

## Political Contents Found in Verbal and Visual Signs of Tempo Magazine Covers

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**Abstract-** This research aims to analyze how Tempo magazine uses verbal and visual signs on its covers to construct political narratives and shape public discourse related to the current political situation. Using semiotic analysis, the study examines the way Tempo magazine uses a combination of verbal and visual elements to convey complex political narratives. Two specific covers, “*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*” and “*Saling Kunci Kursi Menteri*,” are analyzed to uncover the implicit messages and socio-political contexts represent. Qualitative methods are applied in this research. The research is based on Chandler's (2007) theory of signs, Barthes' (1968) concepts of connotation and denotation, and Cerrato's (2012) color analysis framework. The results indicate the selected magazine covers contain 22 verbal signs and 17 visual signs. Both covers use striking visuals and provocative text to illustrate complex political narratives and make power struggles clearer. Tempo effectively blends cultural language and visual metaphors to simplify these dynamics, highlighting the need for media literacy to understand such messages. The findings highlight how Tempo strategically employs strong imagery and provocative headlines to frame political events, thereby influencing public perceptions and contributing to the construction of political discourse in Indonesia. The conclusion emphasizes that media, through such visual and verbal strategies, not only reflects but actively shapes political realities, underscoring the significant role of the press in guiding public opinion and shaping socio-political narratives. These insights suggest a broader implication for the media's role in both informing and influencing the political landscape in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Semiotics Analysis, Media Discourse, Politics, Magazine, Cover

### I. INTRODUCTION

Language, as an arbitrary system of sound symbols, serves as a fundamental communication tool, enabling people to express thoughts, emotions, and socio-political realities. In political communication, language includes both verbal and visual forms, both of which are crucial in influencing public opinion and shaping public discourse. With the development of visual arts and typography, a concept is needed to understand the literal and hidden meanings conveyed by the message maker. Semiotics, the

study of signs and symbols, provides a powerful framework for analyzing how these verbal and visual signs convey the many messages within them. News is something that the public consumes every day. People access news from newspapers, television, and other electronic media such as electronic magazines. Tempo magazine—a prominent Indonesian publication known for its bold and factual political commentary, is a favored source of news among parents and young people alike. With its creative and to-the-point news packaging, it is a plus for

readers. Magazine covers, in particular, are a rich source of such signs, often using striking visuals and headlines to encapsulate complex political narratives. The cover of a magazine is the first thing that readers see to interpret the news published in the magazine. This research analyses two covers of *Tempo Magazine* entitled "*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*" and "*Saling Kunci Kursi Menteri*." These magazine covers were chosen because of their relevancy to the current political situation in Indonesia. It describes the interference of Joko Widodo (the 7th President of the Republic of Indonesia) in the government built by Prabowo Subianto (the 8th President-elect of the Republic of Indonesia) and the political situation between party leaders who are competing for ministerial positions in the new government structure. By analyzing the magazine cover, this research aims to reveal the deeper meaning behind the verbal and visual signs and their role in shaping political discourse in Indonesia. The cover of *Tempo* magazine is a strong example of how semiotics can be applied to dissect the interaction between media and politics.

Semiotics involves the exploration of meaning-making and the philosophical theory of signs and symbols, encompassing the examination of signs and sign processes. This includes the study of signs and sign processes, indication, designation, likeness, analogy, metaphor, symbolism, signification, and communication (Sena et al., 2016). Saussure defines a sign as the composition of a "signifier" and a "signified," as quoted in Chandler (2001). The Signifier is the form that the sign takes. Signified is the concept it represents, both verbally and visually. The sign represents more than just a link between names. It encompasses a concept or idea as the signified and a sound pattern as the signifier (Pratiwi et al., 2023). According to Chandler (2007) classified signs into verbal and visual types: verbal signs are words with hidden meanings, while visual signs include pictures and gestures with significance. Verbal signs are words with hidden meanings, while visual signs include pictures and gestures with symbolic significance. In political media, this interaction between the signifier and the signified helps construct narratives that influence public perception and discourse.

In the context of political communication, magazine covers serve as powerful tools that embody complex political narratives through verbal and visual elements. In Sadono & Amina

(2023), magazines are highlighted as a form of communication medium that offers comprehensive and detailed information and is a reliable and credible source of information. Magazines often contain articles and essays that express individuals' opinions and perspectives on various social issues. In today's world, magazines have significantly changed how they share information, mainly because they are now competing with online media. This competition means that magazine editors have to work harder to keep people interested. One of the main ways that magazines attract attention is through their covers. Editors always try to create cover illustrations that mix words and images to give readers a good idea of what is inside the magazine. These covers often contain criticism, especially of the government, which can lead to discussions and different interpretations of the images (Pramaskara, 2022). This dynamic highlights the importance of visual and verbal semiotic analysis in understanding media's role in political discourse.

Historically, caricatures and cartoons were commonly used to criticize the government. In some European countries, cartoonists can freely express their ideas through drawings without the risk of legal consequences. According to (Darmawan, 2016), In Indonesia, the principle of press freedom became more evident after the New Order era, especially with the enactment of Law No. 40 of 1999 on the press, which explicitly states that press freedom is a fundamental human right. This law ensured greater freedom of expression through mass media, leading to a rise in political illustrations criticizing the government during President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's term from 2004 to 2014. The use of cartoons and caricatures, which employ satire and irony, became a significant area of study, particularly in how they critique government actions and societal issues.

This creates a platform for press freedom discourse. A cartoonist's choices in executing political cartoons become a significant study area. Political cartoons are symbolic images or representations that contain jokes, humor, satire, and irony. These cartoons typically highlight government actions or societal life in the context of community and state living. These initial observations drive researchers to explore the visual modalities used by cartoonists in creating political cartoons for online media. In this context, modality is a social semiotic approach to questions of truth (Darmawan, 2016). In this

case, cartoonists use caricatures as a medium to express their ideas and feelings about something, which, in this case, intends to criticize the government through writing in various types of media.

These writings shed light on societal problems and encourage readers to consider different viewpoints. Furthermore, the cover page and photographs within the magazine are strategically selected to captivate the audience and draw them into the publication. *Tempo Magazine*, one of Indonesia's most popular magazines, is exceptionally expert at this approach, using its covers to express its political views on current events, controversies, and personalities.

Magazines like *Tempo* play an essential role in fostering press freedom and public discourse through their strategic use of covers. These covers often use bold visuals and provocative headlines to highlight contemporary political issues. As a leading Indonesian magazine, *Tempo* expertly combines verbal and visual signs to promote the magazine and offer compelling political commentary on current events and personalities. By drawing readers in with striking images and creatively crafted headlines, *Tempo* creates impactful and exclusive content that drives political conversations.

Several studies have carried out studies on semiotics. The first related study by Andriani et al. (2021), "Verbal and Non-Verbal Signs in Facial Wash Advertisements: A Semiotic Analysis," This study aims to discover verbal and non-verbal signs that describe the meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs found in face wash advertisements. The second piece of literature was the article "Youth Representative of Verbal and Visual Signs on Music Concert Posters: A Semiotic Analysis" by Manu & Hikmaharyanti (2024) study examines three 2023 Bali concert posters, analyzing verbal and visual signs. The third relevant study was an article by Wahyuni et al. (2022) entitled "A Semiotic Analysis of Public Service Advertisements." This study aimed to identify and describe verbal and visual signs in public service advertising. The fourth piece of literature is entitled "Semiotics Analysis of Dynamics LPM Magazine Cover "Uber-Uber Manusia Silver" November 2020 Edition" by Harahap & Alfikri (2022). This study aimed to determine what the representamen, objects, and interpretants on the magazine cover meant. The last study is "Deconstructing Internet Memes through Semiotic Analysis: Unveiling Myths and

Ideologies in Visual and Verbal Signs" by Pratiwi et al. (2023). This study fills this gap by specifically focusing on the political content in *Tempo* magazine covers, using semiotic analysis to examine how these verbal and visual signs reflect and influence socio-political narratives in Indonesia. By analyzing political covers, this research aims to reveal how magazines like *Tempo* play a critical role in shaping political discourse and public perception, a dimension not deeply explored in the previous studies mentioned.

This study focuses on two specific *Tempo* magazine covers "*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*" and "*Saling Kunci Kursi Menteri*." Through the analysis of these covers' verbal and visual signs, the research seeks to uncover the implied socio-political messages and broader political contexts they represent. By applying semiotic analysis, this study aims to show how *Tempo* magazine informs and influences public perception, contributing to the development of political narratives and shaping readers' understanding of contemporary political issues.

## II. METHODS

The data sources used in this study were taken from those published on the official website between February and March 2024, which offers the data in Indonesian and English. The official website <https://majalah.tempo.co> was chosen as a platform to discover the data source for magazine covers to be examined and analyzed. The method used in this research is qualitative. The cover of this magazine contains content about the political situation after the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election or the 2024 Presidential Election. It generally describes the latest issues and news related to political developments in Indonesia. The observation process involved systematically analyzing the verbal and visual signs on the selected covers. Verbal signs included headlines, subheadlines, and captions, while visual signs encompassed images, illustrations, and color schemes. The data collected was then broken down by mapping the visual and verbal content. Recording each element using the note taking method. Each visual and verbal data was then analysed for its connotation and denotation meaning by linking all the elements to the current political situation in Indonesia

The authors are actively involved in the process of observation and interpretation to create consistent, objective, neutral, and rational

analyses. Through active discussion, the authors checked the results of the data collected. Upstanding collaboration was applied to avoid misinterpretation of the analyzed elements and bias that could undermine the results of the research. To ensure consistency, the analysis was guided by a preliminary framework based on semiotic theory (Chandler, 2007; Barthes, 1968), categorizing signs into denotative (literal) and connotative (implied) meanings to reveal both explicit and hidden political content. Criteria for selecting the signs focused on their relevance to the political narrative and their prominence on the cover, such as size, placement, and visual emphasis. The data was then categorized into verbal and nonverbal signs to simplify the analysis process (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Verbal and visual signs on magazine covers were analyzed using a variety of theoretical frameworks, including Chandler's theory (2007) and Barthes's (1968) insights into their meanings. In order to understand the significance of color in this context, the research drew upon theories from Cerrato (2012). This study used a methodology based on observation to gather and analyze data. The findings were presented in both formal and informal formats to provide a comprehensive understanding of the results.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this analysis, three key semiotic frameworks are applied to explore the meaning of verbal and visual signs on the covers of *Tempo* magazine: Chandler's semiotic theory (2007) general semiotic principles to understand how signs (verbal and visual) create meaning, Barthes' distinction between connotative and denotative meanings (1968) focus on the different layers of meaning (denotation as the literal meaning and connotation as the cultural and contextual meaning), and Cerrato's theory on the meaning of colors (2012) examining the significance of colors in visual communication and how they evoke emotions and ideas. Each framework offers a different perspective for interpreting the elements presented in the magazine covers.

In the verbal signs section, the headline and sub-headlines, political slogans, featured article titles, and other textual elements are analyzed using Barthes' (1968) framework to interpret the connotative and denotative meanings of the textual elements. In the visual signs section, images of political figures, election-related symbols, body language, and color palettes are examined using Barthes' (1968) and Cerrato's

(2012) theory of color framework.

This study analyses *Tempo* magazine entitled "*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*" and "*Saling Kunci Kursi Menteri*." The verbal and visual signs work together to provide a nuanced commentary on political events in Indonesia.

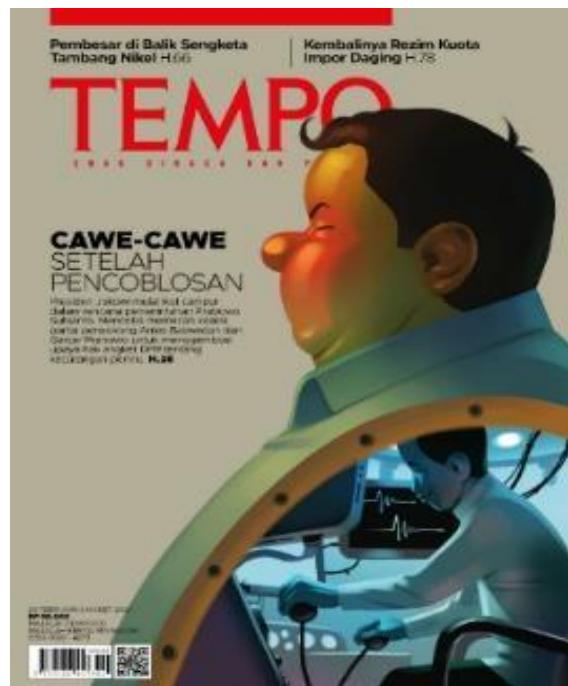
The first magazine cover is entitled "*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*" which yielded 11 verbal signs and 9 visual signs. The visual signs The headline "*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*" can be translated as "Interference After the Election." The text focuses on President Jokowi's involvement after the election. It specifically looks at his efforts to influence the political landscape by breaking up coalitions and engaging in behind-the-scenes maneuvering. The visual shows a caricature of President Jokowi operating controls in a command center, depicting him as someone managing the post-election situation from behind the scenes. The verbal and visual signs complement each other by reinforcing the idea that Jokowi is actively and somewhat secretly involved in the political activities that followed the election.

Likewise, the second magazine cover is entitled "*Saling Kunci Kursi Menteri*" which yielded 11 verbal signs and 8 visual signs. The verbal headline "*Saling Kunci Kursi Menteri*," which translates to "Interlocking of Ministerial Seats," refers to the political power struggle over cabinet positions. The visual depicts three large, somewhat caricatured figures, each holding a wooden chair in a standoff-like position, as if ready to fight over it. The facial expressions of tension, determination, and seriousness convey the intensity of the battle for these ministerial positions. The visual elements directly support the spoken narrative of political competition and rivalry. The image of people holding chairs represents the mention of "ministerial seats" in a literal way. The tense confrontation shown visually emphasizes the concept of "interlocking" or blocking access to political positions, complementing the idea of a political deadlock or intense negotiation mentioned in the verbal text.

This analysis of *Tempo* magazine covers, "*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*" and "*Saling Kunci Kursi Menteri*," highlights how media uses verbal and visual semiotic strategies to shape public perception and political discourse. The covers depict Indonesia's political dynamics through strong visual images to show how politics works in Indonesia. They also show how President Jokowi has a lot of control behind the scenes and a literal fight over ministerial seats.

These images, paired with impactful headlines, suggest power manipulation, political rivalry, and dysfunction, influencing how the public views both political figures and processes. The media, through such representations, plays an active role in shaping political narratives, often editorializing events through exaggeration or caricature. This use of semiotics invites critical reflection on political power, encouraging debate but also potentially polarizing public opinion. Overall, the analysis reveals how the media doesn't just report politics but actively constructs and influences the perception of political realities. The cover of *Tempo* magazine presents a variety of complex verbal and visual elements. Starting with the diction in typography and the depiction of deep characters. The more detailed data analysis can be seen as follows.

### 3.1 Data 1 “*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*”



**Figure 3.1 “*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*” Magazine Cover**

The magazine cover above, entitled “*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*,” which can be translated into “Interference After the Election,” is the cover of the 25 February 2024 edition of *Tempo Magazine*, which can be accessed through the official website of *Tempo Magazine*. In Figure 1, a prominent figure is seen being controlled by someone as if controlling a robot. The magazine cover above is a deliberate combination of visual and verbal elements that convey a multitude of meanings to the reader. By applying Barthes' (1968) concepts of connotative and denotative meanings, as well as Chandler's

(2007) theory of semiotics, we can gain insight into how signs (verbal and visual) generate meaning. The data is discussed in detail in the sections below.

#### The Analysis of Verbal Signs

According to (Pratiwi et al., 2021), verbal signs refer to linguistic representations in written or spoken words and coherent units of language known as sentences. The first verbal sign found, “*Pembesar di Balik Sengketa Tambang Nikel H.66*,” translates to “The Big Figures behind the Nickel Mine Dispute, Page 66”. The phrase explains the friction over nickel mining in several areas of North Maluku, where there are allegedly big people (with power) who support the operations and protect mining activities from the law for habitat destruction, soil erosion, and biodiversity loss that it causes. Denotatively, indicating that on page 66 of the magazine, there is an article discussing influential individuals involved in a conflict over a nickel mine. Connotatively, the phrase implies that the dispute is significant and involves influential, possibly high-ranking, individuals whose actions and decisions are central to the controversy. The term big figures suggests their influence and hints at potential corruption, power struggles, or hidden agendas. This connotation points to an in-depth investigative piece that promises to reveal the complex and possibly scandalous nature of the people and issues at the heart of the mining dispute.

The verbal sign “*Kembalinya Rezim Kuota Impor Daging H.78*” translates to “The Return of the Meat Import Quota Regime, Page 78” The context is the government's plan to re-import beef to stabilise market prices and meet consumption needs in the community. There are opportunities for those in power in this program, as the policy instrument of import quotas has the potential to lead to conspiracies in determining import quota holders. This is an incentive for bribery of very large sums of money by potential quota holders. Denotatively, indicating that on page 78 of the magazine, there is an article about the reinstatement of a regulatory system governing meat import quotas. Connotatively, the phrase “*Kembalinya Rezim*” (The Return of the Regime) suggests a revival of a previous, potentially contentious policy. The term “*rezim*” (regime) often carries a negative connotation, implying authoritarian control or strict regulation, which may be unpopular or controversial. This connotation hints at possible debates, opposition,

or criticism related to the policy's return, as well as its implications for market dynamics, economic impact, and the interests of various stakeholders. The use of “*kembalinya*” (the return) emphasizes a cyclical nature, suggesting that this policy has been implemented before and is now being reintroduced, potentially sparking discussions on its effectiveness and necessity.

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The verbal sign “*Tempo*” on the magazine cover can be analyzed for its denotative and connotative meanings. Denotatively, “*Tempo*” is the magazine's title, a well-known Indonesian weekly news publication. It simply serves to identify the magazine and its brand. Connotatively, the word “*Tempo*,” which means “time” in both Indonesian and Italian, conveys a sense of timeliness, relevance, and a focus on current events. It suggests that the magazine provides timely, in-depth analysis and reporting on contemporary issues. This connotation reinforces the magazine's identity as a source of authoritative and up-to-date news and information, appealing to readers who seek insightful and reliable coverage of national and international affairs.

The verbal sign “*Enak Dibaca dan Perlu*” denotes that this phrase translates to “Nice to Read and Necessary,” indicating that the magazine's content is both enjoyable and essential for readers. Connotatively, “*Enak Dibaca*” (pleasant to read) suggests that the magazine is engaging, well-written, and appealing, emphasizing the quality of its journalism and storytelling. “*Dan Perlu*” (and necessary) implies that the information provided is important, valuable, and indispensable for readers who want to stay informed about current events and issues. This connotation positions the magazine as a trusted and authoritative news source that is informative and enjoyable, appealing to readers who value quality and substance in their news consumption.

The verbal sign “*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*” translates to “Interference After the Election.” Denotatively, the phrase indicates an article that discusses actions taken post-election. Connotatively, “*Cawe-Cawe*” (interference) carries a negative implication of meddling or unwelcome involvement, suggesting underhanded or controversial activities. “*Setelah Pencoblosan*” (after voting) situates these actions in the sensitive period following an election when political stability and fairness are crucial. The connotation here hints at potential scandals, manipulations, or power struggles after public votes. This suggests the magazine will provide a critical and possibly exposé-style examination of post-election political dynamics.

The verbal sign “*Presiden Jokowi mulai ikut campur dalam rencana pemerintahan Prabowo Subianto. Mencoba memecah koalisi partai penyokong Anies Baswedan dan Ganjar Pranowo untuk menggembosi upaya hak angket DPR tentang kecurangan pemilu. H.26*” can be translated into “President Jokowi has started intervening in Prabowo Subianto's government plans. Trying to break up the coalition of supporting parties of Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo to sabotage the House of Representatives committees of inquiry rights on election fraud. H.26”. Denotatively, the text states that President Jokowi is interfering in Prabowo Subianto's government plans and attempting to break the coalition of parties supporting Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo to undermine the DPR's inquiry into election fraud, with further details available on page 26. Connotatively, the phrase “*mulai ikut campur*” (starts interfering) suggests active and possibly unwelcome involvement, indicating that

President Jokowi is perceived as meddling inappropriately. The term “*memecah koalisi*” (breaking the coalition) implies divisive tactics aimed at weakening political alliances, while “*menggembosi*” (undermining) reinforces a sense of deliberate sabotage or obstruction. Together, these connotations suggest political maneuvering, power struggles, and potential ethical concerns regarding the president's actions, painting a picture of a contentious and possibly manipulative political environment that the magazine aims to investigate and reveal in detail.

The verbal sign “*26 Februari – 3 Maret 2024*” translated into “26 February - 3 March 2024” denotes a specific publication date, delineating the temporal scope of an issue from February 26 to March 3, 2024. Denotatively, it signifies a period within the calendar, providing factual information about the timeframe covered. Connotatively, however, it implies a sense of temporality, suggesting a snapshot of events, news, or content relevant to that particular week. Additionally, it may evoke notions of timeliness, urgency, or relevance as readers anticipate the latest information within that timeframe. Thus, while denotatively, it communicates a specific date range, connotatively, it carries associations of currency and contemporaneity within the context of the publication.

The verbal sign “*Rp 50.000*” translated into “*IDR 50,000*”. Denotatively, it specifies the price of the magazine in Indonesian Rupiah, indicating that it costs fifty thousand rupiah. Connotatively, this price point can suggest affordability and accessibility, targeting a broad audience within Indonesia. It may also reflect the magazine's perceived value, positioning itself as a premium yet reasonably priced source of news, which could imply a commitment to quality journalism at a cost accessible to the general public. The price can further evoke perceptions of the magazine's market positioning, suggesting it is neither expensive nor cheap. It aims to attract a middle-class readership who values in-depth reporting and analysis.

The verbal sign “*Majalah Tempo*” translated into “*Tempo Magazine*.<sup>1</sup>” Denotatively identifies the publication as indicating that it is a periodical or magazine named Tempo. Connotatively, “*Majalah Tempo*” evokes a sense of credibility and quality journalism, as Tempo is a well-known and respected news magazine in Indonesia. The name suggests thorough, investigative reporting and insightful analysis, aiming to inform and engage its readership with

timely and relevant news. Additionally, “*Majalah*” implies a traditional, printed format, which may evoke a sense of reliability and permanence in an era dominated by digital media.

“*Majalah Berita Mingguan*,” translated to “*Weekly News Magazine*,” denotes a publication focused on news, adhering to a weekly schedule. Denotatively, it communicates the literal function and periodicity of the magazine, conveying its purpose as a source of current affairs and updates distributed every week. Connotatively, the phrase implies reliability, consistency, and timeliness, suggesting a trusted source for staying informed. Additionally, it evokes notions of regularity and routine in its readership, emphasizing a habitual engagement with news consumption. The verbal sign encapsulates the tangible product and the broader cultural significance of staying updated in a structured manner, resonating with individuals seeking both information and a sense of order in their lives.

The verbal sign “ISSN: 0126-4273” Denotatively specifies the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) assigned to “*Tempo Magazine*,” providing a unique identifier for the publication, which is essential for cataloging and referencing in libraries and databases. Connotatively, the presence of an ISSN implies a certain level of professionalism and legitimacy, suggesting that the magazine is a recognized and established periodical. This can enhance the reader's perception of the magazine's credibility and authority in journalism, indicating that it adheres to international standards for serial publications.

### The Analysis of Visual Signs

The visual message on the cover of *Tempo* magazine often has a deeper meaning that not every reader can easily grasp. Each issue of *Tempo* features a unique and interesting illustration on its cover (Aji et al., 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth analysis of the hidden meanings of the visual signs contained in the magazine cover to obtain the information that *Tempo* wants to convey.

By applying the concepts of connotative and denotative meanings, as outlined by Barthes (1968), and integrating them with the semiotic theory proposed by Chandler (2007), we can gain a deeper insight into how verbal and visual signs generate multiple layers of meaning. This approach demonstrates that signs convey not

only straightforward, literal (denotative) messages, but also more complex, culturally embedded (connotative) meanings. These meanings significantly influence how we interpret and perceive the content.

The visual signs on the *Tempo* magazine cover depict a person (possibly representing President Jokowi) in a submarine-like control room, operating machinery with screens displaying waveforms. Denotatively, it shows a figure in a confined, high-tech environment focused on managing various controls and monitors. In a connotative sense, this imagery suggests deep involvement and a strategic, behind-the-scenes approach to governance, symbolizing the president's intricate and possibly covert engagement in political affairs. The submarine setting evokes themes of exploration and control, implying that Jokowi is navigating complex political waters with a hands-on, detailed-oriented strategy. At the same time, the waveforms on the screens hint at monitoring and possibly influencing ongoing developments.

Denotatively, the facial expression and body language of the large figure on the *Tempo* magazine cover depict a person with a confident expression and a smirk, with their hands placed in a way that suggests involvement or interference. Connotatively, this portrayal suggests a sense of control, manipulation, and possibly deceit. The confident expression and smirk imply a self-assured attitude, potentially indicating that the person feels secure in their actions and influence. With the hands suggesting active involvement, the body language reinforces the idea of behind-the-scenes manipulation or control, aligning with the headline about interference after voting. In diverse cultures, nonverbal behaviors are guided by a complex system of body signs and codes, shaped by the perception of the body as something beyond its physical form (Pratiwi et al., 2022). This visual sign, therefore, conveys a deeper critique of political manipulation and power dynamics.

The illustration of a person on the *Tempo* magazine cover is a clear caricature. The figure has a large head, a confident expression, and a smirk and is holding a hand as if manipulating something unseen. This visual sign implies a sense of political manipulation and control, suggesting that the individual depicted is wielding significant influence behind the scenes. The exaggerated features and smirk convey a sense of arrogance or self-assurance, hinting at possible unethical behavior or interference in a

democratic process. This portrayal aligns with familiar visual tropes used to criticize powerful figures who are perceived to manipulate outcomes for their benefit.

The computer or control panel on the *Tempo* magazine cover is unambiguously depicted as a technological setup with screens and controls operated by a smaller figure sitting at it. The visual sign on the cover implies surveillance, monitoring, and manipulation. It suggests that the individual on the control panel is managing or influencing events from behind the scenes. The technological elements unambiguously evoke themes of control and data manipulation, reinforcing the idea of covert operations or interference. This aligns with the magazine's headline about post-voting activities, which makes it clear that technology is being used to sway or control political outcomes. This is an explicit critique of the hidden influence exerted by those in power.

Behind the big character of Prabowo Subianto, there is a person who controls his soul and body. That figure is the maestro Joko Widodo. With his signature thin smile, he controls the Presidential Candidate to win the match like controlling a fighting robot. Prabowo Subianto's expression, which looks tense with his eyebrows rising, signifies that he is ready to win the battle using all hard means. It was reflected in his emotions and impulsiveness, which he often showed with short but sharp statements with high intonation.

The blue shirt worn by Prabowo Subianto is his signature shirt for the 2024 presidential election. In a departure from previous years, he opted for a brown safari shirt with four pockets, reminiscent of the attire worn by past founding fathers such as Soekarno and Hatta. For the 2024 election, he has chosen a blue shirt. He has openly acknowledged that the blue color symbolizes coolness for both of them. Blue represents joy for him. It conveys a feeling of cool, calm, peaceful, and happiness.

The red color on Prabowo Subianto's face reflects courage, strength, passion, energy, and excitement to do something. Red is often linked to urgency, passion, and alarm (Pratiwi et al., 2024). It is closely associated with fire and blood, which connect it to energy, war, danger, strength, power, determination, passion, desire, and love. It is inversely correlated with the meaning of the color of the blue shirt worn, which is joy, cool, calm, peaceful, and happy.

The white shirt worn by Joko Widodo is a

symbol of simplicity and purity. White means safety, purity, and cleanliness. As opposed to black, white usually has a positive connotation (Cerrato, 2012: 14). Previously, when he led the Special Capital Region of Jakarta, he wore a shirt with a red gingham pattern with a combination of blue and white, which became his trademark when he was paired with Basuki Tjahaja Purnama. This color represents the diversity of Jakarta's population, which includes people of different races, ethnicities, and religions. Despite these differences, the city continues to thrive in harmony. Despite the color differences, he maintains a simple dress style with rolled-up sleeves, demonstrating that leaders must be ready to work.

The color scheme on the *Tempo* magazine cover is quite striking. It uses dark and contrasting hues, with a prominent use of green and blue tones and shadows. These colors evoke a sense of seriousness, urgency, and possibly foreboding, which is in keeping with the critical tone of the cover story. Dark colors often symbolize secrecy and power, suggesting that the actions depicted (political manipulation or control) are not transparent or ethical. The contrasting hues make the main figures and their actions stand out, which is great because it makes you think about their involvement's covert and potentially malevolent nature. This helps the magazine critically comment on post-voting interference and political dynamics.

### 3.2 Data 2: "Saling Kunci Kursi Menteri"



**Figure 3.2 "Saling Kunci Kursi Menteri" Magazine Cover**

The second magazine cover, entitled "Saling Kunci Kursi Menteri," which can be interpreted as "Interlocking of Ministerial Seats," is the cover of the 24 March 2024 edition of *Tempo* Magazine, which can be accessed through the official website of *Tempo* Magazine. Figure 2 shows three people holding each part of a chair. The combination of visual and verbal elements in the magazine cover above holds many implied meanings that want to be conveyed to the reader. By utilizing Barthes' (1968) distinction between connotative and denotative meanings, alongside Chandler's (2007) semiotic theory, we can better understand how both verbal and visual signs produce layered meanings. This approach reveals how signs not only convey literal (denotative) information but also carry deeper, culturally influenced (connotative) messages, shaping our interpretation of the content. The data is discussed in detail in the sections below.

### Analysis of Verbal Signs

The first verbal sign that was found on *Tempo* Magazine Cover entitled "Sengkarut Relokasi Warga Pulau Rempang H.82", which is interpreted as "Dispute over the Relocation of Residents of Rempang Island, Page 82" serves as a significant verbal sign on the cover of *Tempo* magazine. Denotatively, the signifier "Sengkarut Relokasi Warga Pulau Rempang" refers to the literal meaning of chaos or disorder associated with the relocation of the residents of Rempang Island. Connotatively, the phrase suggests more profound socio-political implications, highlighting the community's potential mismanagement, conflicts, and struggles due to forced relocation. It evokes images of resistance, challenges to the government, and the broader impact on the lives of those affected, reflecting the tension and complex reality of the implementation of relocation policies. The inclusion of "H.82" directs readers to further details within the magazine, indicating the issue's broader exploration of this contentious issue.

The phrase "Skenario Pembentukan Induk BUMN Baru H.70" can be translated into "Scenario for the Establishment of a new State-Owned Enterprise holderhouse, Page 70" on the cover of *Tempo* magazine serves as a crucial verbal sign. The signifier "Skenario Pembentukan Induk BUMN Baru" denotes the literal meaning of plans or scenarios for creating a new State-Owned Enterprise (BUMN) holding company. In terms of connotation, this phrase suggests strategic economic maneuvers and

possible restructuring within the framework of the national economy. It implies the government's efforts to streamline and possibly improve the efficiency and competitiveness of State-Owned Enterprise, which reflects broader economic policy and governance strategies. The reference to "H.70" directs readers to further elaboration within the magazine, indicating detailed coverage and analysis of these significant economic developments.

The verbal sign "*Tempo*" denotatively, "*Tempo*" is the magazine's title, a well-known Indonesian weekly news publication. It simply identifies the magazine and its brand. The word "*Tempo*" means "time" in both Indonesian and Italian, conveying a sense of timeliness, relevance, and a focus on current events. The magazine provides timely, in-depth analysis and reporting on contemporary issues. This reinforces the magazine's identity as a source of authoritative and up-to-date news and information. It appeals to readers seeking insightful and reliable national and international affairs coverage.

The phrase "*Enak Dibaca dan Perlu*" on the *Tempo* magazine cover means "Enjoyable and Essential." This shows that the magazine's content is both enjoyable and important to readers. "*Enak Dibaca*" (enjoyable) shows the magazine has engaging, well-written, and appealing journalism. "*Dan Perlu*" (and necessary) means the information is important for readers who want to stay informed about current events. This makes the magazine a trusted and authoritative source of informative and enjoyable news.

The phrase "*Saling Kunci Kursi Menteri*" translates to "Interlocking of Ministerial Seats," which indicates a situation where political figures are competing for and trying to secure ministerial positions. The connotations of this phrase are those of a power struggle and strategic maneuvering among political allies, where each party is attempting to secure and lock in their desired positions in the government. The term "locking" implies not just the act of securing but also a sense of exclusivity and resistance to change. This hints at potential conflicts, alliances, and backroom deals. This phrase paints a picture of a tense and competitive political environment where ministerial seats are highly coveted and fiercely contested. This reflects broader themes of political intrigue and the quest for power.

The subheadline "*Partai pendukung*

*presiden terpilih Prabowo Subianto Jokowi meminta jatah menteri. Jokowi menerima jatah sejumlah posisi*" which means "Supporting parties of president-elect Prabowo Subianto are asking Jokowi for ministerial seats. Jokowi received several positions" is clear in its meaning: the supporting parties of the elected president, Prabowo Subianto, are requesting ministerial positions, and that Jokowi is receiving a share of these positions. The term "*meminta jatah*," which means "asking for allotment," clearly indicates a sense of entitlement and division of spoils. It is evident that these positions are seen as rewards or compensations for political support rather than appointments based on merit. The phrase implies a transactional nature of political alliances and power distribution, where ministerial positions are negotiated and divided among political allies. This connotation unmistakably reveals the underlying themes of political bargaining, favoritism, and the strategic allocation of governmental roles to satisfy various factions within the political landscape.

The verbal sign "25 – 31 Maret 2024" clearly denotes a specific publication date, delineating the temporal scope of an issue from 25 March to 31 March 2024. Denotatively, it signifies a period within the calendar, providing factual information about the timeframe covered. However, it also suggests a sense of temporality, representing a snapshot of events, news, or content relevant to that particular week. Furthermore, it will undoubtedly evoke notions of timeliness, urgency, or relevance as readers anticipate the latest information within that timeframe. Therefore, while denotatively, it communicates a specific date range, connotatively, it carries associations of currency and contemporaneity within the context of the publication.

The verbal sign "Rp 50.000" has both denotative and connotative meanings. Denotatively, it specifies the price of the magazine in Indonesian rupiah. Connotatively, this price point suggests affordability and accessibility, targeting a broad audience within Indonesia. It also shows what the magazine's owners think it's worth – it's premium but not too expensive. That suggests they're committed to high-quality journalism, even though it's affordable to the general public. The price also shows that they think the magazine's market position shouldn't be too expensive or too cheap. That means it'll appeal to middle-class readers who value in-depth reporting and analysis.

The verbal sign “*Majalah Tempo*” translates as “Tempo Magazine”. “*Majalah Tempo*” is a name that denotes the publication in question. It is a magazine called Tempo, which is what we would expect from a well-known and respected news magazine in Indonesia. Connotatively, “*Majalah Tempo*” is an unmistakable sign of credibility and quality journalism, as Tempo is a well-known and respected news magazine in Indonesia. The name suggests thorough, investigative reporting and insightful analysis, and it aims to inform and engage its readership with timely and relevant news. Moreover, “*Majalah*” suggests a traditional, printed format. In an era dominated by digital media, it implies reliability and permanence.

The term “*Majalah Berita Mingguan*,” translated into “Weekly News Magazine,” is a weekly publication focused on news. The word “*Mingguan*” denotes the magazine's purpose as a source of current affairs and updates distributed every week. The term carries the connotation of reliability, consistency, and timeliness, making it a trusted source for staying informed. Furthermore, it instills a sense of regularity and routine in its readers, encouraging a habitual engagement with news consumption. This verbal sign represents the tangible product and the broader cultural significance of staying updated in a structured manner. It resonates with individuals seeking information and a sense of order in their lives.

The verbal sign “ISSN: 0126-4273” has two meanings: denotative and connotative. The denotative meaning is that the sign specifies the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) assigned to “Tempo Magazine.” This is essential for the publication's cataloging and referencing in libraries and databases. Connotatively, an ISSN is a clear sign that the magazine is a well-known, respected publication. The presence of an ISSN will enhance the reader's perception of the magazine's credibility and authority in journalism. It will also indicate that it adheres to international standards for serial publications.

### The Analysis of Visual Signs

According to (Romboni & Indrayana, 2022), one form of nonverbal communication through the images on this magazine's cover is that it inevitably creates various perceptions among its readers.

Thus, researchers are interested in analyzing the cover of *Tempo Magazine* to find out the message that wants to be highlighted on it.

The first visual sign clearly shows three figures holding broken parts of a wooden chair. The figures depict some of Indonesia's most famous political figures. The figure in yellow depicts Airlangga Hartarto, the chairman of the *Golongan Karya (Golkar)* Party, who served as the coordinating minister for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in President Jokowi's second term cabinet. The figure in blue or grey depicts Prabowo Subianto, the *Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Gerindra)* Party chairman and the current Minister of Defence of the Republic of Indonesia. The figure in white depicts President Jokowi, who served as the seventh President of the Republic of Indonesia for two terms.

The figure holding the chair in the visual representation embodies the essence of a political figure or party engaged in securing a position within the government. The deliberate act of grasping the chair symbolizes the fervent struggle to solidify or “lock in” specific positions of power. The commanding posture of the central character conveys their pivotal role as a significant player in the ongoing power dynamics and strategic maneuvering. Meanwhile, the two characters beside him are the coalition allies to achieve the same goal. Airlangga Hartanto is the leader of the *Golongan Karya (Golkar)* party and firmly supports Prabowo Subianto as a presidential candidate in the 2024 election. Joko Widodo, the playmaker of Prabowo Subianto's candidacy as a presidential candidate, is paired with the former Mayor of Surakarta, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, his eldest son. Although he was raised by the *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDI-P)* Party, in 2024, Joko Widodo maximized his power to support Prabowo Subianto from the *Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Gerindra)* Party rather than Ganjar Pranowo from the PDI-P Party.

The broken parts of a wooden chair carried by each character denotatively signify a seat or chair. In political science, a chair symbolizes position. It represents a seat in parliament, the cabinet, the board, etc. The picture on the magazine cover clearly shows a game or arrangement of seats or positions shared by political rulers in office or with great power.

They hold different parts of the chair. Joko Widodo holds the foot of the chair, which has meaning as the part that holds the weight of the person who will sit on the chair. Meanwhile, Airlangga Hartarto holds the back of the chair, which means the part that leaves the person who

will sit on the chair. Meanwhile, the chair seat carried by Prabowo Subianto is an important part that allows the chair to be used. That is the role of each person holding the part of the chair in the picture. But if one is missing, the chair or position will not be suitable for sitting on. Therefore, they formed a coalition to unite their strengths and form a solid chair to be used by someone who has great burden and power. Authority serves as the primary tool for rulers to manage society, often employing manipulation to shape the thoughts of individuals or restrict their actions by legitimizing, diminishing, or hiding inequality and domination (Pardede et al., 2023). The competition for ministerial seats in the government cabinet is of the utmost importance for the future political development of the country's leaders.

Prabowo Subianto's facial expression was characterized by slightly raised eyebrows and closed lips, conveying an unmistakable sense of firmness in his opinion. This demeanor hinted at a tendency to become agitated and emotional

during significant events or meetings, likely stemming from his extensive military background as a former Army Strategic Reserve Command commander. Furthermore, his status as a powerful President's son-in-law may have also shaped his assertive yet emotive disposition.

Joko Widodo's gloomy expression represents the many problems he has faced during his two-term presidency. Jokowi won the popular vote but lost the electoral vote, indicating that most of Indonesia did not support him for a second term. Many people underestimated and problematized everything about his program. Moreover, the control of political interest groups overshadowed him. With his actions, he is still trying to strengthen his political position in his last term as president.

Airlangga Hartanto's faint smile signifies his joy at participating in this coalition unity. The hidden meaning behind that smile may be quite pathetic. He was predicted to be a presidential candidate, but reality spoke otherwise. Due to the turbulent political situation, he failed to find a clear path to running for president or vice president, and the movement of the *Golongan Karya (Golkar)* party has stagnated. He and his party finally took the high road by declaring their support for Prabowo Subianto, hoping to gain exposure to the action.

According to Cerrato's (2012: 7) theory, yellow is very effective for attracting attention, so use it to highlight the most important elements

of your design. The cover of this magazine uses muted yellow colors with highlights as the background to emphasize an object that is a vital and fundamental part of the design. This object is shown in bold so that readers can immediately connect with the topic of discussion.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

*Tempo* magazine is an independent weekly news magazine that covers news on politics. Its sharp, intelligent, and balanced writing style and the visual depiction of its frontal and attractive magazine cover make people interested in seeing and reading it. The semiotic analysis clearly showed that the publisher uses a combination of textual, visual, and symbolic elements to convey a specific message to the audience.

*Tempo* magazine reveals how it strategically uses textual, visual, and symbolic elements to convey political messages. Through the combination of Javanese and Indonesian languages, such as "*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*," *Tempo* integrates cultural nuances to highlight political interference in the 2024 general election. The magazine's bold imagery, like Joko Widodo controlling Prabowo Subianto as a robot, visually emphasizes power dynamics, while depictions of political figures with broken chairs symbolize political instability. By blending provocative visuals with sharp language, *Tempo* shapes political narratives, revealing the importance of media literacy in decoding these complex messages.

The textual elements used in the first poster, "*Cawe-Cawe Setelah Pencoblosan*" are practical. The term "*Cawe-Cawe*," which translates into "Intervene," and "*Setelah Pencoblosan*," which means "after the election." The image of a character (Prabowo Subianto) whose body is controlled by a character (Joko Widodo), like a captain controlling a robot, clearly conveys that Joko Widodo is interfering with Prabowo Subianto after the voting in the 2024 general election.

Similarly, the second poster features an image of three characters representing government officials: Airlangga Hartanto (Chairman of the Golongan Karya Party and Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia), Prabowo Subianto (Chairman of the Gerakan Indonesia Raya Party and Minister of Defence), and Joko Widodo (7th President of Indonesia). Each character is depicted carrying a broken wooden chair. The text element "*Saling Kunci Kursi Menteri*" is also

noteworthy. It translates to "Interlocking of Ministerial Seats," which is clearly irrelevant compared to the broken chair's image. However, a semiotic analysis uncovers a hidden meaning. Each character is depicted as trying to control and secure positions in the next era of government.

The semiotic analysis of *Tempo* magazine covers reveals its significant influence on public opinion and political discourse. By combining bold visuals, cultural language, and symbolic metaphors, *Tempo* simplifies complex political dynamics, making them more accessible to a broad audience. This strategic use of imagery and text shapes perceptions of political figures and power struggles, potentially influencing public attitudes. Additionally, *Tempo* functions as media critique, prompting readers to question political narratives and recognize underlying power structures.

The study demonstrates how *Tempo* employs verbal and visual semiotic elements—such as bold images, color schemes, and provocative headlines—to convey political messages and shape public perception. This innovative approach underscores the importance of semiotic analysis in understanding media's role in socio-political discourse. Moreover, it highlights the need for critical media literacy to decode the intricate political messages embedded in everyday media, enhancing public engagement with political content.

Proposed areas for future research include exploring the impact of *Tempo* magazine covers semiotic strategies on various demographic groups to understand how different audiences interpret its political messages. Additionally, future studies could investigate how *Tempo*'s verbal and visual elements influence public opinion during critical political events, such as elections or policy debates. Comparative analyses between *Tempo* and other political media outlets could also provide insight into how different media platforms shape society's political discourse. Finally, examining how media literacy programs help readers critically engage with these semiotic strategies could highlight ways to enhance public understanding of political content.

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