



The buying and selling of identity in the 2024 presidential debate: A cultural politics approach to media and hegemony

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ABSTRACT

Background: This article discusses the attempt to establish hegemony in the 2024 presidential election through the presidential candidate debates. The presidential election is an important event in the transition of government in a democratic country. Presidential candidate debates are often seen merely as a campaign stage, but few view them as a medium for establishing hegemony, or as a marketplace where the identity products of presidential candidates are traded for voter loyalty. This study aims to explain how hegemony is established through the 2024 presidential candidate debates and how the identities of each candidate pair are traded for voter loyalty. **Methods:** This research was conducted by applying the theoretical framework of the “market for loyalties” as a method of analyzing the buying and selling of political products through the media. This study employs qualitative critical discourse analysis using the “market for loyalties” framework with data from debates, regulations, media, and campaign materials to examine identity construction and hegemony. **Findings:** This article indicates that hegemony is established through the ideologies and narratives brought by each candidate pair and their coalitions. The government plays a role in limiting the public's perspective on ideologies to only three presidential candidate pairs through presidential debates broadcast via mass media and digital media. These ideologies are reflected in the identities of each candidate pair; candidate pair 01 represents religious identity and change; 02 represents youth identity, loyalty to Jokowi, and continuity; 03 represents the identity of the PDIP (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*) as the ruling party and incumbent. **Conclusion:** This study concludes that the 2024 presidential candidate debates function as a medium for constructing hegemony through the articulation of ideologies and identities exchanged for voter loyalty. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This article lies in applying the “market for loyalties” framework to analyze presidential debates as arenas of hegemony formation rather than merely campaign platforms.

KEYWORDS: election; hegemony; ideology; identity; market for loyalties.

1. Introduction

The presidential candidate debate is a promotional medium to gain approval for power. The event, which is held every five years as a complement to the Presidential Election/*Pemilihan Presiden (pilpres)*, is basically aimed at promoting the visions and missions and work programs of the candidate pairs/*pasangan calon (paslon)*. However, behind that, the presidential debate is also a means to gain or maintain power (Asy'ari, 2023). In the presidential election, the main goal of each candidate pair is to gain legitimacy for power and gain compliance from the people. Especially in Indonesia, which is a

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democratic country, this legitimacy is obtained through the majority vote. Therefore, to get votes from the people, promotional efforts are needed, one of which is through presidential debates.

In order to gain legitimacy for power and compliance, candidates promote their political goals through ideology. Ideology is not only related to racial or religious group identity or the right-left political spectrum, but a "false consciousness" of reality (Easton, 2017; Langman, 2015). With the promotion of ideology, candidates do not need to convey the ultimate goal of achieving power clearly. Through ideology, people will be given a certain construction of reality that ultimately makes people able to give consent to be led. The state of political leadership based on the consent of the led is called hegemony (Bates, 1975). Hegemony is the answer to why even oppressive, or corrupt, power does not get significant resistance (Althusser, 1971), and even gets fanatical loyalty from some of its people. With the people's willingness to be "controlled", hegemony is strong enough to drive out other ideologies outside the dominant ideology instilled by the ruler.

The candidate pairs' efforts to gain legitimacy through the promotion of hegemony can be explained through the market for loyalties framework. This framework analogizes the interactions that occur during presidential debates as "buying and selling" activities. Candidates and power holders are positioned as sellers who try to offer identities to be bought by the people using votes, obedience, and loyalty as currency (Price, 1994). Using this framework, a picture of the identity offered by the candidates will be obtained, which in the end succeeds in instilling hegemony over the people. The problem formulation in this study is focused on two main questions. First, it examines how power holders or potential power holders instill hegemony through presidential debates. Second, it explores how the identity of each candidate is "traded" in the presidential debates when viewed through the framework of the market for loyalties.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research method with a critical discourse analysis approach by applying Althusser's concept of ideology, Gramsci's theory of hegemony, and Monroe Price's "market for loyalties" framework to examine the 2024 presidential candidate debates. Data were collected from official regulations, debate broadcasts, media reports, and candidate campaign materials, which were then analyzed to identify how ideologies are constructed into identities, how these identities are traded as political commodities, and how the debates function as arenas for instilling hegemony and limiting public perspectives within an oligopolistic information market regulated by the General Election Commissions/*Komisi Pemilihan Umum* (KPU).

This study is intended to answer the two questions formulated. Power holders and candidates for power holders instill hegemony in presidential debates by providing ideological narratives that make people in a false consciousness and give consent to be led. In the framework of the market for loyalties, the presidential debate becomes a means of "buying and selling" identity as goods purchased using votes and loyalty as a medium of exchange, in which the candidate pairs have their respective ideological identities.

This study using the market for loyalties framework in the context of the 2024 presidential debate, the author describes several components to be able to show the condition of the market. These components are "sellers" and "trade goods". Unlike the conditions when the government is already running, in election conditions the government or power holder is no longer the sole actor in the market for loyalties. There are other actors who can also be categorized as "sellers" who carry their own "trade goods", namely identity.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Ideology

Ideology becomes the basis for a person to recognize their reality. When talking about ideology, what is meant is not ideology as a point of thought with its "ISMS (Information Security Management System)", but rather an individual construction of reality (Felluga, 2011). By construction, it means that the reality constructed from ideology does not represent reality as a whole and as it is. More clearly, Althusser (1971) developed his thesis on ideology: ideology represents a person's imaginary relationship with the conditions of reality. In this case, ideology does not reflect reality or the real world, but only represents the reality formed from the imaginary relationship that a person experiences with his world (Felluga, 2011). With this understanding, a person cannot recognize his "real" reality, because the reality that is believed is only part of his imaginary relationship with reality. The representation of the imaginary relationship that becomes reality becomes the basis for a person to view his world and practice it in activities and shape behavior. It is also what causes a person to ignore other realities that intersect with the reality he recognizes.

In the Marxist tradition, ideology serves to mask the exploitation that underlies inequality in class society (Felluga, 2011). Marx's conflict theory distinguishes society into two classes, first the bourgeoisie, who own the capital and modes of production; and the proletariat, who are the labor force and depend on the production process controlled by the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie also involves the power holders who are the "key holders" in making regulations that benefit the production process. In the Marxist school it is also believed that with ideology the proletariat will continue to be under the exploitation of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat is given the "false consciousness" that by being exploited they can survive (Langman, 2015; Leitch & Cain, 2010). Ideology is needed to maintain the bourgeois-proletarian bond in order to form society.

3.2 Hegemony

The contestation of power cannot be separated from the control of ideology. Gramsci, an Italian communist activist, in his *The Prisoner's Notebook* (1971) explains how an authoritarian power does not get resistance even though the people are aware of oppression. Gramsci introduced the concept of hegemony as a condition in which the people are in "agreement" with the point of view of the ruling group (Gramsci, 2009). In the context of politics, Bates (1975) defines it as political leadership based on the consent of the led. In practice, hegemony involves a reciprocal relationship between "power" (which can be in the form of policies, laws, or law enforcement officers) and the consent of the people (Althusser, 1971; Gramsci, 2009). The people under hegemony are aware of the government's attempts at oppression in the form of policies and political decisions, but they acquiesce by believing the government's version that these efforts are for the benefit of the people.

Another characteristic of hegemony is the "false consciousness" (Langman, 2015) of the people. Often the consent given by the people under the ruling group is based on false consciousness. The people will consider the ideology offered by the ruling group as a normal "way of life" and "common sense", while in reality they are under oppression. The practice of hegemony does not always last forever. Through a combination of power and consent, the hegemony of the ruling group can be contested with a counter-ideology (Althusser, 1971).

In order to realize hegemony, the ruler needs a media. This media must be able to accommodate the cultivation of hegemony by creating a narrative of the future to gain approval from the people. This media is information media, either mass or digital media.

In addition, the ruler will arrange a narrative broadcast that offers the ruler's point of view. One of them is the presidential debate. The election moment is an important moment where the candidates will compete with each other to instill their hegemony. This broadcast

will be used as an assessment by the people to determine which candidate's point of view they will "believe" and give approval.

3.3 Market for loyalties

Price (1994) introduced the market for loyalties as a media theory that explains the relationship of government power practices to the people through the control of media information flows. This theory is based on neoclassical economic thinking. Price analogizes the process that occurs in the government-media-audience relationship to the production-consumption process driven by the supply-demand model (Marshall, 2009). This neoclassical economic analogy can be used to identify political actors and the identities that are traded. In the context of the 2024 presidential election debate, identities can be found in the form of ideas, vision-mission, as well as the background and track record of coalition parties or presidential and vice presidential candidates.

3.3.1 Market for loyalties component

Price uses economic terms to describe his theory. To understand the application of the theory, the following table may help to provide an explanation. In market for loyalties, the process of information flow is like a "marketplace of ideas" along with the components that are part of "buying and selling" (Price, 1994). Price describes governments or power holders as "sellers" and people as "buyers". Merchandise in this market is not bought with money. Instead, the government and other potential power holders ask for loyalty as a medium of exchange to "buy" identity. The concept of identity as a commodity represents historical identity or the idea of the future, heritage, resources, protection, hopes and aspirations of the group they represent. Loyalty as a medium of exchange is described by Monroe as obedience and submission to the law and even readiness to "fight" on behalf of the "bought" identity.

Table 1. Economic terms in the market for loyalties

Economic Terms	Market for Loyalties
Seller	Government and Power of Attorney
Buyer	People
Price/Exchange Tools	Loyalty
Goods	Identity

(Price, 1994)

As with theories in neoclassical economics, the structure of the market for loyalties also involves supply and demand (Callister, 2006; Marshall, 2009). Where loyalty as a cost of production is compared to the quantity of identity in the information channel. In the law of demand, the higher the demand for identity, the higher the price of loyalty. Conversely, the price of loyalty will be higher if there is less supply of identity in the market. To maximize loyalty (in terms of votes, product preferences, policies, taxes, etc.), governments and power holders seek to exclude competitors-sellers with identity offerings-from the market by controlling information and communication channels through barriers to entry-including regulations governing which sellers are eligible to enter the market-that allow the market to function (Callister, 2006; Price, 1994).

3.3.2 The Relationship between ideology and identity

Ideology plays an important role in identity formation in the market for loyalties. The concept of identity can be explained as the aspirations of the sellers (power holders) in the market. Price (1994) describes sellers as "those who believe that myths, dreams, and history can be transformed into power and wealth". In this case, the aspirations of sellers constitute ideology. As ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals - in

this context, sellers or power holders - with their reality (Althusser, 1971). McFate & Jackson (2006) further explain the relationship between ideology and narrative in shaping group identity and instilling loyalty. Where ideology provides "identity, purpose, and community".

Another thesis from Althusser (1971) states that ideology has a material existence. This means that ideology is not simply located in the minds of individuals, but is also tangible or manifests in attitudes and actions (Felluga, 2011). These actions also include individuals' interactions with reality and other individuals. Where ideologies-and narratives-make a person have a goal and urgency to achieve that goal by associating or joining a community with the same goal. Through these interactions, aspirations related to shared backgrounds and goals emerge, which also become group identities. As an important aspect of identity involves the relationship between past heritage and dreams of a better or more secure future (Callister, 2006). Ideology is the basis for the formation of identity through material manifestations that are attached to the aspirations of a person or group.

3.4 Planting hegemony in the 2024 presidential candidate debate

Every 5 years during the presidential election, the KPU organizes a presidential debate as a means for candidate pairs to socialize their vision-mission and work program and demonstrate their understanding and appropriateness as leaders. The provision of this presidential debate is regulated in Article 275 paragraph (1) letter h of Law Number 7/2017 on General Elections. The presidential debate is held by presenting the candidates and given space to campaign and there are sessions to answer questions from panelists and compete with each other on several strategic issues of the country. In the 2024 presidential debate, as stipulated in Article 50 paragraph (1) of KPU Regulation Number 15 of 2023 concerning the General Election Campaign, a series of events were held 5 times with 3 presidential debates and 2 vice presidential debates broadcast nationally, both through television and web-based live broadcast services.

The presidential debates are not only a forum for debating ideas, but are also full of ideologies. The candidates come to the debate forum with their respective ideologies. This ideology comes from the coalition parties with their political goals, which are reflected in the content of the ideas and narratives presented by the candidates. In this case, ideas and narratives are ideological. Through the presidential debates, the candidates convey their imaginary relationship with reality, which they call "ideal", through a series of narratives. Narratives become an important tool in instilling ideology to achieve political goals (McFate & Jackson, 2006). Candidates offer alternative perspectives on (ideological) reality and solutions to its problems in the hope of approval for political leadership from the people (Bates, 1975).

Gramsci (1971) in Langman (2015) reminds us that approval of the "way of life" offered by the ruler or ruling candidate will only be obtained when the people are in a false consciousness. In this case, the presidential debate is an effective medium to foster this false consciousness. The presidential debates limit the narrative of the future reality to a number of candidates and force the people to choose one of them. It is as if the people are not given the option to construct their own reality, but depend on one of the candidates. This makes people only able to compare the "dreams" presented in the presidential debates without having their own awareness. In the end, people only see reality from the point of view offered so that awareness of their reality becomes false.

3.5 KPU and the "oligopoly market" of identity

The market analogy in the market for loyalties framework can also be used by describing the competitive structure of the market. In general, the government as a regulator will try to maintain the identity monopoly in the market so that the loyalty level remains high (Callister, 2006). The government will regulate the sellers who can enter the market through censorship or setting barriers to entry. By keeping competition in a

monopoly, the government can maximize the price of people's loyalty to remain high. Using the supply-demand model, the governments attempt to restrict actors and impose a monopoly is to suppress the supply of identity at a low level. This makes the people as buyers only have limited choices of identity products from the government so that the level of loyalty remains high.

Unfortunately, monopoly markets are very difficult to maintain in democracies, especially during election periods. Countries with communist or absolute governments (e.g. China, North Korea, Singapore, etc.) will find it easier to implement monopolies in the information market. The government in such countries has full power to censor and restrict "sellers" from entering the market. On the other hand, Indonesia as a democracy needs to accommodate the voice of the people, including in the formation of regulations and the election of leaders. During the election period, the competitive conditions of the information market will shift due to the higher demand for identity. After 5 years of leadership, people who have high loyalty will look for similar identities or those that represent the previous government. Meanwhile, people with low loyalty try to find a new identity that represents the fate and hopes of the people for the future. This condition requires the government to regulate identity supply in the information market.

The KPU's role in organizing elections is not only limited to providing a system for selecting leaders, but also maintaining market stability during elections. In this case, the government's position is not only as a regulator, but also a "cartel" of identity producers (Price, 1994) to maintain competition. In this condition, the KPU, as a representative of the power holder, through the election procurement procedure organizes presidential debates as an effort to control market competition. The high demand for identity makes KPU unable to monopolize the market, so an oligopoly competition structure is created that focuses on a number of actors or sellers. In this case, the sellers are a coalition of parties that are power holders and potential power holders. By maintaining competition in an oligopoly structure, it will make people feel they have choices and prevent loss of loyalty due to unfulfilled demand. This effort is made by the KPU through the presidential debate by making it the main national broadcast that fulfills the supply of identity in the information market with the identity of the candidates. KPU makes the information market, which is seen through the framework of the market for loyalties, an oligopoly market as an alternative effort to monopoly to maintain people's loyalty to the power holder.

The concept of hegemony is widely used to describe the conditions of popular consent to the leadership of an oppressive government. However, hegemony is generally used to describe conditions in the current government and still few in the transition of government. Future research can use the concept of hegemony in the context of certain elections or transitions of government. In addition, the market for loyalties framework, which is generally used in the context of global communication, can also be used in the context of intra-state communication for future research.

A political reality marked by hegemonization that utilizes identity in the end does not necessarily or even tends not to improve the state of the country and the welfare of its people. This requires new theoretical efforts. Some say that leading change must be preceded by changing leadership, still democratically (Harsono, 2012). Pancasila has the guidance to do that. In the 4th precept of Pancasila, the sovereignty of the people is led by wisdom (not by someone who is considered wise) through logical tests and honesty tests on opinions or arguments (Harsono, 2007). Related to this, there is a paradigm of opinion leadership (which is precisely in accordance with Pancasila) that intends to correct the paradigm of chairman leadership that has existed for 10,000 years ago in the Neo Paleolithic era (Harsono, 2012).

3.6 The "sellers"

The market for loyalties framework uses the term seller to represent power holders. However, in the context of the presidential debate, the analogy is slightly different. In the presidential debate, the government's position is more than just a seller. The government

seems to act as a market organizer as well as a regulator. Price (1994) also mentions the government's position as a cartel of identity producers. The parties who become sellers in the context of the presidential debate are none other than the candidate pairs and their coalitions. They are considered as sellers because they enter the information flow market and have identity products as their respective trade goods. In this case, sellers are not limited to power holders, but also those who have sufficient power and identity to carry. Sellers are power holders and potential power holders.

The 2024 presidential candidate debate featured 3 coalitions that were the main sellers. The first seller was the Coalition of Change with Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar. The next seller was the Advanced Indonesia Coalition with Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka. And the last is the Coalition of Political Party Cooperation with Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD.

3.7 "Goods" of the candidates

The merchandise of sellers in the information flow market of the presidential debate is identity. As explained earlier, identity is a seller's aspiration that represents the legacy of the past and the hope for a better future (Callister, 2006). These aspirations come from the coalition background, such as the personal identities and track records of the candidates and the identities of each supporting party. These various aspirations eventually produce a new identity product represented by the figures of the presidential and vice-presidential pairs. The identity of the candidates is part of the ideology that ultimately plays a role in planting hegemony through the approval and loyalty of the people. Here the author tries to identify the identity of each candidate pair.

3.7.1 AMIN, opposition, and change

The identity of candidate number 01 Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar, known as AMIN, is based on Anies Baswedan's background as governor of DKI Jakarta, and Muhaimin or Cak Imin with his *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) background. Their identity is also formed from the supporting parties, some of which have not entered the central government and have become the opposition.



Fig 1. (a) Desak Anies in Gorontalo, (b). @aniesbubble account on X

Anies Baswedan has a strong identity as a presidential candidate. Anies Baswedan is an independent figure who is not bound or affiliated with any party. This means that before becoming a presidential candidate, Anies Baswedan already had an identity known to the public, which came from his performance as governor of DKI Jakarta in 2017-2022. A survey from Populi Center in 2022 showed that the level of satisfaction of Jakarta residents when led by Anies reached 83.5 percent (Siregar, 2022). The strong identity of Anies' figure is also shown from his personal branding shown through Instagram as a leader who is honest, smart, visionary, and a trend setter (Arnanda, 2023). In addition, one of the evidences that show the strength of Anies' figure identity is the emergence of a fan base towards him, such

as Anies Bubble (Nazma & Jamiati, 2024). Anies succeeded in attracting the political interest of critical people, especially young people, through the Anies Desak program. Even so, negative sentiments towards his identity are still attached, such as the public's opinion that Anies often uses identity politics (Gainous & Wagner, 2014; Sari, 2016; Triantoro, 2019). In addition, the blasphemy case experienced by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama a.k.a. Ahok was the background for Anies' election as governor of DKI Jakarta. This makes Anies often associated with extreme religious organizations that previously brought down Ahok (Sari, 2016).



Fig. 2. (a) NU's Support for Anies-Cak Imin, (b) Anies-Cak Imin's final campaign at Jakarta International Stadium (JIS) (10/02/2024)

Unlike Anies, Cak Imin's identity is attached to the identity of the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, NU. Cak Imin is the chairman of PKB, which is also based on the organization. This identity is strongly attached, even Cak Imin himself said,

"So if there are people from NU, not voting for the original NU sing (the original) means kebangetan (outrageous)" (CNN Indonesia, 2024).

Paslon 01 has great potential to gain votes (loyalty) from the NU identity base. This is because data from the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2019 states that 159 million Indonesians claim to be NU. That is equal to 56.9 percent of Indonesia's population (Taufani, 2024). With this NU base, it strengthens the religious identity of candidate 01, especially Islam.

Coalition parties also contribute to identity. When viewed, the coalition parties in candidate 01 are mostly parties that have a religious identity, such as PKS (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*), PKB (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*) and *Partai Ummat*. This strengthens the impression of religiosity in the identity of candidate 01. In addition, the parties of coalition 01, except for PKB, are parties that are not included in the current government cabinet. Even PKS is a party that is known for being consistent in opposing the government. This also encourages the narrative of change in the identity of candidate 01 (Al-Arif, 2024).

Apart from the figures of Anies and Cak Imin and the background of the coalition parties, the narrative of change also became the identity of candidate 01. The coalition of opposition parties, religious identity, and association with extremist groups made the candidate 01 coalition seen as "opposing" the government and demanding change. Even the narrative of change also became the name of this coalition, namely the Coalition of Change. Through the narrative of change, candidate 01 represents people who are dissatisfied with the previous government. The identity element in this narrative of change can be assumed to be the ideology of candidate 01. In this case, the identity of candidate 01 is an identity that will be bought by people who have low loyalty to the previous government.

3.7.2 Prabowo-Gibran, Jokowi, and sustainability

The Advanced Indonesia Coalition, which carries the candidates Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, is interesting to discuss. The reason is that Prabowo is back in the

presidential election arena after previously becoming a presidential candidate twice in a row in 2014 and 2019. In addition, Gibran, who is the son of President Jokowi and the youngest vice-presidential candidate in Indonesia's history, represents the identity of youth, which is the largest group of voters in the 2024 election (Muhamad, 2023).



Fig. 3. (a) Prabowo dancing during campaign, (b) visualization of Prabowo's AI image

Prabowo Subianto was initially known as a patriotic and assertive figure (Abdurrohman, 2024). The patriotism and assertiveness came from his TNI background. Prabowo used this identity in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections. However, in the 2024 election Prabowo comes with a different identity, which is nicknamed "gemoy", which is the current youth slang for the word "gemas". Following the trend of young people, Prabowo is represented with all aspects of the present, such as his and Gibran's images made using artificial intelligence (AI), using TikTok media trend songs as campaign songs, and doing dance moves during campaigns or in forums. Even Prabowo, who is known for his temperament, was framed as a low-profile leader. For example, Gerindra's Instagram post shows Prabowo's "dancing" gesture with the caption "slandered and still relaxed" (Abdurrohman, 2024). This change was widely highlighted and favored by the people because Prabowo's re-branding strategy succeeded in bringing people to feel closer to him.

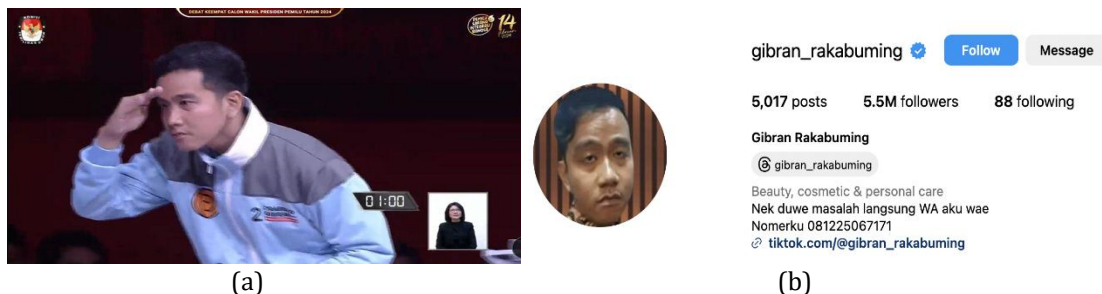


Fig. 4. (a) Gibran's Instagram, (b) Gibran's Instagram account

Meanwhile, Gibran's figure in this contestation began with a polemic regarding ethics. The reason is that the KPU processed Gibran's registration as a vice president even though he was not yet 40 years old, which is contrary to Article 169 letter q of Law Number 7 Year 2017 concerning General Elections.

Election Organizer Honorary Council/*Dewan Kehormatan Penyelenggara Pemilu* (DKPP) has imposed a stern warning on the KPU chairman and other KPU members, Gibran still managed to advance as the vice-presidential candidate of candidate 02. In addition to the ethical issues of Gibran's candidacy, Gibran's ethics and attitude during the vice-presidential debate were also busy being discussed by the public. This was caused by Gibran's choice of diction that was not commonly used during the presidential-vice-presidential debate. Gibran's attitude towards Mahfud MD who asked about the diction was also in the spotlight because it was considered unethical and impolite. However, Gibran's supporters see it as a form of young people who are competent with their knowledge. In addition, Gibran as the youngest vice-presidential candidate in Indonesia's history is considered to be able to bridge the gap between young voters and potential leaders (Putri

& Ahmad, 2024). This "young person" identity is also displayed by Gibran in his social media who uses "odd" profile pictures, posts memes, and replies to netizen comments.



Fig. 5. (a) Jokowi says the president has the right to campaign, (b) Iriana caught on camera to brandishing the 2-finger symbol

Although Prabowo and Gibran contribute their own identities, the main identity of candidate 02 comes from Jokowi. Previous research has proven Jokowi's strong influence on candidate electability (Hakim & Sejati, 2024; Ihsanuddin, 2024). Jokowi's outgoing, *low profile* and down-to-earth figure gives him a strong affinity with the people. Some people feel that Jokowi is part of them. In addition, Jokowi's image has been built for eleven years, even since Jokowi was still the mayor of Solo until he served as president for 2 periods. Surveys show that people's satisfaction with Jokowi's government reached 76.6 percent (Farisa, 2024). There is even an "ideology" that seems to glorify the figure of Jokowi called *Jokowism* (Utomo, 2024). In fact, one of the parties supporting the coalition, the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI), uses this ideology as its party ideology to continue Jokowi's legacy (PSI, 2023). Although *Jokowism* is actually just a political term that describes the polarization of leadership, people's loyalty to Jokowi's figure is very high. Therefore, Prabowo, who became close to Jokowi after the 2019 presidential election, by entering the cabinet, and Gibran, who is none other than his eldest son, can be seen as Jokowi's successor. Jokowi also intervened in the candidate 02's campaign. By bringing the figure of Jokowi, the narrative of sustainability is a great strength of candidate 02 (Al-Arif, 2024).

For candidate 02, the identity of sustainability is the main trade item. Indirectly, the identity of candidate 02 is the identity of the government that was running at the time of, namely the Jokowi presidential administration. The narrative of sustainability is the main identity element that can be assumed as an ideology that creates a false awareness of the people to feel that they are still being led by the Jokowi government. The people's high loyalty to the previous government will be given back to candidate 02 who expects a sustainable future from the Jokowi government.

3.7.3 Ganjar-Mahfud, PDIP, and the incumbent

The candidate pair of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD is a pair carried by the PDIP party. PDIP has been the incumbent party that won 2 consecutive presidential elections in 2014 and 2019. However, in the 2024 presidential election it seems that the influence of this identity is not so great to gain the loyalty of the people (Amalia et al., 2024).

Ganjar Pranowo became known and admired by the public when he became the Governor of Central Java. Previously, Ganjar was assigned as a member of the House of Representatives from the PDIP faction for several periods. During his time as Governor of Central Java, his "*blusukan*" activities as governor were always documented and uploaded to social media, making people start to recognize Ganjar. Having an identity similar to that of Jokowi in the past, people have the impression that Ganjar is a people's leader. Supported by his words that repeatedly say "my master is the people, the governor is only a mandate"

makes people feel close to him (Probowati, 2021). With this identity, Ganjar ranked first, beating Prabowo and Anies Baswedan with 29.5% in the National Survey Institute's electability survey in June 2022 (Hidayat & Muksin, 2023). Nevertheless, Ganjar is often associated with the Wadas case that occurred in 2022 despite claiming that the case has been resolved. In addition, Ganjar's ablution and congregational prayer advertisements on RCTI and MNC TV that aired before the election were also widely discussed because they were considered to be practicing identity politics.

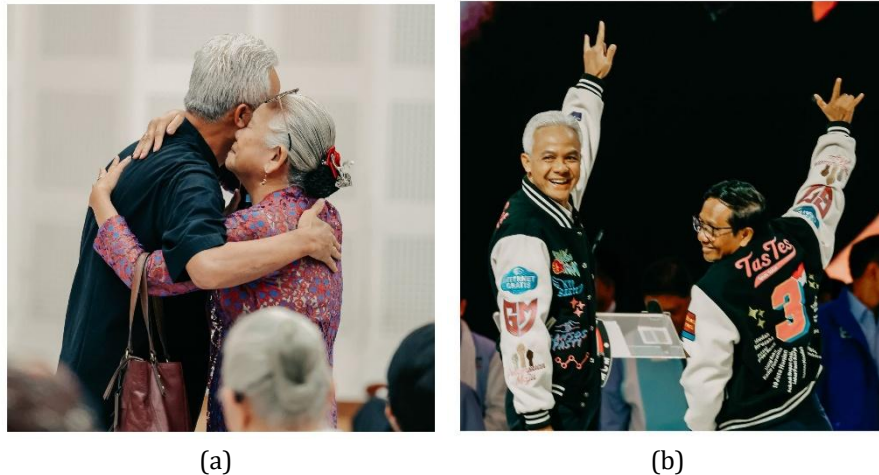


Fig. 6. (a) Ganjar hugging his supporter, (b) Ganjar and Mahfud MD at Presidential and Vice-Presidential Debate 2024

Mahfud MD was nominated by PDIP to be the Vice-Presidential Candidate of Ganjar Pranowo. PDIP as the incumbent party previously endorsed a *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) figure, KH Ma'ruf Amin, to be Jokowi's vice president in the 2019 election. This time, PDIP endorsed Mahfud MD who is considered to have a clean track record and has good judgment from the people (Antony & Candra, 2024). Mahfud MD is known as a Professor of the Faculty of Law at the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII) Yogyakarta and several times in the Indonesian Ministry. Mahfud MD served as the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs who later resigned on the grounds of maintaining integrity because he had participated in the 2024 election contestation as the vice-presidential candidate for candidate 03.

The strength of PDIP as the party supporting Ganjar-Mahfud is not in doubt from year to year. However, in the previous two presidential election periods, PDIP's victory was due to the people's loyalty to Jokowi. In the 2024 presidential election, the relationship between PDIP and Jokowi was rumored to be strained due to internal conflicts. There was information circulating from several media outlets in Indonesia that President Jokowi and his family were hurt by the PDIP for being the party that supported him. People were also busy talking about it on social media by uploading a video of Megawati which was considered to underestimate President Jokowi. In addition, Jokowi's considerable influence in endorsing his son as the vice president of candidate 02 also further validated the people's perception that the relationship between PDIP and Jokowi was not good. Several times PDIP held *rakernas* and Jokowi did not attend. With this condition, there is a dualism of people's loyalty to Jokowi or PDIP. Jokowi, who was initially nominated by the PDIP and received support from the PDIP voter base, suddenly changed coalition parties because of Gibran's nomination as candidate 02. As a result, Jokowi supporters, PDIP voters, or Jokowi supporters based on PDIP must be divided.

The identity of candidate 03 as an incumbent who is accompanied by the figures of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD is not strong enough to match the identity of the other two candidates. People's loyalty is more attached to the figure of Jokowi than PDIP. In addition, people with low loyalty to the government are more interested in buying the 01 identity

that offers change. PDIP's decade-long incumbent identity can be assumed to be this candidate's ideology.

4. Conclusions

Presidential debates are not just a place to present visions, missions and work programs. Behind it, there are political motives and efforts to gain legitimacy for power and obedience from the people. The 2024 presidential debate also involved three candidates with different goals and identities. By looking at the efforts to instill hegemony and using the market for loyalties framework, it can be seen how the 2024 presidential debate is an effective medium for instilling hegemony through the identity of the candidate pairs.

Rulers and candidates for rulers instill hegemony through narratives that create a false consciousness of the people. The candidates and coalition parties have their own ideological identities and political goals. The KPU, as part of the power holders, held the 2024 presidential debate to limit the people's reality to the 3 existing candidates. The people are made to only be able to choose one narrative about reality-work programs, political promises, and the future when they are led—that is delivered by the candidates during the debate. People are restricted from being able to construct their own reality so that they are forced to live in the pseudo-consciousness of the candidate pairs. Under these conditions, the people will give their consent to the candidate to achieve their political goals through legitimacy to be led (hegemony).

The market for loyalties framework analogizes the 2024 presidential debate to a market with buying and selling activities. The candidates are sellers who sell identities to the people to be bought with loyalties. Identity represents the candidate's aspirations in the form of background heritage and hopes for the future. The identity of candidate 01 represents Anies' background figure, religious groups, and opposition ideas for the future of change. Meanwhile, the identity of candidate 02 represents the figure of Prabowo (patriotic and gemoy), the youth group, and loyalty to Jokowi with a future of sustainability. Finally, the 03 identity represents the figures of Ganjar and Mahfud MD and PDIP with the future of incumbency. The identities of the candidates can be assumed as ideologies used to instill hegemony and gain consent to be led by the people.

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