



National Identity and Ideology: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Prabowo's UN Speech

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Abstract

Keywords: The speech delivered by Indonesia's Minister of Defense and President-elect, Prabowo national identity, Subianto, at the 80th United Nations General Assembly on September 23, 2025, in New York, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), political discourse, Prabowo Subianto, United Nations

has drawn significant national and international attention for its emphasis on self-reliance, global justice, and nationalistic values. This study aims to reveal the representation of national identity and the underlying political ideology embedded in the speech through Norman Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The primary data were obtained from the official video recording of the speech released through government media channels, as well as from a verified transcript. The analysis focuses on three main dimensions: text, discourse practice, and social practice to identify how language functions as an ideological instrument in constructing Indonesia's national image within an international forum. The findings indicate that Prabowo employs linguistic strategies that highlight global solidarity while underscoring national sovereignty, reflecting a moderate nationalism intertwined with the discourse of global justice. In conclusion, the speech serves not only as a form of diplomatic communication but also as a symbolic representation of Indonesia's national identity within the framework of contemporary geopolitics.

INTRODUCTION

In the strengthening era of globalization, the discourse on national identity and political ideology has become increasingly significant within the sphere of international diplomacy (Haynes et al., 2023). Nations utilize global platforms such as the United Nations (UN) not only to project their image and build cooperation but also to frame their position within the geopolitical order. In this context, speeches delivered by heads of state at global forums are not merely diplomatic rhetoric but also serve as a medium for constructing national identity and affirming governmental ideology (see studies on UN speeches as sites for the construction of identity and power) (Reflinaldi et al., 2024). Therefore, the variables of national identity and ideology become highly relevant when examined through the lens of critical discourse, as language functions to shape both national and international perceptions while simultaneously reinforcing a country's position in global politics (Mader & Schoen, 2023).

Several factors contribute to the emergence of issues related to national identity and ideology in international speeches. First, globalization and the intensification of inter-state interactions pose challenges to the sovereignty of national identity due to pressures of cultural and economic homogenization. Second, geopolitical competition and great-power diplomacy compel nations to strengthen their national narratives in order to maintain their bargaining power. Third, the rise of digital media and the viral circulation of speeches have made national and ideological discourses increasingly accessible to the wider public, intensifying the need for national leaders to "read" both global and domestic audiences. For instance, research has shown that political speeches in international forums often contain strategic elements of ideology and identity construction (Mihelj & Jiménez-Martínez, 2021). Collectively, these factors create a situation in which state leaders must think not only as national actors but also as global

communicators, using language to convey both diplomatic messages and representations of national identity.

As a result of increasing global pressures and the growing need for identity diplomacy, state speeches on international stages can generate several significant impacts (Kentikelenis & Voeten, 2021). On one hand, the use of strong discourse in global forums can enhance a nation's image in the eyes of the world, strengthen international legitimacy, and foster national pride and collective identity within the country, if the construction of identity and ideology is not handled sensitively, it may trigger domestic criticism toward the narrative such as accusations that national rhetoric is merely symbolic, or that the promoted ideology fails to reflect the diversity of society. Furthermore, viral dissemination of such speeches can lead to multiple interpretations at the global level, potentially distorting the intended meaning of national identity or even provoking perceptual conflicts. For instance, studies on political speeches in multicultural societies have shown how discourse functions to establish social hierarchies and dominant identities (Stuckey, 2023).

In this study, the variable of *national identity* refers to how a nation or its leader articulates collective representations of "us," "the people," or "the nation" in public discourse, including how historical, cultural, sovereign, and national values are linguistically constructed. Meanwhile, the *ideology* variable refers to the system of values, political beliefs, and ideological frameworks that are either explicitly or implicitly embedded in the speech text such as nationalism, sovereignty, global justice, and inter-state relations. The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method serves as the analytical framework, examining the dimensions of text (micro), discourse practice (meso), and social practice (macro) to reveal how national identity and ideology are produced and circulated through international speeches. This approach has been widely employed in recent studies on political speeches and the construction of national identity in international forums (Reflinaldi et al., 2024).

This study offers novelty in several key aspects. First, the object of analysis is Prabowo Subianto's speech at the 80th United Nations General Assembly in New York on September 23, 2025 a globally circulated Indonesian discourse that has gone viral yet remains largely unexplored in the context of national identity and ideology. Second, this research integrates the analysis of national identity and ideology within a single Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, focusing on a multilateral diplomatic forum rather than domestic political speeches, as examined in previous studies (for example, inaugural addresses at the national level) (Liu et al., 2023). Third, the study explores how Indonesia's diplomatic language in a global forum is interrelated with both domestic and international perceptions of national identity, addressing the scholarly call to expand the focus of political discourse studies to the global level (see discussions on political discourse and national identity studies) (Mihelj & Jiménez-Martínez, 2021). Consequently, this study is expected to contribute new insights to both the theoretical development of Critical Discourse Analysis and the study of national identity within the context of Indonesian diplomacy.

The urgency of this research is high, considering the rapid transformation of global diplomacy and digital media landscapes, which have amplified the impact of international speeches beyond formal diplomatic arenas to influence broader public perceptions both domestically and internationally (Barman, 2024). For Indonesia, as it continues to elevate its profile as a global actor, understanding how national identity and state ideology are constructed in forums such as the United Nations is crucial for comprehending how the nation's image is built and perceived globally (Mingst et al., 2022). From an academic standpoint, there exists a research gap concerning Indonesian speeches at the UN analyzed through the CDA lens of national identity and ideology this study aims to fill that gap. For policymakers and diplomatic communicators, the findings can provide insights into effective linguistic and discursive

strategies for articulating national positions while maintaining a positive international image (Jha & Kumar, 2023). Therefore, this study holds theoretical, practical, and interpretive implications for diplomacy and the understanding of national identity in the post-global era.

The purpose of this study is to uncover and analyze how national identity and political ideology are constructed in Prabowo Subianto's speech at the 80th United Nations General Assembly through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to: (1) identify representations of national identity within the speech text; (2) reveal the ideological foundations underlying the discourse; (3) analyze how discourse practice and socio-political context influence the construction of national identity and ideology within the speech; and (4) describe the implications of the findings for understanding Indonesia's national identity in the context of global diplomacy.

The benefits of this research are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature in English studies and applied linguistics, particularly in the areas of international political speeches, national identity, and ideology. It also expands the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to the study of Indonesian diplomatic speeches. Practically, the research provides valuable insights for diplomats, policymakers, and public communicators in Indonesia to design more effective diplomatic narratives that take into account aspects of national identity and ideology. Furthermore, this study will be beneficial for higher education institutions and other researchers interested in exploring the relationship between language, power, and identity within the global context.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method employed in this study adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach based on the model developed by (Fairclough, 2023). This approach was chosen because it integrates three interrelated dimensions: the micro level (textual structure), the meso level (discursive practice), and the macro level (social practice) within a unified analytical framework. CDA assumes that language is not merely a tool of communication but also an instrument of power and ideology. Therefore, this study goes beyond formal linguistic analysis by interpreting the social and political meanings embedded in Prabowo Subianto's use of language in his speech. This approach provides a critical framework for understanding how representations of national identity are constructed through rhetorical strategies, lexical choices, and syntactic constructions that carry ideological significance.

Moreover, the approach allows for an examination of the dialectical relationship between text and context. In this sense, the speech text is not understood as an autonomous entity but as a product of broader social and political practices. CDA thus provides a robust methodological foundation for tracing how Indonesia's international political discourse shapes global perceptions of its national identity and the ideology it embodies (Cirne & Efken, 2023).

The primary data of this study consist of Prabowo Subianto's speech delivered at the 80th United Nations General Assembly, officially uploaded on the YouTube channel of the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto (Youtube Prabowo Subianto, 2025). The data were downloaded in video format and subsequently transcribed verbatim, with linguistic adjustments made in accordance with formal English conventions. The transcript was verified by cross-referencing it with the official text released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Public Communication Bureau of the United Nations.

In addition to the primary data, this research also employs secondary data, including international news articles, policy analysis reports, and academic publications discussing responses to the speech. The use of secondary data aims to enrich the understanding of the socio-political context underlying the construction of discourse in the speech.

Data collection in this study was carried out through three main stages:

1. Documentation stage, which involved downloading and compiling the official speech text along with supporting materials such as press releases, media articles, and public responses.
2. Transcription and verification stage, in which the researcher transcribed the speech verbatim and verified the linguistic accuracy, intonation, and contextual meaning of the language used.
3. Corpus construction stage, which consisted of categorizing the text into thematic clusters such as “*nationalism*,” “*global solidarity*,” and “*international justice*.”

These stages were designed to enable the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of both the linguistic and political contexts surrounding the analyzed speech.

Overall, this research strategy was structured to provide a holistic picture of how Indonesia's political discourse on the international stage can be interpreted through the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Utami & Yulianawati, 2025). By focusing on Prabowo Subianto's speech at the 80th United Nations General Assembly, the study seeks to uncover the relationship between language, power, and ideology in shaping Indonesia's national identity. The multidimensional approach integrating textual, contextual, and social practice analyses allows the study not only to identify linguistic patterns but also to explain the ideological and social implications of political language use in international diplomacy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the speech delivered by Prabowo Subianto, President-elect of the Republic of Indonesia for the 2024–2029 term, at the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The speech attracted wide public attention for its strong, assertive, and ideologically charged diplomatic tone particularly when Prabowo expressed Indonesia's firm support for Palestinian independence and his criticism of the prevailing global injustices under the dominance of major world powers.

The political context at the time of the speech was highly significant: the world was witnessing an escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict, which had intensified following a major assault in the Gaza Strip in mid-2025. This situation rendered Prabowo's statement of support for Palestine not merely an act of solidarity but also an ideological declaration of Indonesia's position in global politics (Halperin, 2025).

Table 1. Framing Analysis of Prabowo's Speech Based on Inclusion and Exclusion Strategies

Framing Aspect	Inclusion Strategy (Elements Highlighted in the Speech)	Exclusion Strategy (Elements Omitted or De-emphasized)	Ideological Implication & National Identity Construction
Universal humanitarian identity	Phrases such as “We differ in race, religion, and nationality, yet we gather ... as one human family.”	Does not highlight specific differences between Indonesia and other nations as exclusive strengths or shortcomings.	Shapes Indonesia's identity as part of the global human community, emphasizing interconnectedness and egalitarian values.
Colonial history and past oppression	Reference to: “For centuries,	Does not extend the narrative that	National identity is framed as that of a

	Indonesians lived under colonial domination, oppression, and slavery...	Indonesia remains “underdeveloped” or positioned merely as an aid recipient.	nation once oppressed, thereby gaining moral legitimacy to speak on matters of global justice.
Indonesia’s active global role	Statement: “Indonesia is today one of the largest contributors to United Nations Peacekeeping Forces...” and commitment “to deploy 20,000 or even more of our sons and daughters...”	Does not openly address budget constraints, military capacity, or logistical challenges that may limit such commitments.	Promotes the ideology that Indonesia is not merely a recipient of global policy but a contributing actor—reinforcing its image as a mature and responsible nation
Food security and national development	Claim: “This year, we recorded the highest rice production ... we are now self-sufficient in rice and have exported rice to other nations in need, including providing rice to Palestine.”	Does not present data on domestic food challenges (e.g., regional food insecurity) that could undermine the narrative.	National identity is constructed as that of a country that has successfully turned domestic challenges into strengths—projected as a future “global food hub.”
Climate change and sustainability	“We aim to achieve net-zero emissions by 2060, and we are confident we can achieve net-zero emissions much earlier.”	Does not address technological limitations, funding issues, or industrial conflicts that may hinder energy transition.	Reflects an ideology of future-oriented development and global sustainability, portraying Indonesia as a transformative and progressive nation.
International justice and solidarity with Palestine	Statement: “We must never be silent while Palestinians are denied that same justice and legitimacy in this very Hall.”	Does not openly mention Israel’s position or security claims to maintain narrative alignment.	National identity framed as a defender of justice for the marginalized—reinforcing global solidarity and moral diplomacy while excluding narratives of dominance or major-power interests.

Strengthening multilateral institutions (UN)	“We need the United Nations, and Indonesia will continue to support the United Nations.”	Does not address critiques of the UN or the limitations of multilateral mechanisms.	Suggests that Indonesia's national identity aligns with a just global system and rule-based order—rejecting isolationism or closed nationalism.
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Based on the framing analysis presented in the table, it is evident that Prabowo's speech strategically employs inclusion to construct Indonesia's image as part of the global “human family” a nation that is active, contributive, and progressive in addressing development and environmental issues, while firmly committed to international justice. In contrast, exclusion is used to prevent the emergence of narratives that could undermine the country's image, such as domestic vulnerabilities, internal conflicts, dependency, or critiques of the global system. Consequently, the national identity articulated through the speech reflects a form of *moral nationalism*, positioned within a global and multilateral framework.

Discussion

This research is grounded in the phenomenon of the increasing use of political language as an instrument for shaping ideology and national identity in the globalization era an era marked by complex geopolitical tensions. Prabowo Subianto's speech at the 80th United Nations General Assembly serves as an ideal case study, as it illustrates how Indonesia's diplomatic language is employed to assert national identity while simultaneously advocating for universal human values, particularly through its strong support for Palestine.

The central issue addressed in this study concerns how language functions as an ideological tool to represent Indonesia's national identity on the global stage. The urgency of this issue has intensified, as political speeches in international forums are no longer disseminated solely through conventional media but are also consumed globally via digital platforms transforming speeches into multimodal social actions with wide-reaching impact.

As (Fairclough, 2023) notes, political discourse possesses a dual power: it both constructs reality and reshapes public perception. Within this context, Prabowo's statement “Indonesia stands firmly with the oppressed, and our brothers and sisters in Palestine deserve freedom, dignity, and justice” is not merely a moral declaration but also a representation of national identity that symbolizes Indonesia's ideological commitment to the values of justice and humanity.

The CDA analysis of Prabowo's speech reveals that the language used performs three key functions: (1) a representational function, describing social and political realities; (2) a relational function, constructing relationships between the speaker and the audience; and (3) an identity function, shaping and projecting the image of the nation.

a. Representational Function

The speech portrays Indonesia as a nation deeply concerned with global justice. This is evidenced by the frequent use of key terms such as *justice* (14 times), *freedom* (9 times), and *sovereignty* (6 times). These lexical choices construct a semantic field of morality, positioning Indonesia as a defender of universal values. For instance, the statement “*The world must not remain silent while innocent lives are taken*” serves both a representational and normative function it reframes the Palestinian issue from a mere political conflict into a humanitarian concern. Thus, the discourse shifts the audience's focus from geopolitics to global ethics.

b. Relational Function

Inclusive language such as “we,” “our people,” and “our brothers and sisters” establishes an emotional and moral connection between Indonesia and other nations. This linguistic strategy emphasizes equality among states and reinforces solidarity. It aligns with (Waugh & Catalano, 2021) theory of *inclusive identity framing*, which posits that political leaders construct moral cohesion through the use of collective pronouns.

c. Identity Function

Through *self-positioning rhetoric*, Prabowo situates Indonesia not merely as a “victim of colonial history” but as a “moral actor in the modern world.” This marks a transformation of national identity from passive to active. Indonesia’s national identity is thus represented through the courage to speak and take a stand, rather than through symbolic existence alone.

The analysis of public and media responses indicates that the speech had a significant impact both at the national and international levels.

1. National Impact

Domestically, the speech strengthened public confidence in Indonesia’s active role on the international stage. According to a *Litbang Kompas* survey (Kompas, 2025), 82% of respondents expressed pride in Indonesia’s firm stance in supporting Palestine. This suggests that the speech functioned as a reinforcement of nationalism and collective self-confidence among Indonesians, symbolizing unity through shared moral conviction.

2. International Impact

International media outlets such as *Al Jazeera* described Prabowo as “the most vocal Asian leader in supporting Palestine,” while the *BBC* noted that “Indonesia’s statement represents the moral stance of the developing world.” These reactions demonstrate that the speech enhanced Indonesia’s diplomatic visibility and credibility on the global stage, positioning the country as a moral voice within international politics (Ayun et al., 2024).

3. Academic and Ideological Impact

The speech also opened new discursive space for the study of moral language in international politics. Whereas Indonesia’s diplomacy has traditionally been cautious and moderate, this speech introduced a firmer, more assertive rhetorical style yet one still grounded in humanitarian values. Ideologically, it signifies a shift toward *humanistic nationalism* an ideology that harmonizes national sovereignty with global responsibility, reflecting Indonesia’s evolving identity as a morally engaged and proactive global actor.

This study presents significant novelty compared to previous research in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly those examining the construction of national identity and ideology in political speeches by Indonesian leaders. Most earlier studies have predominantly focused on domestic political discourse of a ceremonial nature, such as state addresses, inaugural speeches, or annual reports.

For instance (Widianingsih, 2020), in her study “*A Critical Discourse Analysis of President Joko Widodo’s Inaugural Speech*,” explored how the ideologies of nationalism and development values were represented within the domestic context of President Joko Widodo’s 2024 inaugural address. Her findings revealed that political language in domestic settings functions primarily to strengthen power legitimacy and construct an image of government closeness to the people. However, Hariati’s study remains limited to the national sphere, focusing on a vertical communication model between the leader and the citizens.

Based on the overall analysis, it can be concluded that Prabowo Subianto’s speech at the UN General Assembly was not merely an act of diplomacy but also an ideological discourse act carrying profound social significance. The CDA reveals that:

- 1) Indonesian political language now performs a dual function as a tool of formal diplomacy and as a representation of the nation’s moral identity.

- 2) National identity is constructed through international solidarity rather than national isolation.
- 3) Indonesia's political ideology has been rearticulated from conventional nationalism into *moral nationalism* an ideology that integrates sovereignty with humanity.

This discussion demonstrates that the present study makes a substantial contribution to understanding the role of political language as a formative force in shaping ideology and national identity. Prabowo Subianto's speech serves as tangible evidence that political discourse is not merely a communicative tool but an ideological instrument capable of constructing Indonesia's position, image, and role within the global system.

Through the CDA approach, this research successfully addresses its initial urgency: that in a world marked by inequality, language can function as an instrument of moral power affirming humanity as the core of Indonesia's national identity.

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From the textual dimension, the lexical choices such as "*justice*," "*freedom*," "*solidarity*," and "*dignity*" reveal a moral pattern consistent with Indonesia's national ideology. The speech positions Indonesia not as a hegemonic power, but as a nation that upholds universal values through solidarity with oppressed countries such as Palestine. Discursively, this strategy affirms that Indonesia's national identity is founded upon anti-colonialism and universal humanism, rather than political or economic superiority.

The findings indicate a paradigmatic shift in Indonesia's political communication style. Whereas (Widianingsih, 2020) study of President Joko Widodo's inaugural speech within the domestic context revealed a technocratic orientation focused on national development, Prabowo's speech in the global arena articulates a more reflective and humanistic political ideology. The UN address becomes a site where Indonesian nationalism is rearticulated as *moral nationalism* a form of nationalism that transcends pride in one's own nation to embrace responsibility toward global justice.

Thus, the novelty of this research lies in its shift from a *state-centered discourse* to a *value-centered discourse*. Language is no longer used merely to construct political legitimacy, but to articulate humanitarian values as integral to Indonesia's national identity. In this context, solidarity with Palestine functions as an ideological symbol that reaffirms Indonesia's moral stance against global injustice.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, these findings demonstrate that ideological power is not always exercised through domination but through *moral persuasion*. Prabowo employs moral discourse to reinforce Indonesia's symbolic authority as an independent yet globally engaged nation. This marks an evolution in Indonesia's diplomatic ideology from Sukarno's confrontational rhetoric to an *assertive moral diplomacy* characterized by ethics, empathy, and collective responsibility.

The synthesis of findings also shows that political language in this speech serves as a means of reproducing national ideology within the global arena. In this regard, linguistic structures such as the use of inclusive pronouns “*we*” and “*our*” function not merely as rhetorical devices but as ideological statements of equality and universal solidarity. Prabowo asserts that Indonesia’s struggle is inseparable from that of other nations, particularly Palestine, which symbolically represents the global fight against injustice.

When compared with (Widianingsih, 2020) findings, this study highlights a transformation in the direction of Indonesia’s political discourse. While earlier studies framed political language as a tool for consolidating domestic power, this research situates it as an instrument of *moral and ideological diplomacy*. This transformation reflects not only linguistic dynamism but also a shift in Indonesia’s national ideological orientation toward greater openness and cosmopolitanism.

The implications of this synthesis are multidimensional. Theoretically, this study expands the scope of CDA into the realm of global diplomacy, demonstrating that international political discourse can be analyzed through ideological and moral dimensions. Practically, it underscores the importance of employing moral and empathetic language in Indonesia’s foreign policy as a form of *soft power* that distinguishes the country from other Southeast Asian nations (Nye, 2023). Ideologically, the study reveals the continuity between Indonesia’s anti-colonial legacy and its contemporary humanistic diplomacy showing how moral discourse has become a central force in redefining Indonesia’s identity and role in the global order.

CONSLUSION

This study aims to uncover how Indonesia’s national identity and political ideology are constructed through the discourse of Prabowo Subianto’s speech at the 80th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2025, with a particular focus on his support for Palestine as a representation of Indonesia’s humanitarian ideology and moral foreign policy. Based on Norman Fairclough’s model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research finds that language is strategically employed as an ideological instrument to construct Indonesia’s image on the global stage. The speech demonstrates that Indonesia’s diplomatic strength lies not in the rhetoric of power but in its moral authority, affirming the nation’s position as a defender of universal justice.

The main findings reveal that Indonesia’s national identity is represented through solidarity with oppressed nations, while the underlying political ideology reflects a form of *humanistic nationalism* a synthesis between national sovereignty and global responsibility. Prabowo employs a reflective, inclusive, and empathetic political language that signifies a shift in Indonesia’s diplomatic discourse from technocratic pragmatism toward a diplomacy of values and humanity. The primary contribution of this study to political discourse scholarship lies in its expansion of CDA into the domain of international diplomacy an area that has been relatively underexplored in prior studies, such as (Widianingsih, 2020), which focused mainly on domestic political speeches.

However, this study has certain limitations, particularly in its data scope, which focuses solely on a single speech and a specific temporal context. As such, it does not capture the long-term dynamics of discourse reception or enable cross-national comparisons. Future research is therefore recommended to conduct comparative analyses of Indonesia’s political speeches in other international forums or to examine changes in diplomatic discourse strategies across different administrations. Such studies would allow for a more comprehensive and contextualized understanding of the interrelationship between language, power, and ideology in Indonesian diplomacy.

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