carousel. This means that the social media team behind @aniesbaswedan aims to convey a series of information through multiple photos. The selection of the cover photo to be displayed in a post is not without reason but aims to highlight the photo through the visual dominance principle, which can emphasize information through positioning and composition (H. Setiawan, 2017). Thus, the information in the initial photo is intended to be emphasized, while the subsequent photos in the slide are subordinate. In terms of the pictorial aspect, the majority of photos uploaded by @aniesbaswedan are

taken using a wide-angle lens, allowing for capturing wide photos that convey a sense of space and encompass the conditions and atmosphere surrounding the subject (Taylor et al., 2015). Furthermore, composition techniques are employed by the photographer behind the @aniesbaswedan account to arrange objects, landscapes, backgrounds, foregrounds, and all elements within the photo frame to effectively convey the intended message and create aesthetically pleasing photos (Taylor, 2018).

At the connotative level and ideological representation, the photos posted by @aniesbaswedan are not only seen in terms of aesthetics, technical aspects, and editorial content but also as signifiers of an inherent concept and underlying ideological philosophy. From the 10 connotation points presented in Table 4, it can be concluded that Anies portrays himself as someone who has successfully led Jakarta as the capital city and is ready to elevate to the level of president. This can be observed from the posts showcasing Anies' performance and achievements during his 5-year tenure as the Governor of DKI Jakarta, which is depicted as a completed task. This is also indicated by the transition of hashtags from #JakartaKotaGlobal (Jakarta as a Global City), which was consistently used for performance-



related posts in DKI Jakarta, to #UntukIndonesia (For Indonesia), which was first used in a post on 25 November 2022 during the Nasdem event titled "Restorasi Indonesia" (Restoration of Indonesia). In the socio-political context, hashtags are used for personal branding (Fedushko & Kolos, 2019), campaigns (Helmi et al., 2020; Omena et al., 2020; Senyo Ofori-Parku & Moscato, 2018), and even ideological polarization (Soares & Recuero, 2021). The transition of hashtags by the @aniesbaswedan account is one of the efforts to construct the transition of Anies' leadership from Governor to President. This transition is also reflected in the semantic shift from 'Jakarta' to 'Indonesia'.

The next political persona constructed by @aniesbaswedan is that of a leader with global leadership characteristics, which refers to a leader with a global mindset, insight, and role in a diverse and complex environment, and has a wide network (Hassanzadeh et al., 2015). Several criteria for global leadership have been built through posts related to performance. The remaining criteria are established through posts showcasing personal achievements, popularity, and pluralism. Anies often showcases his activities as a keynote speaker, such as at the Australian National University, where he discussed the synchronization of technocracy and democracy in governance. He also presented at the Young Global Leaders program at Nanyang Technological University, discussing the transformation of Jakarta into a global city. In another post, Anies attended the Bloomberg Energy Outlook forum, where he shared experiences about Indonesia's efforts in transitioning towards renewable energy use. All of these posts are used by the @aniesbaswedan account to build his political persona in terms of technocratic leadership, which refers to a leader based on competence and expertise in their respective fields (Hussein & Omar,

2022), and environmental leadership, which refers to a leader's ability to promote stakeholders in achieving environmentally sustainable goals (Su et al., 2020).

In the previous governor election in Jakarta in 2017, Anies was criticized for engaging in identity politics (Afif et al., 2022; Samosir, 2021), political polarization (Afrimadona, 2021), and in an interview with ABC News Australia, he was referred to as "you played the religion card" (ABC News, 2023), and it was speculated that similar practices would be employed in the 2024 presidential election. To counter these issues, @aniesbaswedan constructed a political persona as a leader who upholds pluralism. He posted many photos of his visits to the Cathedral Church, Aditya Jaya Temple, Ekayana Arama Vihara, visits to various mosques in Indonesia, fellowship with the Indonesian Pentecostal Church, meetings with religious figures and leaders, and more. Pluralism encompasses not only religious aspects but also ethnic, racial, and social diversity (Soekarba, 2018). @aniesbaswedan also showcases other aspects through posts of his visits to various communities, where he is welcomed by large crowds, and interacts with the people; sometimes from a stage, sometimes on the same level on the streets. He also interacted with indigenous communities in Papua, the Baduy Luar community, the Vespa community, and The Jakmania. Other posts highlight Anies' closeness to the people, such as dialogues with farmers, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and the intimacy with his family, particularly his wife. These portray a political persona aimed at building a humanistic character, someone who treats others with humanity, cares about human rights and focuses on human needs (Gente et al., 2022). The posts displaying his closeness to figures from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)



aim to gain sympathy from NU supporters.

Interestingly, @aniesbaswedan consistently posts news of condolences through figurative symbols, such as photos of Anies leading funeral prayers for K.H. Ali Yafie, carrying the coffin of H. Mohammad Taufik, and visiting Lieus Sungkharisma, with a selective focus on the portrait frame of the deceased. This reflects Anies' deep sympathy towards the phenomenon of death. Socrates stated, "Death is the separation of the soul from the body. The body is an obstacle for the soul to pursue and acquire true knowledge, virtue,

moderation, and higher spiritual achievements generally." It is this perspective that made Socrates unafraid of death, and he even regarded life as a preparation for death (Kokosalakis, 2020). All these posts are conveyed to build Anies' political persona, emphasizing that he never forgets the services of individuals and their contributions and shared past experiences. Anies is portrayed as someone who will accompany their bodies and continue to keep their spirit alive through the legacy they leave behind in the world.

**@ganjar\_pranowo's Instagram Posts Visual Framing Analysis**

Table 4. Visual Framing Analysis @ganjar\_pranowo





|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Denotative</b>                  | @ganjar_pranowo visually displayed: party loyalty, performance/showcase of work, closeness to the people, closeness to community figures, closeness to family, popularity, upholding pluralism, interest in sports, sympathy towards Bung Karno, closeness to Joko Widodo, and closeness to laborers.   |
| <b>Stylistic-Semiotic</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Editorially, the posts consist of the first photo in a carousel post and video reels (represented by screenshots). Almost all of @ganjar_pranowo's posts include Ganjar himself in the photos and videos, although there are a few exceptions (such as video reels regarding public complaints).</li> <li>● Pictorially, the photos posted by @ganjar_pranowo are captured through documentary photography, some use compositional techniques while others do not. The angles of the photos vary, some utilize framing techniques, artificial lighting is not used, and most of the photos undergo retouching, primarily in saturation enhancement.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Connotative</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Party loyalty: Figurative symbol</li> <li>● Performance/showcase of work: Figurative symbol</li> <li>● Closeness to community figures: Figurative symbol</li> <li>● Closeness to the family: Figurative symbol</li> <li>● Popularity: Figurative symbol</li> <li>● Upholding pluralism: Figurative symbol</li> <li>● Interest in sports / running: Figurative symbol</li> <li>● Sympathy towards Bung Karno: Figurative symbol</li> <li>● Closeness to Joko Widodo: Figurative symbol</li> <li>● Closeness to laborers: Figurative symbol</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Ideological Representations</b> | Ganjar as a loyalist of PDIP, successful in leading Central Java with the best performance, close to Islamic religious leaders, caring for his family, a sports enthusiast, upholding pluralism, close to laborers, a supporter of Indonesian micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and an admirer of Bung Karno.   |

Source: Researchers' Compilation (2023)

The total number of posts related to the political persona by @ganjar\_pranowo amounts to 96 and is categorized into themes at the denotative level.

From an editorial perspective, the posts by @ganjar\_pranowo predominantly utilize the *reels*. This indicates that the social media team of @ganjar\_pranowo intends to convey more complex and holistic information, presenting events in a storytelling manner. Unlike photos, the visual dominance principle in videos is not represented solely by the first scene but is more dynamic. This can be achieved through the Three-act Structure (Keerdo-dawson, 2022) or a Cinematic Sequence (Wibowo et al., 2021). On the other hand,

posts with photos tend to use documentary-style photography that prioritizes capturing moments rather than aesthetics (Susanti, 2021).

At the connotative level and ideological representation, the discussion covers 10 points of connotation in Table 6. It is concluded that @ganjar\_pranowo portrays himself as a figure loyal to his party (PDIP). This is evident from his posts alongside party elites such as Megawati Sukarnoputri (Chairperson of PDIP), Puan Maharani, and Prananda Prabowo (both of whom are Megawati's children and hold positions in the DPP PDIP), as well as Joko Widodo (a non-structural cadre of PDIP). Many of @ganjar\_pranowo's posts also feature him wearing PDIP uniforms. In contrast



to @aniesbaswedan, who only wears Nasdem uniforms during party events, and that too infrequently, or compared to @prabowo, who is never seen wearing Gerindra party attire or attributes. This figurative symbol reflects how Ganjar is a politician who is close and deeply connected to his party. He wants to demonstrate his loyalty, including through the attributes he wears. Ganjar's loyalty was tested when he was not invited to two PDIP events, competed with Puan Maharani to be declared as a candidate for the 2024 Indonesian presidential election, and was tempted by the Golkar party (Detik.com, 2022).

Next, the political persona built by @ganjar\_pranowo revolves around the completion of his duties as the governor of Central Java during one term of leadership, culminating in the achievement of being awarded the Best Performing Province at the National Level in 2023 by the Ministry of Home Affairs. @ganjar\_pranowo's video posts about the award ceremony by Minister of Home Affairs, Tito Karnavian, not only showcase his achievements during his tenure as the governor of Central Java but also serve as an affirmation that Ganjar's performance is superior to that of Anies. This is because in the same year, DKI Jakarta, which is led by Anies, did not even rank in the top three (Hapsari, 2023).

@ganjar\_pranowo often posts about his closeness with various community figures. The figures most frequently featured in his posts are Islamic religious leaders, and all of them come from the NU community, including Habib Zein, Gus Muwafiq, Habib Syech, Habib Luthfi, Gus Mus, Gus Baha, Kiai Hafidz Habibullah, Kiai Munif Zuhri, KH. Nahrowi Dalhar, KH. Suyuthi Murtadho, and Nyai Ainur Rohmah. This approach is considered an effort by Ganjar to garner sympathy and win the support of Nahdliyin (NU members). Ganjar himself is not a *Nahdliyin*, so he

constructs a political persona that portrays his closeness with charismatic NU figures. Moreover, some of these figures explicitly express their support for Ganjar. With a total of 150 million members throughout Indonesia, Nahdliyin's votes are always targeted by politicians in political contests (Basyari, 2023). Additionally, Ganjar is also competing with Anies and Prabowo to gain the support of the Nahdliyin.

Another prominent closeness showcased by @ganjar\_pranowo is his connection with Joko Widodo, the 7th President of the Republic of Indonesia. Moments of their togetherness featured in posts include Joko Widodo and Ganjar appearing together one day before Eid in Solo. Joko Widodo is seen holding hands with his two grandchildren, with Ganjar beside them. Another moment captured is during the Eid al-Fitr prayer (1444 H/2023 AD), where Ganjar is seen standing beside Joko Widodo. The photo does not show any other figures, emphasizing their presence alone. After the Eid prayer, Ganjar posts a photo of his family having breakfast with Gibran Rakabuming Raka, Joko Widodo's son. These three posts by @ganjar\_pranowo imply a closeness that resembles family ties. The moment one day before Eid in Indonesia is referred to as "*takbiran*" which is usually done with family members, either at the mosque or around the city. The background of the presidential plane in the photo indicates that Ganjar is going on "*mudik*" with Joko Widodo (Rusdianto & Isnaeniah, 2022). Additionally, the Eid al-Fitr prayer is usually performed with family and followed by the tradition of "*sungkeman*" (Ghofir & Jabbar, 2022). However, both the Eid prayer and the post-prayer activities are carried out by Ganjar together with Joko Widodo and Gibran. The political persona constructed through Ganjar's closeness with Joko Widodo is related to the direction of support from the 7th President of the



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Republic of Indonesia. His chosen candidate can influence public preferences toward potential presidential candidates (Mediaindonesia.com, 2023).

It is quite interesting that @ganjar\_pranowo constructs a political persona as an admirer of Bung Karno, the first President of Indonesia. This is evident from several of his posts that recount Sukarno's past speeches, and stories about Sukarno's birth history, and mimic Sukarno's distinctive style of oration, characterized by raising his hand in the air and using the title "bung"

(Pranata, 2021). Ganjar builds this political persona to proclaim himself as a figure who firmly upholds Sukarno's values as a charismatic leader, pro-people, with a spirit of struggle, and a strong commitment to unity and national integrity. Additionally, it is also constructed to strengthen the image that Ganjar is a holistic politician within PDIP, considering that PDIP is currently led by Sukarno's daughter and upholds Sukarno's ideology (Marhaenisme) (Hasnu & Syam, 2021).

**@prabowo's Instagram Posts Visual Framing Analysis**

Table 5. Visual Framing Analysis @prabowo



|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Denotative</b>                  | @prabowo visually displayed: performance and work programs, personal achievements showcase, closeness to the people, connections with community figures, popularity, proximity to Joko Widodo, interest in books, sports, culinary experiences, and landscapes.  |
| <b>Stylistic-Semiotic</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Editorially, the displayed photos consist mainly of single images and are often featured as the first photo in a carousel post. The majority of @prabowo's posts include Prabowo himself in the photo frame. However, it is not uncommon to find abstract symbolic objects such as landscapes, food, or buildings.</li> <li>• Pictorially, the photos on @prabowo's account are captured using technical photography techniques, employing compositional elements, varied angles, framing techniques, candid moments, and selecting picturesque locations or spots for photography. Additionally, the use of lenses that support depth of field and wide-angle lenses, along with artificial lighting, is accompanied by post-processing retouching methods.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Connotative</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Party Loyalty: The figurative symbols</li> <li>• Performance Showcase/Work Program: The figurative symbols</li> <li>• Personal Achievement Showcase: The abstract &amp; figurative symbols</li> <li>• Closeness to the People: The figurative symbols</li> <li>• Closeness to Community Figures: The figurative symbols</li> <li>• Popularity: The figurative symbols</li> <li>• Closeness to Joko Widodo: The figurative symbols</li> <li>• Interests in Books, Sports, Cuisine, and Landscapes: The figurative symbols</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Ideological Representations</b> | Prabowo is a minister with a global relations character equivalent to that of a president. He has successfully fulfilled his duties as the Minister of Defense, achieved accomplishments in the military field, and is closely connected with people from all walks of life. Prabowo enjoys working alongside the citizens and has a close bond with various Islamic figures. Additionally, he exhibits a genuine concern for Indonesian sports, takes pride in the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Indonesia, and shares a close relationship with Joko Widodo. Moreover, he is portrayed as an individual who possesses a fondness for books.  |

Source: Researchers' Compilation (2023)

The total number of posts related to Prabowo's political persona on @prabowo's account amounts to 93, and these have been grouped into themes at the denotative level.

In terms of editorial style, @prabowo's posts predominantly feature single photos rather than carousels or reels. This indicates that the social media team aims to communicate events and narratives through single visuals. This approach is intended to direct the audience's focus toward the objects within the single photo, emphasizing the story, moment, expression, composition, and details (Lin, 2022). Regarding the pictorial aspect, the majority of photos uploaded by @prabowo are captured

using a standard lens, which closely resembles human vision (Gatchum, 2016). Additionally, wide-angle lenses are also used, creating a sense of space in the images (Taylor et al., 2015), while telephoto lenses enable a closer perspective of the objects (Gatchum, 2016). Furthermore, the composition of the photographs is skilfully employed by the photographer behind @prabowo's account to arrange objects, landscapes, backgrounds, foregrounds, and all elements within the photo frame to effectively convey the message and enhance the aesthetic appeal of the photos (Taylor, 2018).

At the connotative level and ideological representation, the photos



posted on @prabowo's account are not only seen in terms of aesthetics, technical aspects, and editorial content but also as signifiers of inherent concepts and ideological philosophies underlying the representation. Based on the 8 points of connotation presented in Table 8, it can be inferred that Prabowo portrays himself as someone who upholds pride in his political party and coalition. However, unlike Ganjar, Prabowo does not explicitly display the attributes of his party. The photos uploaded always use a wide-angle lens, so the main focus of the audience is not on the political party or Prabowo himself, but rather on the collective whole, including party members and supporters. In this regard, Prabowo intends to convey that his quest for the presidency is not solely a personal endeavor but a collective effort with the party, coalition, and supporters. This is reinforced by the signing of the Cooperation Charter between Gerindra and PKB titled "Collaboration for Prosperity" (Guritno, 2022).

Another political persona built by @prabowo is that of a minister with the characteristics of a foreign representative (Haripin et al., 2022). The posts on @prabowo's account show frequent overseas work visits. He has been recorded meeting with the United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd James Austin III, Italian Minister of Defense Guido Crosetto, Australian Minister of Defense Richard Marles, French Minister of Defense Sébastien Lecornu, and even Prime Minister of Palestine Mohammed Ibrahim Shtayyeh, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, and French President Emmanuel Macron. This is also part of Prabowo's strategy since becoming the Minister of Defense of Indonesia. His focus on defense diplomacy is aimed at enhancing Indonesia's image as well as his own on the global stage (Suoneto & Evander, 2021). This strategy also aims to strengthen his position in anticipation of

the 2024 presidential election (Haripin et al., 2022). The meetings with global diplomats up to the level of prime ministers and presidents undoubtedly contribute to Prabowo's political persona, which is perceived to be on par with that of a president.

Individually, Prabowo's achievements are also highly notable. On the @prabowo account, an abstract symbol photo is showcased, depicting Prabowo adorned with the highest-level honors, namely the Bintang Yudha Dharma Utama, Bintang Kartika Eka Paksi Utama, Bintang Jalasena Utama, and Bintang Swa Bhuwana Paksa Utama. These four awards, in consecutive order, represent the highest honors bestowed by the Indonesian government through the President (Setneg.go.id, 2023). Through this photo, Prabowo seeks to showcase his achievements without necessarily displaying his personal image.

To demonstrate his political persona of closeness with the people, @prabowo often shares his activities during visits to various regions. In every photo with the people, Prabowo appears to be very approachable and close to the community. For instance, there is a photo of Prabowo hugging a victim of the Cianjur earthquake tightly. The victim displays a deep sense of sadness, while Prabowo shows sympathy. According to proxemic theory, Prabowo's closeness falls within the intimate zone of interaction, indicating a close relationship between individuals (Daza et al., 2021). In another photo, Prabowo is seen trying out a corn harvester in Lombok. He also shares a photo of batik canting at the Danar Hadi Batik Museum in Solo. This characterizes transformational leadership in terms of building emotional support by actively engaging in activities alongside workers (Lai et al., 2020). Prabowo aims to highlight his political persona as a servant leader or a leader who serves based on altruistic and ethical



orientations (Eva et al., 2019). He portrays himself as a leader who is close to the people, willing to sacrifice for them, focused on the well-being of the people, and ready to work together with them.

Like his rivals, @prabowo also demonstrates his closeness with several public figures, especially religious figures. He is seen posting photos with Gus Miftah, Pastor Gilbert, Cak Nun, Habib Husen Ja'far Al Hadar, K.H. Asep Saifuddin Chalim, K.H. Ma'ruf Amin, Bhante DhiraPunno. Judging from the figures he meets, Prabowo aims to build his political persona as a leader who upholds pluralism (Soekarba, 2018). This is considered important because, like Anies, Prabowo has also been associated with identity politics issues closely related to the 212 Movement (Fernandes, 2018).

One striking aspect is the posts that highlight Prabowo's closeness with President Joko Widodo. The number of these posts is quite significant, amounting to 18, ranging from Prabowo's work activities in the ministry to personal meetings. This emphasis on closeness is seen as @prabowo's effort to build discourse around Joko Widodo's support for him in the 2024 presidential election. Prabowo appears to be competing with Ganjar in terms of gaining Joko Widodo's support along with all his supporters, partisans, and voters in the 2019 and 2014 presidential elections. Although Joko Widodo is a member of the same party as Ganjar and had previously declared his support for Ganjar, he also signals support for Prabowo (Cnnindonesia.com, 2023; Farisa, 2023). Djayadi Hanan, a researcher at Harvard Kennedy School, believes that Joko Widodo's support for Prabowo is due to Prabowo being the party chairman, while Ganjar is just an ordinary party member (Soeriaatmadja, 2023). Politically, the relationship between Prabowo and Joko Widodo is characterized by mutual

symbiosis. Prabowo gains political support and electability from Joko Widodo's sympathizers. In return, Joko Widodo can pass on the baton of his political interests to Prabowo without worrying about political intervention from other quarters, as would be the case if he were to support Ganjar.

## DISCUSSION

### *Political Persona Leads to Political Identity*

Persona is a representation of individuals fabricated to characterize themselves and position their roles within the social order, and this persona is imbued with politics at its core (Marshall & Henderson, 2016). Thus, political persona is the concept of creating identity in socio-cultural life systematically and collectively through various media, such as photography, caricatures, or other media (van Waarden & Kohlrausch, 2022). When the Indonesian presidential candidates of 2024 build their political persona, the inherent identities within them will automatically be highlighted. For instance, primordial issues such as religion, race, ethnicity, tribe, customs, habits, education level, economic status, social status, family background, political stance, etc. As a result, society will be exposed to constructions of political identity and trapped in polarization between groups. This can be dangerous as it may lead to divisions within society, majority-minority perceptions, and even discrimination and confrontation (Sihidi et al., 2022).

The practice of identity politics in Indonesia was most pronounced during the presidential election in 2014, the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2017, and the presidential election in 2019. From each of these elections, both sides were said to capitalize on identity politics and exploit polarization to win the contest. Group polarization revolved around two camps, and each camp attacked, accused, and pointed fingers at



the other, claiming that their camp was right and victimized (PUSKAPOL UI, 2019). The prominence of the political persona has the potential to lead Indonesian society back into the drama of identity-based political polarization. The research findings indicate that the political persona built by each presidential candidate still revolves around aspects of their own inherent identity, rather than providing a clear picture of their priority policy programs when in office.

The prevalence of identity politics also leads to the degradation of democracy in Indonesia. The public, who are expected to be critical and ensure the concept of checks and balances in exercising power (Kusmanto, 2014), are instead presented with the drama of polarization, resulting in non-substantive and counterproductive debates. The function of checks and balances, which should be directed at the candidates vying for power, ends up becoming mutual attacks among the people themselves. Public debates focus mainly on political persona and electoral aspects, while the aspects of policy, mission for change, and substantial politics of the presidential candidates tend to be forgotten.

## CONCLUSION

Political persona is a concept that involves the systematic and collective creation of identity in socio-cultural life. This is evident in the formation of political personas by the Indonesian presidential candidates for 2024 on their Instagram accounts. Through the use of Visual Framing Analysis, the following findings were identified: the account @aniesbaswedan constructs itself as a former governor of the capital city ready to level up to the presidency, embodying global, technocratic, and environmental leadership characteristics, as well as being a pluralist, humanist, and sympathetic towards the phenomenon of death; the account @ganjar\_pranowo

constructs itself as a party loyalist, a nationally accomplished governor, closely affiliated with NU and Nahdliyin, close to Joko Widodo, and an admirer of Bung Karno; the account @prabowo constructs itself as a party leader with a collective identity, a leader with foreign representative characteristics, an individual with high achievements in their field, a servant leader, pluralist, and close to Joko Widodo.

Furthermore, in the process of unraveling the meaning of each account's political persona, the impact of potential polarization between groups and the decay of democracy in Indonesia is revealed. Instead of fulfilling their role as watchdogs for checking and balancing the prospective rulers, society ends up engaging in mutual attacks within itself.

## CREDIT AUTHORSHIP

### CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

**Muhammad Dicka Ma'arief**

**Alyatalatthaf:** Data gathering, methodology, literature review, data analysis. **Altobeli Lobodally:**

Methodology, Literature Review.

**Natalia Faradheta Putri:** Data analysis, translator, proofreader.

## DECLARATION OF

### COMPETING INTEREST

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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