

Constructing Positive Peace: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Prabowo's 2025 UNGA Speech

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Abstract

This study examines the construction of positive peace narratives in President Prabowo Subianto's speech at the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2025. Employing Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Johan Galtung's theory of Positive Peace as the analytical framework, this qualitative study analyzes the official transcript of the speech, supplemented by government documents and media reports. The findings reveal that the speech constructs peace not merely as the absence of armed conflict (negative peace) but as the presence of justice, equality, humanitarian protection, and effective multilateral cooperation. Six dominant themes emerged: justice and equality, humanitarian concerns, international cooperation, multilateralism, peacebuilding, and structural violence. The speech positions Indonesia as an active middle power and norm entrepreneur committed to a just and rules-based international order. Through its discursive strategies, the speech reinforces Indonesia's identity as a peace-promoting state and demonstrates how political discourse can contribute to global peace narratives and international legitimacy.

Keywords: Positive Peace, Critical Discourse Analysis, Prabowo Subianto, United Nations General Assembly, Political Discourse



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1. INTRODUCTION

The international political landscape in the twenty-first century continues to be shaped by armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, geopolitical rivalries, and growing challenges to the multilateral order. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza, prolonged instability in Sudan, and the resurgence of great-power competition have raised serious concerns about the effectiveness of international institutions in maintaining peace and security. In this context, political communication by state leaders in international forums plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions, constructing legitimacy, and articulating visions of peace and cooperation (Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary for State Documents & Translation, 2025b).

Political speeches delivered in multilateral forums are not merely communicative acts but also constitute discursive practices through which states construct identities, negotiate

interests, and exercise symbolic power. Language in political discourse functions not only to describe reality but also to create social meanings and reproduce ideological positions. Fairclough argues that discourse should be understood as a form of social practice in which language is closely related to power relations and the production of social realities (Fairclough, 1989, 2013). Consequently, presidential speeches delivered at the United Nations General Assembly may be interpreted not only as diplomatic statements but also as representations of broader political and ideological orientations.

Indonesia has historically positioned itself as a country committed to the promotion of world peace through the principle of an independent and active foreign policy (*politik luar negeri bebas aktif*). Since the Bandung Conference of 1955, Indonesia has consistently advocated peaceful conflict resolution, anti-colonialism, international solidarity, and multilateral cooperation. This orientation is also reflected in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, which explicitly states Indonesia's commitment to participate in establishing a world order based on freedom, lasting peace, and social justice.

Such commitments were reaffirmed in President Prabowo Subianto's address to the General Debate of the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2025. In his speech, President Prabowo emphasized the importance of international justice, humanitarian responsibility, multilateral cooperation, and the strengthening of the United Nations as a global institution. He further stated that Indonesia remained committed to internationalism and multilateralism and expressed Indonesia's readiness to contribute personnel and financial resources to United Nations peacekeeping operations in conflict areas, including Gaza and other regions affected by armed violence (Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary for State Documents & Translation, 2025b).

One of the most notable elements of the speech is its repeated emphasis on justice as an indispensable condition for peace. President Prabowo argued that the international system should not allow "the weak to suffer what they must," but rather guarantee justice for all nations regardless of their relative power. This statement reflects a broader understanding of peace that goes beyond the mere cessation of armed conflict and extends toward the establishment of a fair and equitable international order (Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary for State Documents & Translation, 2025a)

This perspective closely aligns with Johan Galtung's concept of positive peace. Galtung distinguishes between negative peace and positive peace, where negative peace refers to the absence of direct violence, whereas positive peace involves the absence of structural violence and the presence of social justice, equality, and institutions capable of sustaining peaceful relations. According to Galtung, societies may appear peaceful in the absence of war while simultaneously experiencing structural inequalities that perpetuate injustice and create

conditions for future conflicts. Therefore, sustainable peace requires not only conflict termination but also the transformation of social structures that generate violence (Galtung, 1969).

Within peace and conflict studies, the concept of positive peace has become one of the most influential analytical frameworks for understanding contemporary peacebuilding efforts. The framework has increasingly been employed to assess the resilience of societies and the capacity of institutions to prevent conflict recurrence through the promotion of justice, inclusive governance, and social cohesion. Positive peace thus represents a broader and more sustainable vision of peace than traditional security-oriented approaches (Galtung, 1969).

Previous studies examining political speeches by state leaders have predominantly focused on rhetorical strategies, political image construction, and public diplomacy. Recent research on President Prabowo Subianto's address to the United Nations General Assembly, for instance, primarily analyzed the rhetorical dimensions of ethos, pathos, and logos in the speech. However, relatively limited attention has been devoted to examining how narratives of peace are discursively constructed and how these narratives reflect broader theoretical understandings of peace within peace and conflict studies (Hendri & Faizah, 2025).

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to analyze the construction of positive peace narratives in President Prabowo Subianto's speech delivered at the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework. By combining Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse with Johan Galtung's theory of positive peace, this study aims to explain how language is employed to construct Indonesia's identity as a peace-promoting state and how concepts of justice, humanitarianism, and multilateral cooperation are articulated within Indonesia's contemporary diplomatic discourse.

Accordingly, the research question addressed in this study is: How is the narrative of positive peace constructed in President Prabowo Subianto's speech at the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2025?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using a critical paradigm. The critical paradigm assumes that social realities are constructed through discourse and that language is inseparable from relations of power, ideology, and social structures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fairclough, 2013). Therefore, political speeches are understood not merely as communicative expressions but as discursive practices through which political actors construct meanings, identities, and social realities.

The study adopted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) proposed by Norman Fairclough as the primary analytical approach. CDA enables researchers to investigate how discourse

contributes to the production and reproduction of power relations, ideological positions, and social structures within particular socio-political contexts (Fairclough, 1989).

A. Research Object and Data Sources

The object of this study was President Prabowo Subianto's speech delivered during the General Debate of the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York in September 2025.

The primary data consisted of the official transcript of the speech obtained from official government publications and publicly accessible recordings of the event. Supporting data included government press releases, media reports, and policy documents related to Indonesia's foreign policy orientation and peace diplomacy initiatives.

The use of documentary sources was considered appropriate because discourse analysis focuses primarily on texts as social products and as manifestations of broader social practices (Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

B. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study consisted of linguistic and discursive elements appearing within the speech text. These included:

1. lexical choices and vocabulary;
2. metaphors and symbolic expressions;
3. argumentative structures;
4. representations of actors and institutions;
5. recurring themes and narratives;
6. intertextual references to international norms and institutions.

Special attention was given to linguistic expressions related to peace, justice, humanitarianism, multilateralism, and international cooperation because these concepts constitute key dimensions of positive peace according to Johan Galtung.

C. Data Collection Technique

Data were collected using documentation techniques. The transcript of President Prabowo Subianto's speech was downloaded, transcribed, and converted into textual data for analysis.

The researcher subsequently conducted repeated readings of the text in order to identify significant linguistic patterns, dominant themes, and discursive strategies. Coding procedures were applied to classify textual segments according to thematic categories derived from Positive Peace theory and Critical Discourse Analysis.

The coding categories included:

- justice and equality;
- humanitarian concerns;

- international cooperation;
- multilateralism;
- peacebuilding;
- international law;
- structural violence.

D. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis followed Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework consisting of text analysis, discursive practice analysis, and social practice analysis.

1. Text Analysis

The first stage focused on the internal characteristics of the text. This included the examination of vocabulary, grammar, modality, metaphors, sentence structures, and rhetorical strategies employed by President Prabowo.

Particular attention was paid to the use of evaluative language and normative expressions that reflected Indonesia's position regarding international peace and justice.

2. Discursive Practice Analysis

The second stage examined how the discourse was produced, distributed, and consumed. This dimension analyzed the institutional context of the speech as an official presidential address delivered at the United Nations General Assembly.

The analysis also explored how Indonesia sought to position itself within global diplomatic discourse through references to multilateral cooperation, humanitarian values, and international legitimacy.

3. Social Practice Analysis

The final stage analyzed the broader socio-political context surrounding the speech. Particular attention was given to:

- ongoing geopolitical tensions;
- the humanitarian crisis in Gaza;
- debates concerning the effectiveness of multilateral institutions;
- Indonesia's foreign policy orientation under President Prabowo's administration.

This stage aimed to explain how the speech reflected and responded to contemporary global political realities.

E. Analytical Framework: Positive Peace

The findings generated through Fairclough's framework were interpreted using Johan Galtung's theory of Positive Peace.

Galtung (1969) distinguishes between negative peace, which refers to the absence of direct violence, and positive peace, which emphasizes the absence of structural violence and the presence of justice and equality.

Based on this framework, the analysis focused on identifying whether the speech constructed peace through the following dimensions:

1. justice and equality;
2. protection of human dignity;
3. international cooperation;
4. institutional legitimacy;
5. social inclusion;
6. peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms.

These dimensions served as analytical indicators for identifying the presence of positive peace narratives within the speech.

F. Trustworthiness of Data

To ensure the credibility of findings, the study employed source triangulation by comparing the official transcript with video recordings, official government statements, and media coverage related to the speech.

Additionally, theoretical triangulation was conducted through the integration of Critical Discourse Analysis and Positive Peace theory in order to strengthen interpretative validity and minimize researcher bias.

3. RESULT

A. Dominant Themes

The analysis of President Prabowo Subianto's speech at the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly reveals six main themes that consistently emerge throughout the text:

Table 1. Dominant Themes of Prabowo's Speech

Codes Category	Dominant Findings
Justice and Equality	Global justice, equality among nations, anti-oppression
Humanitarian Concerns	Palestine, civilians, famine, war trauma
International Cooperation	Global solidarity, international assistance
Multilateralism	Legitimacy of the UN, internationalism
Peacebuilding	peacekeeping, peace diplomacy
Structural Violence	Colonialism, apartheid, power imbalances

Of all these categories, the three most dominant themes are: (1) justice as a prerequisite for peace, (2) multilateralism as a mechanism for conflict resolution, and (3) Indonesia as a global peace actor.

These findings demonstrate that Prabowo's speech does not construct peace merely as the absence of war (negative peace), but rather as the presence of justice, equality, and effective international institutions (positive peace).

B. Text Analysis

1. Lexical Choices and Vocabulary

The speech delivered by President Prabowo Subianto at the 80th United Nations General Assembly was characterized by the intensive use of normative and moral vocabulary associated with peace discourse. Terms such as peace, justice, humanity, solidarity, multilateralism, human dignity, international law, and equality appeared repeatedly throughout the speech and formed its central semantic framework.

For example, Prabowo stated that:

"We gather together as one human family" (Subianto, 2025).

and emphasized that:

"Each created equal, endowed with unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness " (Subianto, 2025).

These lexical choices construct a universalistic and cosmopolitan identity that transcends national boundaries and political divisions. Rather than emphasizing state sovereignty or national interests, the discourse foregrounds humanity as the primary referent object of security and justice.

From the perspective of Positive Peace theory, such vocabulary reflects Galtung's understanding that sustainable peace requires the presence of justice, equality, and social inclusion rather than merely the absence of armed conflict (Galtung, 1969).

2. Representation of Actors and Institutions

The speech presents a relatively clear discursive representation of international actors and institutions.

The United Nations is represented as the primary source of international legitimacy and collective security, while Indonesia is portrayed as a constructive contributor to global peace and humanitarian efforts. Palestine is represented as a victim of injustice and structural inequality, whereas major powers are implicitly positioned as actors carrying historical and moral responsibilities.

This representation is particularly visible in Prabowo's declaration that:

"Indonesia is prepared to deploy 20,000 or even more of our sons and daughters to help secure peace in Gaza or elsewhere" (Subianto, 2025).

Discursively, this statement performs more than a policy announcement. It functions as what communication scholars describe as performative diplomacy, whereby language itself creates political identities and international roles. Through this discourse, Indonesia is positioned not as a passive recipient of international assistance but as an active provider of global public goods.

3. Modality and Normative Commitment

(Fairclough, 2013) argues that modality reveals the speaker's degree of commitment, authority, and certainty toward particular propositions. The speech contains numerous examples of high modality expressions such as must, cannot, should, and have to.

Examples include:

"We must not give up" (Subianto, 2025).

and

"We will never be silent" (Subianto, 2025).

The extensive use of strong modality indicates that Indonesia seeks to articulate not merely political preferences but normative obligations regarding international peace and justice. Such linguistic constructions contribute to the production of moral authority and ideological legitimacy within global diplomatic discourse.

4. Metaphors and Symbolic Expressions

The speech employs several important metaphors that contribute to the construction of political meaning.

One notable example is the statement:

"The United Nations was born from the ashes of the Second World War" (Subianto, 2025).

The metaphor of "ashes" evokes historical trauma and collective memory, thereby reinforcing the moral responsibility of international institutions to prevent future violence.

Similarly, the metaphor of the "human family" constructs a cosmopolitan political community in which moral obligations extend beyond state borders.

Another important intertextual reference appears through Prabowo's citation of Thucydides:

"The strong do what they can, the weak suffer what they must" (Subianto, 2025).

The speech explicitly rejects this realist understanding of international politics and instead promotes a normative international order based on justice, equality, and legal legitimacy.

5. Argumentative Structure

The speech follows a coherent narrative structure that can be summarized as follows:

- a. Indonesia experienced colonial domination and injustice.
- b. International solidarity contributed significantly to Indonesia's independence and development.
- c. The United Nations played an important role in Indonesia's post-colonial development.
- d. Consequently, Indonesia has a moral obligation to contribute to international peace and humanitarian protection.

This argumentative pattern creates a discourse of historical reciprocity in which past assistance generates present responsibility. Such a strategy strengthens Indonesia's legitimacy as an advocate of global peace and multilateral cooperation.

C. Discursive Practice Analysis

1. Production of Discourse

The speech was produced within the institutional context of the United Nations General Assembly, one of the most important arenas of global political communication.

Therefore, the speech should not be interpreted solely as an individual expression of President Prabowo's political views but rather as an official representation of Indonesian foreign policy orientation and diplomatic identity.

The institutional setting significantly shapes the discourse by encouraging references to international law, multilateral cooperation, and collective responsibility.

2. Intertextuality

Fairclough emphasizes that discourse is inherently intertextual, meaning that texts derive meaning from their relationships with other texts and discourses (Fairclough, 2013).

Prabowo's speech incorporates multiple intertextual references, including:

- the United States Declaration of Independence;
- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948);
- Thucydides' realist tradition;
- the Paris Climate Agreement (2015);
- the founding principles of the United Nations.

These references serve to strengthen Indonesia's claims by embedding them within widely accepted international norms and historical narratives.

The strategy simultaneously positions Indonesia as a norm entrepreneur, namely a state actively engaged in promoting and disseminating international norms (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

3. Consumption of Discourse

The discourse was directed toward multiple audiences operating at different levels.

International audiences include member states, international organizations, and global media institutions. Domestic audiences include Indonesian citizens and political elites observing Indonesia's role on the international stage.

For international audiences, the speech constructs Indonesia as a responsible middle power committed to peacekeeping, humanitarianism, and multilateral cooperation.

For domestic audiences, the speech contributes to the construction of national prestige and international status under the new administration.

D. Social Practice Analysis

1. Crisis of Multilateralism

The speech emerged within a broader international context characterized by increasing skepticism regarding the effectiveness of multilateral institutions.

The ongoing wars in Gaza and Ukraine, strategic competition between major powers, and growing geopolitical fragmentation have generated concerns regarding the capacity of international institutions to maintain peace and security.

Against this backdrop, Prabowo's repeated emphasis on strengthening the United Nations represents a discursive defense of multilateralism:

"With a strong UN, we can build a world" (Subianto, 2025).

The speech therefore functions as an intervention within contemporary debates concerning the future of global governance.

2. Gaza and Structural Violence

One of the central themes of the speech concerns the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

From Galtung's perspective, the suffering experienced by Palestinians cannot be understood solely as direct violence but must also be interpreted as structural violence resulting from unequal political, legal, and economic arrangements (Galtung, 1969).

Prabowo stated:

"Innocent are crying out for help" (Subianto, 2025).

This expressions frame the crisis not merely as a military conflict but as a humanitarian and moral failure of the international system.

3. Indonesia's Foreign Policy Orientation under Prabowo

The speech indicates a significant evolution in Indonesia's international identity.

Historically, Indonesian foreign policy has been associated with the doctrine of *bebas dan aktif* (free and active foreign policy). However, the speech suggests a transition toward a more assertive form of middle-power diplomacy characterized by peacekeeping contributions, humanitarian engagement, and active participation in international governance.

The offer to deploy peacekeeping forces and provide financial support for UN operations demonstrates Indonesia's intention to become not only a normative advocate but also a material contributor to global peace efforts.

E. Positive Peace Interpretation

Table 2. Positive Peace Dimensions in Speech

Positive Peace Dimension	Evidence in Speech
Justice and Equality	The assertion that "all human beings are created equal."
Human Dignity	Advocacy for the protection of civilians in Gaza.
International Cooperation	Support for the United Nations and collective international action.
Institutional Legitimacy	Promotion and reinforcement of multilateralism.
Social Inclusion	The construction of humanity as "one human family."

Positive Peace Dimension	Evidence in Speech
Peaceful Conflict Resolution	Support for the Two-State Solution as a peaceful mechanism for resolving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Table 3. Positive Peace Scorecard

Dimension	Presence
Justice	Very strong
Equality	Very strong
Humanitarianism	Very strong
Cooperation	Very strong
Structural Violence Awareness	Strong
Reconciliation	Very Strong

4. DISCUSSION

A. Construction of Positive Peace

The findings indicate that Prabowo’s speech does not frame peace merely as negative peace (the mere absence of war). Instead, it conceptualizes peace as positive peace in accordance with Johan Galtung’s framework. Peace is defined through the principles of social justice, equality, the elimination of structural violence, and human dignity. The Gaza conflict is represented not only as direct violence but also as structural violence rooted in historical injustice and imbalances in international power relations.

B. Positioning and Indonesian Identity

The speech discursively positions Indonesia as an active middle power possessing moral agency and acting as a norm entrepreneur. The commitment to deploy 20,000 peacekeepers constitutes a strong example of performative diplomacy. This reflects a shift in Indonesia’s foreign policy from a non-aligned approach toward active middle power diplomacy and global status-seeking. For domestic audiences, the speech also functions as nation branding that strengthens Prabowo’s image as a global leader.

C. Intertextuality and the Rejection of Realism

Through rich intertextuality—referencing the U.S. Declaration of Independence, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Charter, and a quotation from Thucydides—the speech derives normative legitimacy. The recontextualization of Thucydides’ quotation explicitly rejects the doctrine of “might makes right” and replaces it with a normative framework centered on multilateralism and a rules-based international order. This strategy reinforces Indonesia’s legitimacy as a defender of a just international system.

D. The Two-State Solution and Reconciliation

The proposal for a two-state solution is not merely a political stance but represents a broader project of conflict transformation and intercommunal reconciliation (Lederach, 1995). The statement that “the two descendants of Abraham must live in reconciliation, peace, and harmony” reflects a peace-oriented approach focused on building long-term intergroup relationships.

E. Implications

In the context of the current global crisis of multilateralism—marked by the wars in Gaza and Ukraine and intensifying great power rivalry—this speech serves as both a defense of the United Nations’ effectiveness and a critique of structural inequalities within the international system. From a Communication Studies perspective, this research illustrates how political leaders’ discourse can construct national identity and promote global peace norms.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze how the narrative of positive peace was constructed in President Prabowo Subianto's speech at the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis and Johan Galtung's theory of Positive Peace. The findings demonstrate that the speech constructs peace beyond the concept of negative peace or the mere absence of war. Instead, peace is represented through the principles of justice, equality, humanitarian responsibility, multilateral cooperation, and the transformation of structural violence.

The analysis identified six dominant themes—justice and equality, humanitarian concerns, international cooperation, multilateralism, peacebuilding, and structural violence—which collectively reflect the dimensions of positive peace proposed by Galtung. Through lexical choices, intertextual references, and normative commitments, the speech discursively positions Indonesia as an active middle power, a responsible contributor to global peace, and a defender of a rules-based international order.

Furthermore, the study shows that political speeches delivered in international forums function not only as diplomatic communication but also as instruments for constructing national identity, exercising normative influence, and promoting global peace narratives. In the context of the contemporary crisis of multilateralism and increasing geopolitical tensions, Prabowo's speech represents both a defense of international cooperation and a critique of structural inequalities within the global system.

Future studies may expand this research by comparing Indonesia's peace discourse with those of other middle powers or by examining the consistency between Indonesia's diplomatic rhetoric and its foreign policy practices. Such studies would contribute to a deeper

understanding of the relationship between political discourse, national identity, and peacebuilding in contemporary international relations.

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