

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF ROLAND BARTHES ON THE COVER OF TEMPO MAGAZINE “28 JANUARY 2025 EDITION”

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Abstract

This study aims to uncover the visual and ideological meanings on the cover of Tempo Magazine, January 28, 2025 edition, featuring the pair President Prabowo Subianto and Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, the analysis was conducted at three main levels: denotation, connotation, and myth. The results of the study show that the cover not only represents political figures visually, but also constructs a narrative of power that is hegemonic and ideological. At the denotative level, the visuals show Prabowo in a dominant pose and Gibran in a subordinate position. At the connotative level, gestures, expressions, clothing, and attributes such as shopping bags and background colors imply the symbolism of leadership, populism, and a hierarchical but harmonious power structure. Meanwhile, at the myth level, this cover works to naturalize power relations and government legitimacy as something natural, neutral, and undeniable. These findings emphasize that media visuals do not merely convey information, but also produce ideological meanings that influence the way the public understands contemporary political reality. Thus, visual media plays an important role in shaping opinions and reinforcing dominant discourses through complex processes of symbolic representation.

Keywords: *Roland Barthes' Semiotics, Magazine Covers*

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary political dynamics, mass media no longer merely acts as a transmitter of information, but has become an arena for the production of meaning that is full of ideological construction (McQuail & Deuze, 2020). Political discourse presented through the media is not only informative, but also has a function in shaping mindsets and influencing the collective consciousness of society. As a means of criticism and social control, the media has played an important role in shaping public opinion, especially regarding political issues in Indonesia (Purwaningsih & Ana Fardila, 2018). One form of mass media that still survives and is in demand in public information consumption is magazines. The development of magazines as an information medium cannot be separated from the shift in people's consumption patterns due to the penetration of digital technology. A report from the Reuters Institute noted that 84% of respondents in Indonesia in 2023 accessed news through digital media (Rizaty, 2023). This shows that although print media has physically declined, its existence is maintained in the digital version. This transformation is not only a form of technological adaptation, but also a strategy to maintain the main values of print media such as credibility, information curation, and depth of analysis (Priatna, 2020).

Print media, including magazines, have an advantage in shaping public opinion because they go through a strict and systematic editorial process. Unlike social media which tends to be free and vulnerable to hoaxes, content in print media is more journalistically accountable (Khalid, 2019). Articles and opinions published in magazines have high referential value and longer information durability (long life span), making them an effective instrument in shaping and directing public opinion (Setiawan, 2020). One of the important elements in a magazine that plays a major role in conveying a message is the cover design. Magazine covers are now no longer just visual complements, but have become a communication medium that is able to contain social criticism visually, arouse public opinion, and reflect editorial attitudes towards certain issues (Fadhilah & Anam, 2024). The visual design on the cover has undergone significant development, from being dominated by simple text to being rich in illustrations and photography that are strong aesthetically and rhetorically (Widyokusumo, 2012). Magazine covers specifically show how visualizations are able to convey social criticism more effectively than long narratives in text form (Akbar, 2018). The visuals presented are not only representative, but also contain layers of meaning that open up

interpretation space for readers. One of the dominant visual forms used in magazine covers is caricature. Caricatures are not just sketches, but are also a medium of expression that contains the sharpness of criticism, symbolic intelligence, and critical thinking on current issues (Itiqomah & Sofyan, 2015). As a form of satirical illustration, caricatures are able to convey socio-political messages in a concise, sharp, and reflective way. In this context, caricatures are an effective means of voicing criticism of government policies, and have their own appeal in inviting public attention and interpretation (Syaputra & Santoso, 2023). The flexibility of meaning in caricatures makes them a dynamic and powerful visual communication medium in voicing social reality (Putri et al., 2021). Tempo Magazine is one of the media that consistently voices critical opinions on various political issues in Indonesia. The criticism conveyed is not only present in written form, but also visually through provocative cover designs that invite public debate (Andriyan & Ramli, 2020). Based on a survey (IPWS) in 2023, Tempo was perceived as a media that was sharp in responding to political issues and became a reference reading for those who needed critical analysis (Mantalean & Meiliana, 2023).

The selection of Tempo as the object of research has a strong urgency considering its consistent role as a social watchdog in various periods of Indonesian government (Hill, 2023). As one of the pioneers of the use of cartoons in each edition, Tempo has a visual characteristic that supports its position as a media that is critical of national political dynamics (Nusa, 2016). Through cartoons and other visual illustrations, Tempo not only presents information, but also shapes public opinion through meaningful symbols. The visual design on Tempo's cover is not made haphazardly. Each element is designed with great consideration to shape perception and convey an ideological message implicitly. The choice of colors, facial expressions of characters, and body gestures convey emotions and meanings that strengthen the narrative of social criticism (Varlina et al., 2023). The composition between images and text also shows a strong synergy with titles that not only explain the illustrations but often provide additional layers of meaning that deepen the message.

One concrete example is the cover of the January 28, 2025 edition which carries the theme "Satisfied with Social Assistance." This cover is presented in the context of the momentum of the 100 days of the Prabowo-Gibran administration, and conveys criticism of the populist narrative that places social assistance as a benchmark for government success (Fajri, 2025). In this visual, Tempo highlights the transformation of social assistance (bansos) from a welfare instrument to a tool for legitimizing power. Based on data from the National Survey Institute (2025), as many as 86.7% of respondents stated that they were satisfied with the Prabowo-Gibran administration because of the intensive social assistance policy. Programs such as Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) and the Family Hope Program (PKH) have become symbols of the government's emotional closeness to the people, while strengthening its political position during the first 100 days of government (Pratama et al., 2025).

This phenomenon reflects the contemporary populist strategy that builds symbolic closeness between leaders and the people through populist policies. According to Mudde & Kaltwasser (2019), populism is a political approach that emphasizes closeness to "ordinary people" while contrasting itself with the elite. Laclau (2018) emphasized that populism is a form of discourse that claims to be an authentic representation of the people's voice. In the Indonesian context, this practice has long been part of the clientelism pattern, where material assistance is used as a means of exchange for political loyalty (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). To uncover the meaning behind the visual message, a semiotic approach, especially Roland Barthes' theory, can be used. Semiotics is the study of signs and how they are used to convey meaning in the context of visual communication (Ariffananda & Wijaksono, 2023). Barthes explains that every sign has three levels of meaning: denotation (literal meaning), connotation (cultural or emotional meaning), and myth (hidden ideology) (Vera, 2015). In the context of the Tempo cover, social assistance is not only displayed as a form of government assistance, but also as a symbol of power that contains an ideological narrative about power relations, image, and public manipulation. The criticism presented through visuals is not merely superficial, but leads to the dismantling of political myths that work hidden in the practice of contemporary populism. Thus, a semiotic analysis of the Tempo magazine cover is important for understanding how the media conveys political criticism visually and how these visuals play a role in shaping broader public discourse.

Various previous studies have shown that visual semiotics is an approach that is effective in revealing the hidden meanings and criticisms behind media representations. One relevant international study is Sayan Dey's (2022) study entitled *The Politics of Political Cartoons: A Semiotic Analysis of Amul Cartoons*. This study examines how Amul cartoons function as a dual medium of political communication as well as an advertising tool. Political messages are conveyed through a humorous approach and wordplay, while maintaining elements of product promotion by explicitly displaying the Amul brand. The cartoons analyzed not only convey political opinions on certain issues and figures, but also utilize press freedom to criticize without having to follow the principles of neutral journalism. By featuring distinctive characters such as the Amul Girl, slogans, and easily

recognizable public figures, these messages are visually reinforced. The main focus remains on political issues in the Indian context, but the delivery is directed at increasing product acceptance through a light, entertaining, and informative approach. This approach makes cartoons a source of political information that can be accessed by a wide audience, including those who do not actively follow news developments. National studies also strengthen the argument regarding the urgency of semiotic analysis of media cover visuals, especially Tempo magazine. Tania et al.'s (2022) research entitled Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis of the Cover Caricature of Tempo Magazine, September 16–22, 2019 Edition examines visual criticism of President Jokowi regarding the revision of the KPK Law. The caricature on the cover depicts Jokowi with a long nose like Pinocchio, pouting lips, and closed eyes. These visual elements are interpreted as symbols of betrayal of promises, lack of transparency, and neglect of public aspirations. In addition, indexical signs in the illustration, such as the revision of the KPK Law, are interpreted as weakening efforts to eradicate corruption. The phrase "Promises Are Just Promises" also strengthens the representation of public dissatisfaction with government policies. This finding confirms the role of Tempo magazine as a media that conveys social and political criticism, and has the capacity to shape public opinion on strategic issues such as anti-corruption and government transparency.

Although a number of studies have reviewed the role of media visuals in conveying socio-political criticism, especially through a semiotic approach, there is still room for further exploration. Previous studies have not examined in depth how the visuals of Tempo magazine covers in its latest editions, especially at certain political moments such as the 100th day of the Prabowo-Gibran government, construct ideological discourse through symbols, caricatures, and complex visual narratives. This is where the importance of this study lies, which attempts to fill the gap using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. Based on the description, it can be concluded that the media, especially Tempo magazine, has a strategic role in conveying socio-political criticism through meaningful cover visualizations. Caricatures and other design elements not only function as visual appeal, but also as a medium for conveying ideology, criticism, and complex political narratives. Therefore, this study is important to dissect in more depth how Tempo frames political issues through its visual language. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, this study aims to reveal the denotative, connotative, and ideological myth meanings hidden in the cover of Tempo magazine's special edition "100 Hari Prabowo-Gibran", while also understanding how the media shapes socio-political constructions in the public mind through visual symbols.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a constructivist paradigm, which aims to understand how the media, through magazine covers, actively shape meaning and represent the political reality that took place during the first 100 days of the Prabowo-Gibran administration. In the constructivist view, as explained by Eriyanto (2015), social reality is not considered as something objective and permanent, but rather the result of an interpretive process formed by individuals and groups in a particular social context. This approach allows researchers to capture the symbolic and ideological dimensions of visual representations displayed by the media. Therefore, visual semiotic analysis is used as the main method to reveal the hidden meanings behind visual signs, whether in the form of images, text, or color. The data analysis technique in this study refers to Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, which divides the sign system into three levels of meaning: denotation, which is the literal meaning of a sign connotation, which is the meaning that arises through cultural and emotional associations and myth, which is the ideological meaning hidden behind the connotation and serves to reproduce dominant values in society (Vera, 2015).

Through this framework, the research not only interprets what is displayed visually, but also traces how these signs are constructed to convey a certain narrative, and how they play a role in shaping ideological discourse in the context of contemporary Indonesian politics. This research is an intrinsic case study because it focuses in depth on one specific visual object, namely the cover of Tempo Magazine's "100 Days of the Prabowo-Gibran Cabinet" edition, as a representation of criticism of populist policies packaged in the form of social assistance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To maintain data validity, source triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of visual analysis of the cover with news, journalistic articles, and official statements related to the social assistance program during the early period of government (Patton, 2015). In addition, researchers also apply the principle of reflexivity as a form of critical awareness of their subjective position in the interpretation process (Berger, 2015), so that the resulting interpretation remains contextual and reflective. The data in this study were obtained from two types of sources, namely primary data in the form of the Tempo Magazine cover itself, and secondary data from various relevant documents, articles, and publications that support visual analysis of the representation of populism in contemporary Indonesian mass media (Ihsana & Urfan, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The cover of Tempo Magazine, January 28, 2025 edition, does not merely feature two national political figures, but functions as a visual representation space that strategically shapes and reproduces socio-political reality. Using a cartoonish illustration style, Tempo constructs a visual construction full of signs, symbols, and hidden narratives. This representation not only reflects reality, but also frames it through a certain ideological perspective.



Figure 1. 1Cover of Tempo magazine, January 28, 2025 edition
(Source: <https://www.tempo.co/politik/bantuan-sosial-100-hari-kabinet-prabowo-1199603>)

In this context, mass media is no longer positioned as a passive mirror of social reality, but rather as an active agent in the production of meaning. Media does not merely convey information, but also helps shape public awareness, direct opinion, and create a certain perspective on an event. In line with that, Eriyanto (2015) emphasized that media has a significant ideological function in shaping the collective views of society. Media not only reports facts, but also constructs certain classifications of what is considered normal, deviant, or problematic within the framework of dominant ideology. Thus, media plays a strategic role in determining the boundaries of public discourse.

Table 1 Barthes' Three Levels of Significance for the Tempo Cover (January 28, 2025)

Visual Elements	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
Standing tall, grinning, fists clenched, brown safari suit	Symbol of strength, dominance, courage, political masculinity		A strong leader who carrying the spirit of nationalism a la Soekarno, a symbol of the continuity of the history of power.
Sitting cross-legged on shopping bags, flat expression, white clothes	Symbol of young technocrats, political subordination, involvement in social assistance distribution		Representation of the loyal and pragmatic next generation; bearer of legitimacy for the welfare populist program

Stack of plastic shopping bags	Symbol of social assistance and welfare populism	Social assistance as a tool to legitimize power and form people's political loyalty
Large, capital, bold black text, top center	Ambivalent evaluative statements	People's satisfaction is used as a narrative for political image building, manipulating the perception of policy success.
Empty field, without ornamentation	Freshness, sterility, focus on main figure	visual Narratives of hope and regeneration of power are wrapped in new populism.

Based on the results of initial observations, there are a number of elements of signs that appear on the magazine cover that is the object of research. These visual signs include elements of images, text, color, character expressions, and the overall composition that form a complex meaning. Each element will be analyzed one by one using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, which divides meaning into three levels: denotation, connotation, and myth. In this process, meaning is constructed through the relationship between the signifier and the signified, where both are united to form a sign that can direct the reader to a certain interpretation (Vera, 2015). The visual image on the cover generally functions as the main message that can attract the reader's attention and provide an initial overview of the contents of the report. However, the accompanying text does not only act as a complement, but also as an affirmation or director of meaning, thus helping to direct the reader's interpretation of the facts presented. This combination of visuals and text reflects the construction of a media message that is not neutral, but is instead laden with certain symbolic and ideological interests.

Discussion

At the denotative level, the cover of Tempo Magazine, January 28, 2025 edition, represents two national political figures, namely Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka. This visual representation is presented in a caricature style with a simple but striking composition, relying on contrasting shapes and expressions to attract the reader's attention. Both figures are presented frontally, with an emphasis on facial expressions, body posture, clothing, and other attributes that are directly recognizable without requiring symbolic interpretation process. The illustrative style used maintains a fairly high similarity to the original appearance of each character, making it easier for readers to make instant visual identification. Prabowo's face is visualized with a smirk, marked by raised eyebrows and upward-pointing corners of the lips, while Gibran is depicted with a flat expression, slightly tilted head, and closed mouth, without showing any explicit emotion. In terms of gesture, Prabowo stands tall in a light brown safari suit, with both hands raised and clenched at the side of his head, a pose that emphasizes the impression of strength and dominance. In contrast, Gibran is wearing a plain white shirt, sitting cross-legged on a pile of randomly arranged unbranded shopping bags. Gibran's body position is depicted as upright and calm, with both hands placed on the bags, creating an image that contrasts with Prabowo's active gesture.

Compositionally, Prabowo's position is more visually dominant, his figure is placed on the left side with a larger body proportion and a higher position compared to Gibran who is on the right side. Although Gibran does not appear full frontal, he remains in the reader's main line of sight, emphasizing his important role in the visual narrative. The two are placed close together without visual boundaries, creating a sense of connectedness in an open space. The pale green background serves as an empty field that strengthens the visual focus on the two main figures without the distraction of other ornamental elements. The main title “100 DAYS OF PRABOWO’S CABINET: SATISFIED WITH SOCIAL AID” appears in bold black capital letters in the top-center, while the name of the magazine “Tempo” is in the upper left corner in bright red, the magazine’s distinctive visual identity. Other text elements are omitted, reinforcing the minimalist impression and directing full attention to the figure and the main headline. In terms of physiognomy, Prabowo’s face is depicted as round with a wide jaw, full cheeks, a short nose, and a firm chin; while Gibran has a thinner face with a high forehead and a rectangular jaw shape. Both hairstyles are depicted as realistically resembling their public versions. At the denotative level, this representation merely presents visual characteristics as markers of the figure’s identity, without involving any symbolic meaning, moral values, or specific ideologies.

At the connotative level, the visual representation on the cover of Tempo Magazine, January 28, 2025 edition, is no longer neutral or merely descriptive, but contains a strong ideological content and political message. The characterization of Prabowo Subianto with a sturdy body, raised hands, and a grinning facial expression builds an image as a dominant, firm, and masculine leader. The hand gesture that raises the muscles implies a symbol of power and political superiority (Robson, 2018), while the grinning expression with raised eyebrows strengthens the impression of self-confidence in active and masculine power (Ramdani, 2021). The brown safari outfit worn by Prabowo also contains historical associations with the symbolism of the New Order and Soekarno-style nationalism. In the view of Maulina & Muttaqin (2020), the safari outfit worn by Prabowo is a symbolic strategy to build the image of a people's fighter within the framework of Soekarnoism. Thus, the fashion element does not merely function as a visual complement, but becomes an instrument of political articulation and ideological legitimacy. In contrast, the representation of Gibran Rakabuming Raka with a cross-legged sitting posture on a pile of shopping bags, a flat facial expression, and a lower body position indicates a more subordinate but strategic role (Yudhanto et al., 2024). This visual symbol presents a subtle but sharp social critique, without the need for explicit narrative (Ahdiyati, 2021). The shopping bag used as a seat implies a strong connotation of the social assistance

(bansos) program, which in public discourse is often associated with the practice of welfare populism (Suciatingrum, 2025). In this frame, Gibran appears as a young figure associated with the distribution of bansos, but does not show active expression or strong leadership. The stability of his body and his straight-ahead gaze seem to affirm his role as a technical implementer or symbol of policies designed by a more dominant authority.

The difference in facial expressions between Prabowo and Gibran is not merely visual aesthetics, but also a means of constructing ideological meaning that signifies the power relations in the cabinet structure. Prabowo's dominant expression is contrasted with Gibran's neutral expression, forming a visual narrative that emphasizes who holds the main control in government (Andriyan & Ramli, 2020). The proxemic relations displayed, namely physical closeness without visual barriers, indicate political affinity as well as asymmetrical hierarchical harmony. In this context, political closeness is not always identical to equal distribution of power (Nuriarta, 2020). Visual placement and disparity in body size strengthen Prabowo's dominant position as the center of gravity of power, while Gibran acts as a complement that strengthens political legitimacy through symbols of cross-generational partnership. This visual illustration not only reflects political reality but also reproduces the power structure through visual language formed by the media. Tempo Magazine strategically uses visual elements to frame power relations with a critical approach. The clean, unadorned pale green background is not a neutral space, but rather a visual stage that is "sterilized" from symbolic distractions so that the reader's attention is fully focused on the two main figures. In a semiotic framework, the color green carries a complex connotative burden that can be read as a symbol of hope, regeneration, or a narrative of prosperity that is often used in electoral populism strategies (Kumparan.com, 2022). Thus, the choice of background is not merely an aesthetic consideration, but part of the construction of ideological meaning. The typography of the name “Tempo” in large capital letters in striking red serves as a strong institutional marker. The color red associates courage, urgency, and the media's critical position towards power (Wibowo, 2013). Semiotically, the word “Tempo” which means time also signifies the role of the magazine as a journalistic institution that not only records but also carries out narrative interventions into socio-political dynamics (Setiawan, 2020). The combination of a minimalist background and strong typography reinforces the impression of a sharp and focused editorial. Meanwhile, the main title “PUAS DARI BANSOS” which is displayed in large black capital letters appears as a strong thematic marker. The choice of font and size gives an affirmative impression to the phrase, while also opening up room for interpretation. The emphasis on the word “puas” is evaluative and problematic, raising questions about who is satisfied, in what context, and to what extent the satisfaction is real or politically constructed.

By composing the headline in a declarative manner without question marks, Tempo seems to present a visual irony that provokes readers to respond critically. The phrase can be read as a form of support, subtle criticism, or satire of populism channeled through social assistance programs. Therefore, this title is not just information, but a rhetorical strategy that questions the relationship between public policy, public perception, and the narrative of power in the media space. Overall, the connotation built from this cover shows that the representation of political figures in the media is never neutral. The characterization of Prabowo's masculinity, the symbol of welfare populism through the figure of Gibran, and the visually structured narrative of power are manifestations of the practice of ideological representation. In Barthes' semiotic approach, this cover becomes a field of articulation of discourse on power and political legitimacy that is not only descriptive, but also performative and critical of the reality it raises.

Within Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, myth is understood as a form of second-level sign that works through the process of naturalization of meaning, namely when connotative meaning is treated as if it were a natural and undeniable truth (Vera, 2015). In this context, the cover of Tempo Magazine, January 28, 2025, does not merely produce visual meaning, but also reproduces ideological myths that operate in the contemporary political landscape of Indonesia. The visual representation of the figures of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka is not only descriptive, but also contains a visual strategy that constructs the reality of power through a naturalized hegemonic narrative. Prabowo is presented as a central figure with a straight posture, dominant gestures, and a grinning expression that forms a myth about strong, masculine, and historical leadership. Visual attributes such as brown safari clothing also reproduce the symbolism of New Order-era leadership and the legacy of Soekarnoist nationalism. In the mythological discourse, Prabowo's figure is positioned as the personification of legitimate and "natural" power, making the political dominance he displays seem natural, legitimate, and undeniable by critical reason. This process separates the attributes of masculinity and authority from complex ideological or historical contexts, and presents them as an essence that is inherently attached to the figure of a leader. In contrast, Gibran is depicted in a subordinate position sitting cross-legged on a pile of shopping bags, with a flat facial expression and a calm posture. At the connotative level, this depiction implies calmness, control, and obedience to a larger power structure. However, at the mythical level, this representation forms a narrative of

harmony and continuity of power between generations. Gibran is constructed as a symbol of new legitimacy that strengthens the existing order, not as a political actor who challenges it. He is associated with innovation and social concern, but is positioned within a passive and “natural” political framework, thus reinforcing hierarchical relations as something unproblematic. The shopping bag that Gibran sits on also carries a significant mythological burden in shaping the narrative of welfare populism. It not only represents social assistance programs in literal, but also works as a naturalized political symbol. In this mythological construction, social assistance is presented as a successful social fact, as a real form of government concern for the people without leaving room for a critical reading of the political goals behind the distribution of the assistance.

Furthermore, the typography of the main title “PUAS DARI BANSOS” which appears prominently in capital letters and a bold style emphasizes the myth of the government’s success. The word “puas” is delivered without a question mark or clarification, creating the illusion of certainty and complete public acceptance. At the myth level, this phrase does not function as a factual statement that needs to be verified, but rather as a confirmation of the dominant narrative that the populist programs implemented by the Prabowo-Gibran government are effective and widely accepted. Other visual compositions such as the clean pale green background, the layout with minimal distracting elements, and the dominance of the institutional typography “Tempo” function as mythological devices that imply political order and coolness. Social tensions, power conflicts, or hegemonic practices are reduced, even removed from the visual representation space. Thus, this cover works as a medium for producing myths about a stable, harmonious, and people-oriented government when in fact the reality is a complex and manipulative ideological construction. Through the Barthesian approach, it can be concluded that the cover of Tempo Magazine operates myth as a form of ideological domination through visuality. It does not merely represent two national political figures, but also transforms the construction of power into something that appears natural and undeniable. Through this naturalization process, the media plays an active role in affirming unequal power relations and strengthening political legitimacy through symbolic language that appears objective, when in fact it is formed to serve certain ideological interests.

CONCLUSION

Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis of the cover of Tempo Magazine, January 28, 2025 edition, shows that the visual representation of the figures of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka not only conveys visual information objectively, but actively produces and reproduces ideological meaning through three levels: denotation, connotation, and myth. At the denotative level, the cover presents two political figures illustratively and easily recognizable through their posture, facial expressions, clothing, and other visual attributes. However, at the connotative level, these visual elements begin to contain symbolic meanings that imply power relations, hierarchical inequality, and political image strategies. Prabowo is presented as a dominant, masculine and powerful figure, while Gibran is represented in a subordinate but stable position, emphasizing a harmonious political narrative despite its asymmetrical nature. Deeper, at the myth level, this visual construction works to naturalize the power structure and political relations as something normal and unquestionable. The visualization of Prabowo's strength, Gibran's calmness, and the use of the social assistance bag symbol and the phrase "Puas dengan Bansos" not only convey government policy, but also form a hegemonic narrative that strengthens the legitimacy of power and welfare populism. The media, in this case Tempo, plays a role as a cultural agent that not only reflects political reality, but also constructs it through visual language that appears neutral, but is actually full of ideological content. Thus, this magazine cover can be understood as a visual text that is not free of values, but rather part of the practice of political representation in a broader field of discourse.

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