

# **The Visual Culture in General Election: A Study on the Implication of Political Policies to the Visualization of Political Parties in Indonesia**

**Reiza D. Dienaputra**

**ABSTRACT:** *A symbol for a political party does not show only a sign of existence but also an identity and way to connect ideology level to reality level. The General Election which is the first gate to take the power makes a symbol become an important requirement for a political party to participate in the election. The important role that a symbol plays for a political party, especially as an instrument to reach or take over the authority makes the visualization of a political party's symbol inseparable from the surrounded political system. Those condition and reality are reflected through the visualization of political parties' symbols participating in the General Elections since 1955 until 2004. How political policies influence the visualization of political parties' symbols and how political parties respond the space of visual politics are principal questions in this paper. Finally, to get comprehensive answers to those questions, the paper employs the method of history as the research method.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Political policies, visualization, symbol, political parties, and General Election in Indonesia.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Political parties have taken a long journey in the history of Indonesian political scene. They had emerged before national independence and appeared to have given greater contribution in post colonial era (Koch, 1951:27-28; and Kartodirdjo, 1990:130-137). The first political party was founded a week after the declaration of independence. It was PNI (*Partai Nasional Indonesia* or Indonesia National Party), founded as the state

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**Reiza D. Dienaputra, M.Hum.** is an Academic Staff of the History Department, Faculty of Letters UNPAD (University of Padjadjaran) Bandung, West Java, Indonesia; and a Doctoral Candidate of Art and Design Study Program ITB (Bandung Institute of Technology). He can be reached at: [reizaputra@unpad.ac.id](mailto:reizaputra@unpad.ac.id) and [reizaputra@yahoo.com](mailto:reizaputra@yahoo.com)

party on August 23, 1945, along with the government's announcing the establishment of BKR (*Badan Keamanan Rakyat* or People Safety Body). PNI, however, in the early period of this era, did not last long. As Indonesian political scene developed further, the government dismissed PNI as state party and urged all Indonesian people, through Governmental Edict on November 3, 1945, to establish political parties (Karim, 1983).

This suggestion from the government was enthusiastically welcomed by all elements of society. Afterwards, political parties grew and developed into greater contributors to Indonesian political scene. Various political systems, namely Liberal Democracy (1950-1959), Guided Democracy (1959-1965), or Democracy based on the Five Principles or *Pancasila* (1965-1998), which came into power for more than fifty years, did their own role in the history of political party. Furthermore, after the overthrow of Soeharto's regime on May 1998, the existence of political parties seemed to be more significant.

Many of the study on the existence of political party in Indonesian political scene, indeed, have been carried out, but few of them utilize visual source such as political parties' logos. It has been conventionally agreed that the journey of political parties in post colonial Indonesia has been faced with difficult road (Suryakusuma *et al.*, n.d.:596-618). Legal political system of particular period influenced the display of a party. From visual perspective, it is interesting to ask: how does political policy promulgated by the government influence political parties in visualizing their logos? As a basic component of political system, it is also interesting to inquire: what kind of political culture underlies the visualization of political parties' logos? This paper is going to satisfy the questions.

## **GOVERNMENT'S POLITICAL POLICY**

In respect with the objective of the establishment and the function of political parties, logo has a strategic role. Without logo, the road to the real role in national political scene, especially executive and legislative seats, will be obstructed (Berger, 2005: 39-45; and Piliang, 2005:9-11). Having a logo is an obligatory requirement to be accomplished by political parties when participating in national election. Meanwhile, national election is the entrance for political parties to achieve, manage, and maintain power. Without logo, political parties will have no access to compete in national election (Bernard, 1998:11-18).

Owning a logo as such a pretty much strategic necessity for a political party appears to be understood by the government. Therefore, they think is it important to get involved in regulating political parties' logos.

Governmental policy regarding logo contributes to every national General Elections held in Indonesia, since the first on in 1955 until the last in 2009. However, the discussion of the issue in this paper will be focused on the national General Elections ranging from 1955 until 2004.

The initial regulation, also the oldest, which ruled the logo of a party, was Act 7, 1953, dated on April 4, 1953. In the Article 41, subsection 3, Constituent Members and People's Representative Assembly Election Act, regarding the logo of a political party, it was distinctly stated that "*a logo must not contain national symbol of the Republic of Indonesia, of foreign countries, national flag, individual picture, and symbols which are against moral codes in Indonesia*".

If we study it carefully, the 1953 law distinctly forbade visual figures, namely national symbol (*Garuda* of the five principles), foreign countries' symbols, national flag, individual pictures, and symbols against moral codes in Indonesia. This law was obligatory for all political parties participating in 1955 national election. Thereby, this law implied that political parties could use visual figures not containing those which were forbidden by the law. The prohibition of logos against moral codes in Indonesia was most possibly enacted due to the political etiquette being a serious issue during the era of Liberal Democracy political system.

The second law regulating logos of political parties was Act 15, 1969, dated on December 17, 1969. In Article 18, subsection 2, People's Representative/Consultative Assembly Election, it was stated that "*the use of logos which are the same as or similar to (a) the national symbol of the Republic of Indonesia, (b) national symbols of foreign countries, (c) national flag, (d) foreign countries' national flags, and (e) individual pictures are prohibited in national election*". The second law was obligatory for political parties participating in 1971 national election. Compared to 1953 law, the 1969 law explicitly forbade the use of visual figures like foreign countries' national flag. In turn, it omitted the prohibition of using visual figures containing visual figures perverting the moral codes in Indonesia. The explicit emphasizing on the prohibition of using logos which were the same with or similar to foreign countries' national flag was related with political crises, such as September 30 movement in 1965, which created negative effect on diplomatic relationship between Indonesia and People Republic of China. Indonesian government surely prohibited "hammer and sickle" logo, the symbol of PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or Indonesian Communist Party), which was declared as forbidden organization inside Indonesia's territory since March 12, 1966 although it was not explicitly stated.

The third law regulating the logos of political parties was Act 4, 1975. In relation to the regulation on the logos of political parties, Act 4, 1975, substantially, was not distinctively different from the previous one. It stated that “*the use of logos which are the same with or similar to (a) the national symbol of the Republic of Indonesia, (b) the national symbols of foreign countries, (c) the national flag, (d) the national flag of foreign countries, and (e) individual pictures*”. This law was obligatory for political parties participating in 1977 election.

The enactment of this law was special since it was validated after the fusion of a number of political parties into two parties and a work group: PPP (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* or Development Unity Party), PDI (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* or Indonesia Democracy Party), and GOLKAR (*Golongan Karya* or Functional Group). PPP, fused from four Islamic political parties namely NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama* or Emerging the Ulema), PARMUSI (*Partai Muslimin Indonesia* or Indonesia Moslem Party), PSII (*Partai Syarikat Islam Indonesia* or Indonesia Islamic Company Party), and PERTI (*Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah* or Islamic Education Party), was founded on January 5, 1973. While PDI, formed from nationalist political parties namely PNI (*Partai Nasional Indonesia* or Indonesia National Party), Party of Murba, Party of Catholic, IPKI (*Ikatan Pendukung Kemerdekaan Indonesia* or Supporting United of Indonesia Independence), and PARKINDO (*Partai Kristen Protestan Indonesia* or Indonesia Protest Christian Party), was founded on January 10, 1973 (Karim, 1983:65-101; and Dienaputra, 1995:36). With only a little difference with the two previous ones, this act also explicitly regulated color options, which were allowed to be used by parties participating in national election, namely black and white. This was set in the letter from Amir Machmud, Minister of Domestic Affairs/Chief of National Election Institute Number 118/15/III/1976, dated on March 24, 1976, addressed to the Party’s Representative Assembly of PDI.

The next law regulating the logos of political parties was Act 3, 1985 regarding Political Party and *Golongan Karya* (Functional Group), enacted on February 19, 1985. This new act, replacing Act 4, 1973, distinctly made it compulsory for *Golongan Karya* and the two political parties to use the Five Principles (*Pancasila*) as the only foundation of sociality, nationality, and statesmanship (Suryadinata, 1992:165). On its turn, the regulation put an effect on the visualization of political parties’ logos. Implicitly, with this regulation, the government defined that visual figures allowed to use in political parties’ logos were only those contained in the symbol of Indonesia. Therefore, all visual figures, but those in the symbol of Indonesia, were forbidden.

This political policy valid during the era of the Five Principle Democracy political system was noticeably dissimilar to the previous and subsequent ones. This policy only allowed visual figures which were in mutual accord with the Five Principles as the single foundation. Therefore, the policy imposed a great restriction on cultural space for political parties to express their visual requirements as well as their needs to be able to accommodate visual elements familiar with their supporters or the constituents of the parties (Elkins, 2003; and Schirato & Webb, 2004).

The governmental policy regarding the same issue was enacted not only during Liberal Democracy and Five Principle Democracy eras, but also in the era of Reformation. The first regulation validated in the era was Act 22, 1999, regarding political parties, dated on February 1, 1999. The regulation on the logos of political parties in this Act was included in Chapter 2, article 2, subsection 2, letter d. In respect with the logos of political parties, it was distinctly stated that the logos of political parties must not contain symbols of foreign countries, the national flag of the Republic of Indonesia, the national flags of foreign countries, individual pictures, and names and the logos of existing parties.

If we study it closely, it will appear to us that the visual figures forbidden by the Act had a little difference with those by the prior Acts. This act distinctly stated that the logos which had already been used by existing parties could not be used again by other parties founded after. This act was obligatory for all political parties participating in 1999 election.

The following regulation on the same issue was Act 31, 2002 regarding political party, dated on December 27, 2002. According to this Act, the logos of political parties must not contain any similarity with the national flag or symbol the Republic of Indonesia, symbols of governmental institutions, names, flags, or symbols of other countries, and the names of the flags or symbols international institutions/organizations, names and pictures of an individual, or names and logos with partial or complete similarity with the names or logos of other political parties. This act was strengthened by Election Committee Decree Number 105, 2003, regarding the Procedure of Research and the Enlistment of political party as national election participants, dated on April 30, 2003. Like Act 31, 2002, this decree also prohibited political parties to use similar logos with national flag or the symbol of Indonesia, symbols of governmental institution, names, flags, or symbols of other countries and the names of the flags or symbols of international institutions/foundations, names and pictures of individuals, or names and logos with partial or complete similarity with names and logos of other political parties.

If we study it carefully, this act also distinctly contains prohibition on using logos having partial or complete similarity with the logos of other political parties. Thus, it appears that one of the prohibitions clearly stated by various regulations enacted during the era of Reformation was one on using logos of other political parties.

### **THE VISUALIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES' LOGOS**

From political parties' point of view, logos are not only displayed to follow participation requirement in national election, but also as the signifiers of the parties' identities or even as the representation of ideology. Therefore, every political party always endeavors to make its logo as a means of communication with the electors. Logos are made recognizable and attractive for the electors. In this sense, the effort from political parties to optimally accomplish their needs through the use of logo had to put various legal rules into their consideration (Sachari, 2007). If a rule had been broken, it would have been certain that the opportunity to participate in national election would disappear.

In 1955 General Election, there were at least 36 participants. The visualization of the participating parties' logos in the first national General Election in the independence era was regulated in Act 7, 1953, dated on April 4, 1953. According to the act, there were some visual elements prohibited to use in the logos of political parties, namely the symbol of Indonesia, of foreign countries, national flag, individual pictures, and pictures which are against the moral codes in Indonesia. This prohibition was completely followed by political parties.

Act 7, 1953 was the only political policy regulating the logo of political party in 1955 General Election. Therefore, political parties were basically allowed to use any visual elements outside those prohibited by the Act, the freedom to use legal visual elements gave much space for the political parties to visualize their logos. Apparently, the participants made the best use of this political reality, which gave freedom for the use of visual elements. This appeared from the large number of visual elements chosen by the participants. At least there were twenty five visual figures used by the winning political parties. Some of the visual elements were the picture of buffalo, moon, star, globe, hammer, sickle, pine tree, house, knife, mosque, rice, cotton, torch, and *semar* (figure of puppet shadow play). The visualization of political parties' logos participating in 1955 General Election is what follows:



**Figure 1:**  
 The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1955 General Election  
 (Source: ANRI, 1999).

In 1971 General Election, there were ten political parties participating in the election. The political policy regulating the second election after the declaration of independence was Act 15, 1969, dated on December 1969. Based on the Act, there were a number of forbidden visual elements, namely the symbol of the Republic of Indonesia, the symbols of foreign countries, and individual pictures. Outside the prohibited visual elements, as a result of PKI being declared as forbidden organization all across Indonesia territory since March 12, 1966, there were unwritten forbidden visual elements: those were hammer and sickle pictures. The visual elements were considered to represent Communist party or movement. In accord with the political policy, the political parties participating in 1971 General Election consistently use the allowed visual elements.

Based on the political reality, it appears that the visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1971 was restricted by the written or unwritten regulations. Thus, these regulations on the visualization of the logo of political party are relatively bigger in number than those in the previous elections. On its turn, various regulations regarding this issue did not put much effect on the visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1971 General Election. It was caused the fact that most of the parties participating in 1971 were the same parties participating in the 1955 election. Among the parties, it was only Party of Murba which modified its logo, while the other seven parties still used the same logos. Meanwhile, among the two new parties, PARMUSI and GOLKAR, it was only PARMUSI which utilized old logo, which previously belonged to MASYUMI (*Majlis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia* or Indonesia Moslem Representative Assembly). The ten logos of the political parties are:



**Figure 2:**

The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1971 General Election.



The 1971 General Election was the second election held during the era of Soeharto. Nevertheless, this General Election was the first one since the fusion of the ten into three parties. The three parties in respect with the visualization of their logos were regulated by Act 4, 1975. Based on the policy, there were some forbidden visual elements in terms of political party's logo, i.e. the symbol of the Republic of Indonesia, the symbols of other countries, national flag, the national flags of other countries, and individual pictures. Thus, the forbidden visual elements in 1977 General Election were almost similar to those in 1971. Outside the written regulation, the political policy which forbade the use of visual elements of hammer and sickle was still valid.

As the fusion policy was enacted by the government, automatically there were two parties which had to replace their logos while GOLKAR, which was not obliged to follow fusion policy, maintained the use of old logo, which had been used in 1971 General Election. There were basically two more options for the two new political parties in visualizing their logos. *Firstly*, they were allowed to use the logos belonging to the parties before the fusion. *Secondly*, they were allowed to create new logos. The two parties decided to create new logos. In short, the visualization of the logos of the two new parties seemed to be explicitly based on the ideological resemblance uniting them that is Islamic ideology and nationalist ideology. Thus, PPP, which embraced Islamic ideology, used *Ka'bah* as its logo, while PDI chose buffalo's head as one of its visual elements. The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1977 General Election is what follows:



**Figure 3:**

The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1977 General Election.

The following General Election was held in 1982. In the third General Election of the New Order, the number of participants did not change, that is two political parties and a work group. Like the previous one, the political policy regulated this election was Act 4, 1975. Therefore, the forbidden

visual elements in this election were still the same with the preceding ones. The same political made the logos used in this General Election the same with one prior to it. The visualization of the logos of the political parties participating in 1982 is what follows:



**Figure 4:**

The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1982 General Election.

The 1987 General Election was the third election organized during Soeharto's regime after the fusion. Nevertheless, this General Election was held no long after the declaration of the Five Principles as the only foundation in Indonesian nationality and statesmanship. The policy is contained in Act 3, 1985. According to the act, it was implicitly regulated that the only visual elements allowed to be used in the logos of political parties were visual elements contained in the symbol of the Republic of Indonesia, namely a picture of star, chain, pine tree, buffalo's head, rice, and cotton. Outside those pictures, no visual elements were allowed. This regulation took an effect on one of the three parties that is PPP. PPP, which used a picture of *Ka'bah* as its visual element, had no other option but to change its visual element into one which was contained in national symbol. They finally picked a picture of star, which was considered as the most representative picture for its existence as Islamic political party. The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1987 General Election is what follows:



**Figure 5:**

The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1987 General Election.

The number of national election participants did not change in 1992 General Election that is two political parties and a work group. The political policy regulating this General Election was also the same with the preceding one that is Act 3, 1985. The single act's being employed to the two General Elections resulted in the unchanged use of the visualization of logos by the participating parties. The visualization of political parties' logos participating in 1992 General Election is what follows:



**Figure 6:**

The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1992 General Election.

The 1997 General Election was the sixth election during Soeharto's regime. This General Election was also the last election in the era. The number of parties participating in 1997 General Election was the same with the preceding election. Like 1987 and 1992 General Elections, the political policy regulating the visualization of the logos of political parties in 1997 General Election was Act 3, 1985. Therefore, political policy regulating the visualization of the logos of political parties in 1997 General Election was the same with the two preceding elections. The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1997 General Election is what follows:



**Figure 7:**

The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1997 General Election.

After five General Elections of three allowed participants, as the legal support from the Reformation era accommodated it, the number of political parties significantly increased. This increase was automatically followed by the number of the logos of political parties being also increased. Therefore,

different from the five preceding elections, the first after the overthrow of Soeharto's regime, there were forty eight parties participating in 1999 General Election. The political policy which regulated the logos of political parties in 1999 General Election was Act 22, 1999 regarding political parties, dated Februari 1, 1999. According to this act, the forbidden political parties' logos were the symbols of foreign countries, the national flag of the Republic of Indonesia, the national flag of foreign countries, individual pictures, and names and logos of other existing political parties. The forbidden symbol in this sense means the the symbol of the present election participants. If the symbols belong to non-participants parties, they are allowed to use.

Due to the large number of participating parties in 1999 General Election, the visualization of the logos of participating parties were enriched in number and variation. Apart from the picture of star, moon, and *ka'bah*, the other visual figures used by the parties were the picture of buffalo, pine tree, rice, cotton, sun, globe, Indonesian map, shield, *garuda*, pigeon, statue, arm, and the Five Principle. In addition to visual figures, not in the likeness with the previous elections, 1999 General Election also had a distinct difference in respect with its allowing various colors in the logos of participating parties, not only black and white. The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1999 General Election is as follows:





**Figure 8:**

The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 1999 General Election (Source: KPU, 2000:35-37).

The number of political parties' symbols significantly decreased from 48 to 24 symbols in 2004 General Election, due to the decreasing number of participating parties. In term of the visualization of the logos of political parties, the government enacted a policy, stated in Act 31, 2002, regarding political party, dated on December 2002, which explained further in National Election Decree 105, 2003 regarding the Procedure of Research and the Enlistment of political parties as National Election Participants, dated on April 30, 2003.

As the act regulates it, the KPU (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum* or General Election Commission)'s decree also forbids political parties to use logos with similarity to the national flag or the symbol of the Republic of Indonesia, the symbol of governmental institutions, names, national flags, or symbols of other countries, or names and logos partially or completely resembling the names or logos of other parties. At least, there were sixteen visual figures used by seventeen political parties which gained seats in the Parliament. They are the picture of buffalo, pime tree, rice, cotton, *ka'bah*, globe, star, Indonesian map, sun, moon, arrow, cross, pigeon, chain, and white and red flag. The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 2004 General Election is what follows:



**Figure 9:**

The visualization of the logos of political parties participating in 2004 General Election.

## CONCLUSION

The visualization of political parties' logos in each General Election is strongly correlated with the prevailing political system. In 1955 General Election, the visualization of political parties' logos appeared to have various visual elements although the technology in the period only accommodated black and white logos. The large number of visual elements contained on the logos of the parties participating in 1955 was certainly correlated with the political system of Liberal Democracy at that time, which accommodated creative designs of the logos.

This richness in the visual elements of political parties' logos, with some limitation, reappeared in 1971 General Election. The five year old Fice Principle Democracy which regulated 1971 General Election still gave much room for the participants to pick their own visual elements except ones used by Indonesian Communist Party, which had been declared as forbidden organization since March 12, 1966. On the other hand, 1971 General Election also became the only election during the Five Principle Democracy, which accommodated creative design of political parties' logos.

The following General Elections, since 1977 until 1997, appeared to have restricted this creativity. The government's declaring the Five Principles as the single foundation for all political parties and work group did not compromise variety in terms of political parties' logos because the only allowed visual elements were those contained in the national symbol. Apart from this, the logos of political parties were only allowed to use black and white as their colors. Thus, different from 1955 General Election, the single use of black and white was more likely a bureaucratic problem instead of technological.

The era of Reformation, which was signified by freedom in all aspects of life including politic, gave much room for the creative design of logos which belonged to the parties participating in 1999 and 2004 General Elections. With no exaggeration, the visual elements used in 1999 and 2004 General Elections were the most various ones compared to the previous elections, including 1955 General Election. This richness was not only in terms of figures, but also of colors beside black and white. This use of various colors was an innovation in the visualization of political parties' logos.

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