Eva Leiliyanti

Representation and Symbolic Politics in Indonesia: Billboard Advertising in the 2009 Legislative Assembly Elections

ABSTRACT

One of the most visible political phenomena during Indonesia’s 2009 Legislative Assembly Election was the promulgation of the candidates’ ideology through billboards as a new cultural artefact. During the campaign, streets all over Indonesia were dotted with the candidates’ billboards as the result of the amended law of Legislative Election. The law stipulates that the candidates are now obliged to present themselves directly to the public for the first time. The billboard represents the convoluted web of representation which shows the complexity of polarisations between Nationalist and Islamist strands in the political discursive practices of the major parties. The paper deciphers how the Nationalist and Islamist strands’ images were constructed, constested and obscured on the billboards. Nine billboards that represent the nine winning parties (five nationalist and four Islamist) are examined to disentangle the complexity of the politics of image in Indonesia.

BIOGRAPHY

Eva Leiliyanti is a Ph.D Candidate in Media and Cultural Studies, Edith Cowan University. She teaches English Literature, Media and Cultural Studies at English Department, Universitas Negeri Jakarta. She is the awardee of DIKTI (Direktorat Pendidikan Tinggi- Directorate of Higher Education) scholarship from the Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia in 2010-2013. She also received a U. S. Summer Program Institute Scholarship on American Literature in 2007 and became one of Indonesian delegates in the Youth Exchange Program between ASEAN countries and Japan in 1996.
**Representation and Symbolic Politics in Indonesia: Billboard Advertising in the 2009 Legislative Assembly Elections**

**Introduction**

Following the downfall of Soeharto’s authoritarian regime, the Indonesian political arena has experienced marked political resilience. Mietzner and Aspinall argue that Indonesia’s success in transforming its democratic system from guided democracy (Soekarno’s era), through authoritarian rule (Soeharto’s or New Order regime) to electoral democracy (the Reform era) marks the rise of democratic politics in the post-New Order period. Indonesia’s democratic performance steadily improved after the 1997 Asian Financial crisis, with commentators noting a significant improvement regarding Indonesia’s score on its political rights and civil liberties, especially during 2006-2009. In the measurements of democratic freedoms published by Freedom House, a U. S.-based N. G. O. that monitors and advocates democracy and human rights around the world, Indonesia’s achievements and rating in 2008 (2.3 on a sliding scale on which 1 is the highest degree of freedom) far out-stripped neighbouring countries such as Philippines (4.3) and Thailand (6.4).

This outstanding result arguably stems from Indonesia’s success in rectifying its democratic system especially in the Reform era (1998-2004). Habibie’s government (1998-1999) was noted for ‘peacefully’ turning this transition era away from the authoritarian rule to the democratic system that paved the way for ‘freer’ democratic elections by employing the combination of district and proportional systems. The baton was then given to Megawati after the elected President, Abdurrahman Wahid, was impeached due to allegations regarding financial scandals. Megawati’s administration (2001-2004) successfully initiated a direct Presidential election into Indonesia’s history. However, prior to the Presidential election, the parliamentary election conducted by her government that employed a new election system called an open-list system, reinforced the party’s oligarchy. Haris argues that this system positions the parties as the determiners that organise the positions of their cadres into the list of a ranking number on the ballot papers. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s (SBY) government annulled this system. In 2009 the Constitutional Court acceded a judicial review of Law no. 10, 2008, article 214 which stipulated that the decision to determine the elected legislative candidates based on the ranking number on the ballot paper (as in the 2004 Legislative Election) was against the 1945 Constitution. This imposed a necessity for the legislative candidates to present themselves directly to the public for the first time. It also led to the construction of a new political culture that heavily relies on the politics of image in Indonesia, constructing through many mediums, including the billboard.

The political billboard itself represents the intricate web of representation which involves the complexity of historical polarisation of Nationalist and Islamist strands within the major parties. Kingsbury argues that this polarisation, which originated from Javanese culture, defines Indonesian religious characteristics, especially the Muslim one. Geertz’s classifies Javanese religious groups into three: abangan, santri and priyayi. He defines...

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1 The paper is part of my dissertation project currently in progress. I greatly appreciate the comments and inputs made on this paper by Rod Giblett, Christopher Crouch and Dennis Wood as my supervisors, and by the editors of the Crossroads journal. As this paper was presented at the Perspective on Power Conference held at University of Queensland on 23-25 November 2011, I would also like to thank Diyantari for her contribution as my co-presenter.


4 A system that allowed the voters to directly read the names of the legislative candidates on the ballot paper prior to their casting a vote.


*abangan* as the group who strongly holds Javanese animistic elements and seldom performs any religious formal practices whilst *santri* as comprise the devout Muslims who are mostly traders.\(^8\) One of the *abangan* variants, *abangan* Muslim or syncretic Muslim, usually consists of the peasants who live in the rural areas. However, many scholars disagree with Geertz’s classification for not only does *priyayi* denote a social group (Javanese aristocracy class),\(^9\) not a religious group, but also Geertz overlooks the classification by focusing merely on the conventional anthropological polarisation (big tradition/small tradition or the ‘pure’ Islam/Javanese Islam) as his theoretical basis and treats the phenomena merely within the socio-cultural context which is plausibly detached from the Islamic scriptures. Kingsbury argues that aside from this stark distinction between *abangan* and *santri* which lies on their level of acceptability of Javanese animistic belief,\(^10\) this accommodating act can arguably be seen as the capacity of Indonesian Islam to adopt the local culture. Pranowo argues that this acceptability defines discrepant characteristics of *santri* and *abangan* Muslim: being a Muslim is not merely about the state of being (that A is a Muslim and B is the nominal Muslim) but more to do with the religious state of becoming (although B is reluctant to practise the Muslim’s five-time prayer, B will one day fulfil that religious obligation and support all socio-cultural practices in developing Islam).\(^11\)

In the context of Islamic politics development in Indonesia, the notion of *santri* develops into the Islamic faction whereas *abangan* becomes the nationalist faction. The transformation itself is not rigid. The *santri* sphere then splits into Islamist and nationalist in the second quarter of the twentieth century.\(^12\) The *abangan* transforms itself as religiously neutral nationalist,\(^13\) or secular nationalist.\(^14\) The notion *santri* then proliferates in accordance with the development of the socio-historical context in Indonesia: from radical,\(^15\) or fundamentalist,\(^16\) or idealist,\(^17\) through traditionalist,\(^18\) and modernist,\(^19\) to neo modernist.\(^20\) Hefner argues that the polarised notions can be seen in two general perspectives: civil Islam (the Muslims who promote the concepts of democracy, pluralism, freedom and civil rights) and the opposite group, regimist Islam, which was arguably invented by Soeharto’s regime (which was anti-democracy, repressive, and authoritarian).\(^21\)

This paper outlines the mechanism of how the candidates’ billboards represent the images of Nationalist and Islamist polarisation. I argue that the signifying practices of the image construction on the billboards not only show the contestation of these two strands but that they also obscure the polarisation itself. The paper is organised by looking at the Indonesian political realm (concentrating on the Nationalist and Islamist cleavage),

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Democratisation in Indonesia Elections, Institutions and Society, Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner (Eds) (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010).


15 Fealy, “Foreword,” xii.


18 Fealy, “Foreword,” xii.

19 Ibid.


the political branding (such as the slogan, the party’s platforms, and Pancasila - the state ideology), and a reading of the candidates’ billboards as cultural and visual artefacts that express a visual narratives, I limit the analysis by examining the billboards of nine political parties that won seats in the 2009 Legislative Election, not focusing on how the spectators responded to the billboards, but on how the billboards narrate the polarisation and contest between the two dominant political camps.

INDONESIAN POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

The polarisation of Nationalist and Islamist strands within the major parties, especially since the time Indonesia gained her independence, has defined the Indonesian political framework. Fealy argues that although this factional polarisation no longer gains ‘academic accuracy’ in the present day, it remains the dominant ideological marker to map the Indonesian political framework. Sukma and Platzdasch argue that the status of accuracy has been detached since each faction attempts to adopt the ideological values of its adversary which obscures the ideological framework of the factions. At the same time, this obscurity validates the basis of investigating the contestation between the Nationalist and Islamist strands that are reflected in the billboards of their legislative candidates. This section analyses the contention between Nationalist and Islamic camps that illuminates their political branding.

The overt ideological contestation in the 1920s to 1960s stemmed from the perennial disputes between Islamist and Nationalist camps over state ideology. The Islamist faction wanted to stick with the initial proposition to include the phrase ‘with the obligation to live according to Islamic law’ in the first principle of Pancasila of the Jakarta charter. Platzdasch notes that the act of effacing this phrase was seen by the Islamist faction as violating Pancasila’s democratic principle of musyawarah (deliberation) and mufakat (consensus). The Islamic faction argued that the members, who drafted the charter (the Investigatory Body for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence (BPUPKI), which comprised secular nationalists, Muslims, Christians, Javanese and non-Javanese elements, was regarded as representational. Due to this, the charter was perceived as representing a political compromise, especially between the two dominant camps. However, although Mashad notes that the Islamist faction eventually agreed not to amend it as they realised that it was too early to urge such notion as Indonesia had only recently gained her independence, Platzdasch further argues, fostered ‘cross-religious suspicion’ which ‘echoes the intrinsic position of shari’ah (Islamic law)-minded Muslims in early to mid twentieth centuries.

This shari’ah-minded-ness ostensibly ran parallel with the pan-Islamism propagated by Indian-Paskitani Abu al-A‘la al-Maududi and Sayyid Qutb. It found its channel in Indonesian polity in the mid-twentieth century through an Islamist party, Masyumi (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia or Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims), led by Mohammad Natsir. However, Platzdasch argues that the amalgamation of Islamic values with the western concept of democracy distanced Masyumi from pan-Islamism. He found that Masyumi believed in the compatibility of Islam with the western democratic concept by coalescing the Paskitani ‘Islamic republic’ model with the ‘democratic and constitutional based state’ which placed the state as the core institution to uphold Islamic law (shari’ah).

Due to an allegation of mutiny made against Masyumi, Soekarno issued the Presidential Decree no 200/1960 that dissolved the party in 1960. Notwithstanding his suppression of this largest Islamist party, Soekarno

22 Greg Fealy, “Foreword,” xii.
24 The Jakarta Charter, which was signed in Jakarta on 22 June 1945, was the first design of the state philosophy that the members of the Investigatory Body for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence (BPUPKI) produced prior to Indonesia’s Independence on 17 August 1945. Mashad (Dhurorudin Mashad, Akar Konflik Politik Islam di Indonesia (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2008), 57), notes that Soekarno, the member of BPUPKI who later the first President of Indonesia, perceived the charter as a political compromise between the Nationalist and Islamist camps, not to make Islam as the state ideology which would turn the country into an Islamic one, but rather as the result of the modus vivendi that bridged the deadlock between the two camps.
25 Platzdasch, Islamism in Indonesia, 124-125.
26 Mashad, Akar Konflik.
27 Platzdasch, Islamism in Indonesia, 14, 125.
28 Ibid., 30-32.
attempted to synthesise the nationalist, Islamists, and communists under one concept NASAKOM (Nationalist, Religion, and Communist) to perpetuate his status quo.

However, the downfall of Soekarno’s regime due to the failed communist coup in 1965 marked a new hope for the Islamist faction to rehabilitate its name.29 History records a different reality. Instead of rehabilitating the Islamist faction’s name, Soeharto’s administration emasculated the polarisation of Nationalist and Islamist strands under the slogan of developmentalism. People’s freedom to actively participate in politics was circumscribed by Soeharto’s regime for it was perceived as the source of separatist movement and political turmoil. The President deployed Golkar (the functional group) as his electoral machine and imposed Pancasila as the sole ideology for all political parties. He held the same ideological belief as Soekarno that Pancasila, which reflected the Indonesian soul, could unite the people. The fusion of Pancasila and developmentalism muffled people’s opposition. The Islamist camp finally accepted Pancasila and perceived Pancasila’s first principle (Belief in One Almighty God) could accommodate the Islamist aspiration. This, as Kingsbury argues, is possibly due to the Islamist faction’s view that Pancasila’s secular (religious) notion is seen not as quite illegitimate,’ as it does not totally contradict the ‘Islam’s social and legal claim’ as previously discussed.30

In the Reform era, the ideological contestation re-emerged during the Presidential election in 1999. PDI-P had to admit the Central Axis group’s (the Islamist faction) political manoeuvre in putting Abdurrahman Wahid as the President although PDI-P won the assembly election. However, the ideological contestation did not appear in the same form as in the period from 1945 to the 1960s. It has been transformed and shifted into a pragmatic one due to the cartel system or the fluid coalition that attenuated the ideological contestation.31

THE 2009 ASSEMBLY ELECTION

The 2009 legislative assembly election was conducted on 9 April 2009 with the participation of 171 million people and 38 political parties. Only nine parties met the parliamentary threshold (2.5 per cent). They are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Name</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partai Demokrat (PD - Democrat Party)</td>
<td>20.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Golkar (Golkar - Functional Group Party)</td>
<td>14.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDI-P or Indonesian Democratic Party- Struggle)</td>
<td>14.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS – Prosperous Justice Party)</td>
<td>7.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN – National Mandate Party)</td>
<td>6.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP – United Development Party)</td>
<td>5.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB – Nation’s Awakening Party)</td>
<td>4.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Gerakan Indonesia Merdeka (Gerindra – Greater Indonesia Movement Party)</td>
<td>4.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat (Hanura – People’s Conscience Party)</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result shows that the total votes for the nationalist faction reached 57.56 per cent (PD, Golkar, PDI-P, Gerindra, and Hanura), escalating 21.03 per cent from the 2004 Assembly Election. The ratio between the nationalist faction (PD, Golkar, PDI-P, Gerindra, and Hanura) and Islamist faction (PKS, PPP, PKB, PAN) means that if there are five persons voting for the Islamist parties then there will be 12 persons voting for the nationalists. However, we cannot infer that the phenomenon guaranteed the re-emergence of the overt ideological cleavage as in previous elections. The 2009 election was heavily engaged in exalting the politics of image. The polarisation between Islamist and Nationalist strands seemingly found a new channel to materialize especially in the image construction of the key party’s figures. The PPP Vice Secretary General, Romahurmuziy argued in Kompas that the politics of the (key) party’s figures was the far-reaching factor in winning the election.32 Papua and Sulawesi were the examples where religious based parties no longer became the determiner in voting. This was due to the culture of revering the local community figures. People would follow the party in which these figures were involved.33

30 Kingsbury, The Politics of Indonesia, 86.
31 Kuskrido Ambardi, Mengungkap Politik Kartel Studi tentang Sistem Kepartaian di Indonesia Era Reformasi (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia bekerjasama dengan Lembaga Survei Indonesia, 2009).
32 Kompas, 30 April 2011.
THE PARTY’S BRANDING AND PANCAŚILA

Research that specifically investigates the political branding of the old political parties (PPP, Golkar, PD/PDIP) let alone the new ones (PD, PKS, PAN, PKB, Gerindra, and Hanura) via billboard is scarce. A few instances are found, such as: *Signifikansi Iklan Politik dalam Pemilu 2004 (Analisis Semiotika Iklan PDI Perjuangan Dalam Kampanye Pemilu 2004)* or the Significance of Political advertisement in 2004 General Election (a Semiotic Analysis of PDI-P in 2004 Campaigns), by M. Edy Susilo and Prayudi, offered a semiotic reading of PDI-P’s political branding in newspapers during the 2004 General Election. They found that the ads did not offer sufficient understanding for the voters to choose PDI-P. They merely sold Megawati’s image as the woman who was believed to be inheriting Soekarno’s charisma. Ajidarma also offered a semiotic reading of the candidate’s billboards and found that they were merely about the morphology of the structure which represents the socio/language erosion of what is untold in the social world (in order to achieve the socio-moral status that co-exists in the political arena). 

Firmanzah examined contestation, legitimacy and power in the 2009 Elections from the perspective of political marketing.

The works concerning ‘what’s-inside’ the political parties are also hard to find in the ‘market.’ Their availability is internally consumed for they are focused on doctrine which needs to be imposed on the political parties’ internal adherents. Lee-Marshment argued that branding is not about the overall perception but more about ‘...the impressions, images, attitudes and recognition.’ It thus made the party’s slogan and platforms become the core points in investigating how the party creates a feeling of identity as the differentiation factor in their political marketing. Below is the summary of the political party’s slogan and platforms adopted from Firmanzah that illuminates the party’s branding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTY</th>
<th>SLOGAN</th>
<th>PLATFORMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Continue!</td>
<td>Reducing poverty and the country’s debt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOLKAR</td>
<td>Giving Evidence not Promises, The Sooner the Better</td>
<td>Law supremacy, <em>ekonomi kerakyatan</em>, nationalism, pluralism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDIP</td>
<td>The Grassroots’ Party</td>
<td>Supervising BLT, people’s prosperity, cheap price of the staple foods, creating millions of jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKS</td>
<td>Caring, Clean, Professional</td>
<td>Clean governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAN</td>
<td>Life is Action</td>
<td>‘Education for free’ Program and 1.5 trillion rupiah for underdeveloped villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Together Revive to Make a Change</td>
<td>Reinforcing UMKM, “education and health services for free” programs, the draft of Halal Assurance Law, Custom and Tradition Law, and Islamic Banking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKIB</td>
<td>Defending the right one</td>
<td>‘Easy and comfortable access to public services’ and ‘prospering the People’ programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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38 Firmanzah, *Pensaingan, Legitimasi Kekuasaan, dan Marketing Politik*. 
The table indicates that the nine winning parties employed similar themes in their campaigns. All of these were about how to reduce poverty and increase the prosperity of the same sectors: the economic, social, educative, and political. A similar construction of the Indonesian economic system under the banner of ekonomi kerakyatan was employed by both Nationalist and Islamist strands in their platforms. It stemmed from the state ideology, Pancasila, which was perceived to reflect the national identity.

Pancasila, which had been imposed by Soeharto as the sole ideology, is the ideological umbrella that neither negates nor fuses the ideological differences of the Islamist versus Nationalist polarisation. It provides a shelter under the motto of Bhineka Tunggal Ika or Unity in Diversity. The notion implies an ideological mosaic which not only illuminates the difference/similarity within the concept of nation-state, but also indicates that Pancasila ideologically regulates the party’s and the candidate’s politics of image. It constitutes the model of democracy which synthesised masyawarah (deliberation), mufakat (consensus), gotong royong (mutual assistance/sharing burden), and kekeluargaan (family principle/family-ness), kebersamaan (collectivism), and kerukunan (social harmony) as the national wisdom.

BILLBOARDS AS CULTURAL AND VISUAL ARTEFACTS

Examining the visual operation and meaning making on the candidate’s billboard, we need to shift our focus from analysing the Indonesia’s legislative candidate billboards to the analysis of the legislative candidates’ billboards as the visual artefacts which represent Indonesia’s political realm. As outdoor political advertisements, Gudis asserts the logic of the candidates’ billboards operates like the mechanism of mobile market or the “buyway”. Not only does the billboard trespass the political boundaries of provinces, municipalities and villages, but it also allows the spectators to conduct ‘self-analyses’ towards so-called ‘street-level museum art paintings’. However, due to the rapid mobility of the spectators in the public space, the billboards merely hold a temporary psychological status in the spectators’ minds that distract their attention. Furthermore, as a self-content narrative, candidates’ billboards visually communicate the messages quickly and silently. Their ubiquity, especially beside the roads during the election days, becomes a marker of habituation as people pass the billboards at all times. This (un)consciously forges a certain impression in the spectators which, according to Harrington, does not require any ‘intellectual attention’. It also reinforces the argument that Indonesian politics is more symbolic in nature than substantive.

Reading a candidate’s billboard entails reading the narrative of its visuality. It is about an arrangement of signs as a ‘unit/narrative’ to codify the knowledge of sight to power through a semiotic reading practice which results from the relation between the candidate’s disposition (habitus) and position in a field (capital) within the 2009 assembly election as the political arena. Barthes implicitly recognised that the practices of looking espouse the habitus’ construction, especially at the moment of transmitting the social meaning through the candidate’s

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39 The system which orients to empower people to open and manage small-sized enterprises so that later people’s independency towards the government can be reduced.


41 Ibid., 50-58.

42 In Gudis, Buyways, 70.

43 Platzdasch, Islamism in Indonesia.


photograph on the billboard. Barthes continues that the photograph is ‘the ellipse of language, a condensation of the social whole, for it suggests not merely physical fetishism, a way of dressing, a set of daily choices, a posture, the social setting but more saliently the glorification of the photogenic,’ which is capable of inviting the voter’s habitus to perceive the candidate’s veritable physical transference as the act of delegating herself/himself to reflect plausibly voters’ aspirations.

Besides representing the candidates’ parties’ ideology, the billboard also narrates how the candidates position themselves in the factional polarisation which is possibly different from the ideological position the parties take in the polarisation within demokrasi Pancasila. The analysis focuses on the mechanism of the symbolic exchange on the billboard that portrays the candidates’ political positioning in their politics of image.

**Reading Visual Narratives**

A. **Nationalist Parties:**

**Partai Demokrat** (Democratic Party or PD)

Munadi Herlambang, the Secretary of Youth and Sport Department of Democratic party, employed the slogan: ‘Young, Objective, Without Prejudice’ to illuminate his personal qualities. He provides the procedures to vote for him, his number on the ballot paper, the tick sign, his mobile number for sending SMS and his personal website. The inclusion of the mobile number and website signifies open access for the public to reach Herlambang and connotes his quality as an open-minded person that can cope with input and critics. The voting procedure occupies almost half of Herlambang’s billboard which is positioned centrally. It indicates that he wants to remind the viewers about the new voting procedure. However at the same time, it represents his agitation for his electability.

He correlates his image with SBY’s (the current president and the key party’s figure) image, the national flag and the party’s logo so that the public perceives him as the representative of the nationalist figure by juxtaposing his image with SBY’s which appears on the left hand corner. As the reading pattern begins from the left to the right, it makes the spectators focus on SBY’s image first and later relates it with Herlambang’s. This dependence on SBY’s image implies Herlambang’s lack of personal recognisability. As Ajidarma would argue, Herlambang’s dependence on SBY’s image is communally accepted, for in the paternalistic culture (as represented in Pancasila) such a notion is allowed to reinforce the transmission of SBY’s charisma/sensuality as the paternalistic party’s figure to Herlambang. He chose SBY’s image in which he lifted his right hand as if to give an order which demonstrates a visual tactic and Herlambang’s disposition towards SBY’s military style of command. The action verbs he deploys (choose, open, find and tick) in the procedure reinforce the transferring attempt of SBY’s style of command.

Herlambang’s visual tactic also implies the utilisation of SBY’s image as a Javanese ‘gentle’ patron. SBY’s self-representation of his disposition to power intimates his adoption of the Javanese normative behavioural form of halus (refinement) or virtues, such as ‘patience, detachment, resignation and respect.’ In this sense, not merely does the deployment of SBY’s corporeal body on Herlambang’s billboard connote the patron’s charisma, but also signifies the metaphor which indicates the modus operandi of correlating Herlambang’s image with SBY’s Javanese ‘soft’ power. At the same time, the utilisation of SBY’s body as visual capital can be seen as twofold: it implies the submissive code especially when Herlambang visually defines his disposition through SBY. Secondly, the condition can be reversed. Herlambang’s passivity cannot be seen as representing a submissive action per se. If he wins the ticket to the parliament, he will, without exception, support SBY’s

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47 The photogenic quality, according to Guy Cook (1992), can be seen from the visual text such as the facial expression, gesture, face type, ways of dressing, which he calls paralanguage.
48 The government amended the voting mechanism used in previous elections, from perforating the ballot paper using a nail to the tick sign. It was perceived as a breakthrough in the 2009 General Elections to differ itself from the 2004 elections.
50 In line with Ajidarma, Garin Nugroho (*Kompas* daily, 31.5. 2009) contends that SBY’s corporeal/political body can be seen from the perspective of the fan culture in which the fans revere SBY as the paternalistic figure who represents the fusion of power (military with civility), intellectuality (he earns a doctorate degree), beauty (good –looking), and manner codes.
administration. This creates mutual dependency between SBY and Herlambang on the visual level. By this, the symbolic mutual exchange occurs.

Beside his reliance on SBY to represent his nationalist characteristics, the party jacket Herlambang wears also signifies his nationalist orientation. The jacket becomes the code that represents the party’s nationalist-religious characteristic as stated in its statutes. As the party’s logo is crafted on the jacket, it bears the party’s logo (the red and white three pointed star), which symbolises the party’s religiosity and nationalist orientation (the red and white colours are associated with the Indonesian national flag that connotes the nationalist spirit especially during Independence). His nationalist image is amplified by the accentuation of Herlambang’s academic titles (S.T. and M.A.) which not only illuminates his academic qualities but also indicates the cultural capital he has. This denotes his academic capabilities in handling the technological (S.T denotes a bachelor degree in engineering) and social/humanities issues (M. A. connotes his academic quality of handling the social/humanities issues). However, the signs that illustrate PD’s slogan (continue!) and platform (reducing poverty and country’s debt) are absent. He failed in his candidacy.

**Partai Golkar**

In his billboard, Priyo Budi Santoso, the deputy chairperson of the Parliament from Golkar and the chairperson of Ikatan Cendikiawan Muslim Indonesia or ICMI, promises to build synergy to unite the *ummat* by employing four cartoon characters which arrange four puzzles to build a circle. His preference for deploying the cartoon characters to describe the slogan instead of an authentic (non-cartoon character) one possibly attenuates the visual credibility, because albeit the characters represent the neutral symbols of the Islamic community, they merely possess a faint correlation with the *ummat* itself. The human hands arranging the puzzle as the image background signify that the effort to build synergy is controlled so that *masyawarah* (deliberation) and *mufakat* (consensus) to unite the *ummat* (to reach *kerukunan* or social harmony) are achieved within the framework of Golkar. This also suggests Golkar’s nationalist notion of *mufakat* that reinforces the pattern of *kawula-gusti* in Pancasila. Kingsbury argues that *mufakat* is not synonymous with ‘the open airing of differences of opinion,’ but rather implies the subservience of social norms guided by *gusti* as the patron. In this sense, O’Sullivan et al. view that the functional notion as reflected in Golkar’s name (*Golongan Karya* or Functional Group), operates by smoothing over conflict as *gusti* functions to maintain the party’s equilibrium and ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the party’s constituent parts. Maintaining the effectiveness and efficiency is conducted by performing practical actions that represent the party’s cohesion (read: equilibrium) as reflected in its logo. Golkar’s logo, the banyan tree and the adjoined rice and cotton, represent the Pancasila principles: the unity of Indonesia and democracy through deliberation and consensus. At this stage, the logo signifies the party’s dual system: sustaining an equilibrium through practical actions whilst positioning the practicality as the modus operandi. Thus, the notion ‘functionalism,’ which highly regards the functionality of each division in the party, has been shifted into pragmatic actions as deploying the ‘functional’ notion arguably positions Golkar as a ‘catch-all’ party.

Golkar’s position as the ‘catch-all’ party opens the opportunity for its legislative candidates to adopt any ideological values as long as it resonates with the party’s vision and mission. As the representative of the ‘catch-all’ party and one of ICMI chairpersons, Santososo’s billboard deploys Islamic symbolic attributes in the form of the noun *ummat*, *baju koko* and *peci*, and his socio-political roles in Islamic society. The deployment of the noun *ummat* - in his slogan accentuates Santososo’s political disposition towards the Islamist voters. It is very important for Islam to build synergy within the nationalist framework of Golkar. This politicking is reinforced by his appearance in wearing the white *baju koko* (the Muslim male shirt which is usually worn to go to the mosque) and a black *peci* (a male Muslim cap). *Peci* used to be perceived as one of the pieces of attires for the Muslim man to wear whilst praying. It has now become one of the pieces of national attires to be worn in state ceremonies, which according to Ajidarma, reflects his socio-moral status. Below his smiling image are Santososo’s identity labels which indicates his social capital (the pioneer of T. P. A. or the educational spot for children to study Al Qur’an; the counsellor of BKPRMI or the Indonesian Mosque Youth Communication Board; Chairperson of ICMI) to ostensibly convince the Islamist nationalist electorates to vote him. At the right bottom, he invites the spectators to vote for him on election day for he represents the one who cares for the mosque, the Muslim children, Pesantren and struggles for the *ummat* aspiration. The invitation

53 In Pancasila’s discourse, the image of the star is closely associated with religiosity.
56 The noun – *ummat* – denotes the Islamist community, in this case in Indonesia.
57 *Kompas*, 15 March 2012.
signifies taking the position of developing Indonesian Islam. This politicking also demonstrates the obscurity of polarisation between the Nationalist and Islamist strands. Representing the Nationalist party, Santoso cannot dissociate himself from his Islamic credentials. Joining Golkar, a nationalist party that is strong institutionally, is arguably seen as a smart way to catch all the Muslim voters (santri and abangan). With the cultural capital to catch the santri voters in his hand, Santoso can easily captivate the abangan Muslim voters as he represents the whole package of Islamic images with Golkar as his electoral machine.

Santoso also provides the ballot paper dummy and the tick sign on his number on the right bottom hand corner. The one eighth portion of the dummy in Santoso’s billboard indicates not the insignificance of the new system to be disseminated but demonstrates his self-assurance in his electability for he was known as the most popular parliament member in 2004-2009. Santoso succeeded in his candidacy.

**PDI-P**

Djarot Saiful was the former mayor of Blitar and the legislative candidate from PDI-P. His image presenting a basket of star fruit to an old peasant woman represents his slogan: the leader’s task is to enrich the people, not to make them suffer. By presenting this pictorial act to the spectators, Saiful promotes himself not merely as the legislative candidate who is concerned with people’s prosperity, but also perpetuates his image as the one who successfully developed the star fruit business of the local people from Blitar. The scene resonates with the party’s slogan - the grassroots’ party - for it demonstrates the philanthropic act of helping the poor people and visually materializes PDI-P’s platform, ‘prospering the people.’ However, the act also signifies the hierarchical power relation between Saiful as the former mayor with the commoner and the woman. Instead of picking the fruit together, his act in handing the fruit as a gift connotes the Javanese priyayi paternalistic action in which gusti helps to prosper kawula, which plausibly embodies the Pancasila’s fourth democratic principle (‘popular sovereignty arrived at through deliberation and representation’). The scene occupies half of the billboard to accentuate that Saiful represents the PDI-P’s democratic spirit by deploying the similar symbol of the fourth principle of Pancasila, the buffalo’s head.

The inclusion of the title hajj in Djarot Saiful’s image signifies his political disposition towards Islam. Although Saiful’s Islamic nuance does not present as being as conspicuous as Santoso’s, Saiful’s title indicates his identity as a Muslim who belongs to the so-called secular nationalist party. The title hajj in Indonesia is seen as representing one’s social and/or religious status due to the cost involved in a visit to Mecca. Saiful’s use of the title connects to the populist perception that when one attaches the title “hajj” in front of one’s name (after conducting a pilgrimage) one is perceived as a pious Muslim, although widespread exploitation of the practice for socio/religious-political purposes arguably means that it is perceived as an indication of social status rather than degree of piety. Like Santoso, Saiful does not include PDI-P’s key political figure in his billboard (Megawati Soekarnoputri), for both are aware of their popularity in the national level (for Santosa) or the regional level (for Saiful). As the former successful mayor of Blitar, Saiful believes that his image and philanthropic activities sufficiently represents the party’s platforms as the “wongcilik” or grassroots’ party. Saiful failed to enter Parliament.

**Gerindra**

Haryo Seno was the legislative candidate from Gerindra representing Ngawi, Magetan, Ponorogo and Trenggalek constituencies. He deployed the same pattern as Herlambang in presenting himself to the public with the absence of an authentic visual setting of place to support the party’s/Seno’s ‘distinctive’ ideology. Seno employed the Gerindra slogan: ‘Let us build together.’ However, no signs support this slogan except for the lifting fist of Prabowo Subianto, the party’s key figure, and a retired military General, which faintly indicates the nationalist spirit to build the country with Gerindra/Haryo Seno. His deployment of the same slogan as the party’s indicates the absence of his ‘distinctive’ platform. He merely illuminates that change can be established within the framework of Gerindra which employed Garuda, the national emblem to illuminate Pancasila. Gerindra uses the upper part of the bird, the neck and the head, to ostensibly represent the holistic notion of nationalist identity. The inviting word ‘mari’ or ‘let us’ fails to arouse the spirit to build the country because the invitation sounds plain with the absence of supporting visual signs. It appears parallel to Subianto’s image which indicates the existence of vertical communication of the party’s key figure with the public. The message loses its meaning as the medium shot of Seno occupies almost half of the billboard to introduce himself without attempting to disseminate his personal program within the framework of the party’s platforms. The billboard merely introduces Seno as the newcomer in the (local) political arena. Like Herlambang, Seno correlates his image with the party’s key figure along with the national flag as the background colours (red and white). Subianto’s image appears in the right hand corner while Seno’s image lies under Subianto’s but dominates the

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58 Mietzner, "Indonesia’s 2009 Elections."
billboard. Juxtaposing his image with Subianto’s merely shows his lack of personal reputation as a politician and indicates that Seno is trapped in the dominant paternalistic discourse. Like most candidates, Seno provides the ballot paper dummy with the tick sign on his number to remind the voters of the new election system. He failed to enter the House of Representatives in Senayan.

**Hanura**

Dosy Iskandar Prasetyo’s billboard adopts a similar tactic in his politics of image to Haryo Seno. From the left hand side, we can see that the smiling image of Wiranto, the retired General who was the former commander of the Armed Forces in Soeharto’s era. Wiranto’s military standing reinforces the party’s claim of support from the military camp, but the retired General’s smile relaxes the potentially domineering image of the party/candidate. Prasetyo also appears smiling towards the camera. These smiles connote a friendliness that softens the strong-willed slogan (it is the time for our conscience to speak). The party’s logo (an arrow), which signifies a linear thinking structure, is positioned next to Wiranto’s image. The logo appears to be flowing and connotes the right/true/correct progress of the nation, under one command/leadership. Like any other candidate, Prasetyo also includes the ballot paper dummy below Wiranto’s image as the indirect way to remind the spectators when they cast the vote. The title hajj in Prasetyo’s name is deployed as the tactic to demonstrate his religious (Islamist) nationalist identity. Although he failed in his candidacy, he succeeded in becoming the Secretary General of Hanura.

**B. Islamist Parties:**

**PKS**

The billboard of Hidayat Nur Wahid (the former chairperson of People’s Consultative Assembly in 2004-2009 and the Legislative member from PKS) cannot be directly perceived as his medium to promote himself as the legislative candidate. However, it appeared during the campaign days. Unlike other figures, Wahid does not face the camera in his billboard image, but is shown from a slanting angle in the seemingly altruistic action of helping flood victims. This para-language suggests the focus of Wahid’s billboard is not on introducing who Hidayat Nur Wahid is, but rather demonstrating what he has done. He is seen looking at a group of men helping the flood victims and giving his thumb-up to them, while sitting on a rescue boat holding an oar. While the scene signifies Wahid’s attempt to encourage the volunteers who were helping the flood victims, it also affirms the hierarchical power relation between him as the gusti (the party’s elite) and the group of men as the kawula. The volunteer activities signify the nationalist spirit of gotong royong (mutual assistance/sharing burden) of this Islamist party. Wahid’s presence seems more like an inspection of PKS’s cadres voluntary works. His billboard imitates the cigarette ad for ‘Gudang Garam International,’ the survivor version. He altered the cigarette’s slogan ‘Pria Punya Selera’ (The Man Got the Taste) into ‘Rakyat Punya Selera’ (The People Got the Taste). He juxtaposes the ‘people’ with the ‘man.’ The male figures/characters dominate the billboard. Women are absent from the conspicuous voluntary visual scene which occupies almost half of the billboard. One female figure appears solely and covertly as a student wearing a white headscarf in the imperceptible background of the slogan which shows Wahid as gusti surrounded by kawula when visiting the location. Wahid’s humanitarian action affirms the constructed segregation of the social, cultural and political roles of males/females and Gusti/Kawula in patriarchal Indonesian society. The product logo and name ‘Gudang Garam Internasional’ is altered into the logo and the name of the party, Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party). In the middle bottom of the billboard lies the party’s slogan: Clean, Caring, Professional used to illuminate the qualities of PKS’s cadres. The typical government warning attached at the bottom of the billboard for cigarette advertisements is altered into the people’s warning: choosing PKS will result in the prosperity of the people, the progressive development of the country, the annihilation of corruption and increasing pride in the nation and state. The word ‘warning’ which connotes negative attributes is transformed into the positive one as Wahid transforms it as the medium to promulgate the party’s mission, i.e. clean governance. He succeeded in his candidacy.

**PAN**

Ahmad Firdaus was the former legislative member in the provincial government of Banten (1999-2003). He was also known as a former TKI, an Indonesian worker, in Saudi Arabia. Dissatisfied with his income, he joined an NGO which later brought him in as the chairperson of PAN in Banten. In his billboard Firdaus transformed himself into a James Bond figure (wearing a black tuxedo and holding a gun), declaring war on corruption, stupidity and poverty. The association is partly due to Firdaus’ number on the ballot paper (no. 7) which

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59 The party stated in KPU’s website that the party’s logo is the arrow shape which inscribed the name of HANURA.
resonates with 007, but also reflects his interest in how the C. I. A. and M. I. 6, allegedly intervened in the G30S PKI incident which (in)directly toppled Soekarno’s administration, underlining his goals of political and economic freedom. However, Bond simply represents the imperialist character who seemingly upholds the law and justice from occidental perspectives. It indicates his alignment with imperialist manoeuvres to fight against so-called injustice. Firdaus also includes a series of images of Soetrisno Bachir’s (the former chairperson of PAN) and his political activities. As an Islamic theology graduate, he includes one of Al Qur’an verses, Al Kahfi 107, under his name. He capitalized the words ‘sesungguhnya’ or the truth, ‘beriman’ and ‘beramalsholeh’ or ‘faithful, pious and do good works according to Islamic values’ and ‘Firdaus’ (his name which means heaven). Associating himself with James Bond and the Al Qur’an verses not only affirms his obscure, yet fluid identity, but also demonstrates that pastiche is Firdaus’ tactic, which unfortunately dilutes the visual credibility of his image as PAN cadre. Firdaus failed in his candidacy.

**PPP**

Marissa Haque was the former legislative member of PDI-P in Megawati’s era. In the 2009 Assembly election she chose to stand as the PPP candidate. She translated the party’s platform (‘education and public health services for free’) into her distinctive platform, ‘prioritize early childhood education,’ which also becomes Haque’s slogan on the billboard. Rather than focusing on her objectives, however, the billboard seems focused on introducing Haque to the public, merely presenting a medium shot of her smiling profile and the ballot paper dummy as the visual text. This strategy suggests that while it was believed that she possessed sufficient social and cultural capital to render introduction of her political and personal credentials unnecessary, it was felt necessary to introduce her as a new identity to detach the nationalist/secular label by which the public knew her as the former legislative member of PDI-P. Haque’s statement on her website reinforces the religious considerations underpinning her shift to the PPP, which she regards as the answer to her prayers after fasting for 40 days prior to her decision when seven parties proposed to her that she become their candidate. To resonate with the Islamic nuances of the party, she wears a green headscarf, includes her hajj title and faces the camera from a slanting angle, smiling. This tactic is necessary to reinforce her Islamic public womanhood image, although the inclusion of the title hajj in Haque’s billboard indicates a similar tactic of symbolic religious reinforcement found among candidates regardless of gender. Like other candidates who socialise the new voting rule in their billboards, Haque provides the ballot paper dummy which is placed on the right hand side of the billboard and accentuates her name and number on the ballot paper with the tick sign beneath her image. Although larger font and the position of the slogan indicate Haque’s emphasis on the early childhood education, this accenting loses its credibility because Haque does not provide any (authentic) visual attributes to support her claimed priority. Haque failed to penetrate the Parliament.

**P KB**

H. Sholeh Hayat is the current legislative member at the provincial level (East Java) under the law and governance commission. He represents PKB and emphasises the green-ness and calmness of Surabaya (the capital city of East Java province) as his slogan. From the left hand side, the logo of PKB appears of little significance since it merely occupies less than one eighth of the billboard. The billboard focuses on Hayat’s smiling close-up profile image. He puts his campaign slogan on the top using a smaller font than his name which indicates that Hayat accentuates his persona rather than his program. His slogan does not resonate with his role in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the biggest Muslim organization in Indonesia with (East) Java as its main base, or as the co-ordinator of law and Rukyah Hilal. Possibly the green-ness and calmness of Surabaya as the slogan was chosen because they matched PKB’s Islamist green colour. The relating verb ‘songson’ or ‘welcome’ indicates the informative (rather than persuading) statement that the public will have or welcome the green-ess and calmness of Surabaya by his coming to the House of Representatives at the provincial level. The indirect statement also represents Hayat’s diffident tactic in communicating his program. He labels his role in NU with the word ‘identity.’ Like most legislative candidates, Hayat puts his name and the identification label as the legislative candidate under his profile image. Albeit Hayat’s billboard does not provide the authentic visual setting of place to support his distinctive platform, Hayat gains sufficient social and cultural capital as NU’s public figure at the provincial level.

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60 PAN claims to represent both Islamist and Nationalist camps. However since the founder of PAN, Amien Rais, was the former chairperson of Muhammadiyah, the second largest Muslim organisation in Indonesia, people tend to perceive PAN more representing the Islamist faction.

CONCLUSION

History records that the contestation between the Nationalist and Islamist strands began during the determination of the state ideology, Pancasila. The removal of the Islamic seven words (‘dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluknya’ or ‘with the obligation to live according to Islamic law for the Muslims’) in the first principle of Pancasila in 1945 positioned the ideology as an inclusive yet ambiguous political doctrine. Soeharto’s policy of coercing Pancasila as the sole ideology of the political parties contributed to attenuate the contestation. When Soeharto was impeached, the contestation re-emerged in a form dissimilar to that experienced from 1945 through the 1960s. The polarisation appeared especially when the Islamist strand forged a central axis to impede Megawati becoming the President. However, this overt contestation dilutes as the parties now adopt the cartel system.

This historical fact foregrounds the obscurity of the parties’ identity. This can be seen from the candidates’ billboards that represent the ambiguous position of Islamist and Nationalist parties. The candidates cannot represent themselves as the nationalist or Islamist figure per se to capture the Islamist and Nationalist voters, but can flexibly adopt the Islamist and Nationalist notions as the symbolic exchange within the framework of demokrasi Pancasila. The billboards also show the (in)consistency of the candidates to resonate with the party’s platforms and slogans, which is possibly due to the contestation in the politics of image between Islamist/Nationalist camps that obscures the candidates’ ideological orientation. The Islamist and Nationalist attributes on the billboard fail to construct an identity myth in their political branding.

The billboards of the nationalist camp demonstrate that Pancasila as the nationalist ideology is frequently presented along with the parties patrons’ images, which in themselves can be interpreted as representing the nationalist notion of Pancasila. However, we cannot assume that the absence of the patron’s image dilutes the nationalist values propagated by the candidates’ billboards, since, as in Golkar’s case, this absence most probably stems from the absence of the parties’ central figures. The candidates also utilise the image of the party’s key figure especially when they lack popularity or public recognition themselves.

Similar to the nationalist faction, the billboards of the Islamist parties also represent the obscurity of the ideological polarisation. Although the billboards are heavily loaded with the use of Islamic symbolic attributes such as the headscarf, peci, baju koko and the citation of Qur’anic verses (as part of the candidates’ para-language), the ways in which the candidates deliver the message of their programs seem not to overtly connote an Islamic way. The dress code of Ahmad Firdaus and Hidayat Nur Wahid do not represent their religiosity. Firdaus transforms himself into an Indonesian James Bond whilst Wahid casually wears a batik shirt, black trousers and a white cap. Presenting himself wearing batik, the world heritage cloth of Indonesia, shows an attempt by Wahid to invoke the nationalist strand, instead of the Islamic one.

The image construction of the Nationalist and Islamist parties operates ambiguously. They both seem to adopt similar ideological values as they realise that capturing Indonesian voters is as difficult as dividing santri and abangan. Although Indonesia is known as having the biggest Muslim population of any country in the world, the Islamic characteristic of the dominant Muslim group (abangan) does not allow the polarisation to operate as two distinctive poles as if absenting the ideological overlap between these two camps. In this overlap, the ideological contestation occurs which leads to the ambiguous position of the parties and the candidates’ branding.