

### A Critical Discourse Analysis of Prabowo Subianto's Speech in The Third Presidential Debate of the 2024 General Election

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
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Received : Nov, 30 <sup>th</sup> 2025	This research analyzed how discourse functioned as a tool of social control by revealing the relationship between language, ideology, and power. It examined how social and political contexts were reflected in the ways language was used to enact, confirm, legitimize, reproduce, or challenge power relations in Prabowo Subianto's speech during the third presidential debate of the 2024 General Election. The debate addressed national issues such as defense, diplomacy, technology, and the global economy, and the speech was divided into seventeen segments. These segments were analyzed across three dimensions of discourse microstructural, mesostructural, and macrostructural to identify patterns of power relations. The study found five main functions of power relations, with instances of enactment (47), confirmation (29), legitimization (94), reproduction (10), and challenge (47). The findings showed that political discourse functioned not merely as communication but as a strategic tool to shape public opinion and reinforce socio-political structures. Prabowo Subianto's speech emphasized nationalism and his connection with the people to strengthen social solidarity and national identity while maintaining existing hierarchies. His discourse asserted political authority and projected an image of competence and decisiveness. Overall, the analysis demonstrated how social and political contexts shape linguistic choices and how these choices contribute to the reproduction and occasional contestation of dominant power dynamics during the election.
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### 1. Introduction

Language is an indispensable element in political life, serving as the primary means of communication that allows individuals to express their thoughts, ideas, opinions, and policies. Considering the role of language in political communication, it is important to pay attention to the type of text or discourse used, the communicative purpose, and the intended audience of the speak.

Language was not just a communication tool but also a means to influence thought. It conveyed discourses with values, worldviews, and ideologies, shaping social reality and public opinion (Dahal, Y. 2024). Language was closely linked to ideology and power, often maintaining or challenging power structures. Repeated authoritative discourses

made ideologies seem normal. Language also expressed emotions and attitudes through words and nonverbal cues, shaping how messages were understood.

Thus, language played a key role in shaping perception, social meaning, and controlling discourse. Understanding this relationship helped us critically analyze how power operated in society. By recognizing language's influence, the ability to challenge dominant ideologies and promote social change was strengthened through greater language awareness. Therefore, raising awareness about language use is essential for empowering individuals and communities.

The discourse conveyed can be carried out in various contexts of goals, visions, and missions, including political issues, national defense, education, ethnicity or race, and many others. Effective communication is essential in this process, as language serves as the primary link between leaders, political parties, communities, and citizens. The discourse conveyed plays an important role in shaping public opinion, with the delivery and expression of political messages significantly influencing society's response and acceptance. This includes consideration of the type of text or discourse used, the communicative purpose, and the intended audience of the participant. It means discourse analysis contains meaning or ideology that is being contested by Indonesian leaders.

Critical discourse analysis according to (Fairclough, 2003) is irreducible part of social life, so that social analysis and research always have to take account of language. A critical discourse analysis functions as a powerful tool through linguistic conventions, social and political beliefs and practices, ideologies, subject positions, and norms. (Persada, 2018) The object of critical discourse study is public speech, such as advertisement, newspaper, political campaign debates, official documents, laws and regulations and so on. According to Fairclough (2012: 1) views political discourse as primarily a form of argumentation, and as involving more specifically practical argumentation, argumentation for or against particular ways of acting, argumentation that can be ground decision.

The studies of political discourse is about the text and speech of professional politicians and political institution such as a president and prime ministers, and other parliament and any others. Things to consider when analyzing critical discourse analysis can be analyzed using methods such as the use of logic in reasoning to deal with language or a problem which occurs in Indonesia, the application of mathematical formulas in presenting arguments, and the producer or politician itself. In analyzing critical discourse

(Fairclough, 2003), there is an ideology of change in knowledge, our beliefs, our attitudes, our values, and so on. It's mean in the elements of social events that have cause and effect on changes, whether in development, education, action, the material world, national defense, and many others in presenting their ideas expressed in debates or arguments by presidential candidates.

There were several things that could be analyzed in Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model, which views language as a social practice and integrates linguistic and socio-political perspectives to uncover unequal power relations and ideologies in discourse. The analysis is conducted through three interrelated dimensions: the microstructural dimension, which examines textual features such as vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure; the mesostructural dimension, which focuses on the processes of text production, distribution, and interpretation; and the macrostructural dimension, which analyzes broader social, political, cultural, and historical contexts influencing discourse. Through these dimensions, CDA explains how discourse functions as social action and contributes to the construction and maintenance of power and ideology.

Social and political structures refer to the societal and institutional frameworks in which social problems and political discourse are formed and interpreted, particularly when conditions of imbalance affect a large portion of society. These structures shape issues such as poverty, crime, health crises, and governance through the influence of power, ideology, historical context, institutions, and public participation, all of which impact major social pillars including the economy, education, government, and welfare systems. Governments respond to these interconnected social and political challenges through integrated policies and programs that emphasize public services, social welfare, infrastructure development, and the strategic use of language to guide public opinion and decision-making.

Presidential debates is principally show the citizens of the country the goals and opinion of the candidates, have a particular setting and rules, speak based on time limited to express their concerns while the all candidate stand on the same stage (Palacios, 2018). The candidate uses the strategy to persuade and influence voters to choose among the competing candidates. The debate also highlighted the differences between candidates, by emphasizing to the electorate goals, visions, missions that show power, ideology and dominance.

According to William L. Banoet's (Isotalus, 2017) functional theory the discourse spoken by candidates builds preferences in the form of praise, attack and defense. The statements produced by the candidate not only serve to explain their thoughts to the recipient but also to change opinion or persuasion in increasing public support. According to Simon (1976: 19), the notion of persuasion is to make a manipulative act but it still leaves the supporters making a choice. This might involve persuading someone to change their opinions that have not really been considered before but they still have their own choice.

Studying critical discourse, particularly political discourse, as an object of analysis is examine how candidates in political campaign debates used language to convey their ideology, demonstrate power, and persuade voters and its is as interesting topic to discuss. The most important factor that determined the success of professional politicians in achieving their goals and winning public consensus was their ability to persuade and impress their audience. Generally, professional politicians during campaigns often made promises about their future actions and proposed policies to their listeners. They also offered visions of a better future to convince voters. This was where the need for critical listening and thinking was felt more than ever, in order to recognize the reality and how it was distorted through the delicate and skillful use of language.

Based on the background above, the problems of this research are formulated in the form of questions, as follows: How were the social and political contexts reflected in the ways language was used to enact, confirm, legitimize, reproduce, or challenge power relations in Prabowo Subianto's speech in the third presidential debate of the 2024 General Election?

## 2. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using Critical Discourse Analysis(CDA) based on the frameworks of Fairclough and Van Dijk. The data consisted of videos and textual transcripts of Prabowo Subianto's speech during the third presidential debate of the 2024 Indonesian general election, sourced from the official YouTube channel of KPU Indonesia. Additional references such as books, e-books, theses, and journal articles supported the analysis

Data were collected through observation and document analysis. The researcher selected the debate video, transcribed the speech, identified ideologically loaded utterances, translated

relevant parts into English, and classified them according to the research questions. The data were further validated with guidance from the supervisor.

The analysis followed Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model: (1) textual analysis, which examined linguistic features; (2) discursive practice, which interpreted how the text was produced and received; and (3) sociocultural practice, which explained the broader social and ideological context. These stages correspond to description, interpretation, and explanation, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how ideological meanings were constructed in the speech.

### **3. Research Findings and Discussion**

#### **Research Findings**

The research was selected due to its relevance in reflecting political ideologies, strategic language use, and representations of national identity. The data were analyzed using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model, involving textual analysis, discourse practice, and socio-cultural practice in which language was used to enact, confirm, legitimize, reproduce, or challenge power structures within a discourse.

#### **3.1 A Microstructural Approach to Prabowo's Language Choices in the Debate**

In the third debate, Prabowo used simple, direct, and populist language. He often employed short and repetitive sentences to emphasize that he had already worked. The diction he used tended to be defensive, especially when attacked. Prabowo's speaking style was more emotional and confrontational, emphasizing personal experience rather than data based arguments. This reflected a strategy to build an authoritative image, but it was weak in argumentative structure and policy logic. According to Fairclough's analysis, this showed that Prabowo's language choices were laden with strategies of power and self image.

#### **3.2 Mesostructural Dimension: The Production and Structure of Prabowo's Debate Discourse**

The research data consisted of a transcript of Prabowo Subianto's speech delivered during the third presidential debate of the 2024 Indonesian general election, held on February 4, 2024. The speech focused on key national issues, including defense, international diplomacy, technology, and the global economy was divided into 17 segments. The transcript was obtained from National Television and the Official YouTube Channel of KPU RI and served as the observation data for analysis and it was watched more than 20 times during the data collection.

### **3.3 Macrostructural Practice: Political and Social Ideologies in Prabowo's Debate Speech**

In the third presidential debate of the 2024 election, which focused on defense, security, foreign policy, international relations, globalization, and geopolitics, Prabowo Subianto emphasized the importance of Indonesia's independent and active foreign policy. This reflected the political structure, as it pertained to the institutional and strategic framework through which the state operated in international affairs. Through language that emphasized independence and neutrality, Prabowo enacted and legitimized a nationalist power position, presenting Indonesia as a sovereign actor not subordinate to global powers.

He also stressed that Indonesia should be a "good neighbor" in the Asia-Pacific region by maintaining harmonious relations and regional peace. This again related to the political structure, specifically in terms of diplomatic policy. His choice of the phrase "good neighbor" reproduced diplomatic norms and implied a cooperative yet self-determined role in regional politics reinforcing Indonesia's desired image as a stable, respectable power. Furthermore, Prabowo proposed strengthening the main defense equipment (alutsista) to ensure the country could respond to both internal and external threats. This was a clear expression of political structure, specifically state security and defense policy. The language used here such as "threats," "security," and "sovereignty" functioned to legitimize military investment and reinforce the state's monopoly over violence, a core aspect of political power.

He also highlighted the need to improve the national economy as a foundation to elevate Indonesia's position in the international arena. Though economic in nature, this point still reflected the political structure, as it framed economic growth as a strategic tool for geopolitical influence. His discourse linked economic strength with national pride and influence, thus reinforcing the idea that strong leadership must deliver both prosperity and global respect. On the other hand, when discussing leadership, Prabowo emphasized fundamental values such as patriotism, honesty, and integrity as essential traits to lead the nation and safeguard sovereignty. This part referred to the social structure, as it dealt with shared cultural values and moral expectations within society. By invoking these values, he confirmed and reproduced dominant social norms about what makes a legitimate and trustworthy leader aligning personal morality with political authority.

He further stated that such moral values were vital for a leader to be responsible and trustworthy. Again, this belonged to the social structure, as it emphasized the moral codes embedded in public expectations. Here, his language reinforced traditional social hierarchies where leadership was justified not only by political skill but also by moral character. Finally, when addressing the complexities of global geopolitics and globalization, Prabowo asserted the necessity of maintaining an independent and active stance, free from the influence of major world powers. This directly spoke to the political structure, especially in relation to foreign policy autonomy. Through this discourse, he challenged existing global power dynamics, positioning Indonesia as an emerging force that would not be dictated to by stronger nations. His words sought to empower national identity while critiquing dependency on global hegemons, subtly inviting the audience to view sovereignty as resistance.

### **3.4 Content of Segment**

In the Third Presidential Debate of the 2024 election, with the theme Defense, Security, Geopolitics, and International Relations, which was divided into 17 segments including a question and answer session, Prabowo Subianto delivered a speech that covered the following topics: Segment Vision and Mission. Defense and Security. Foreign Policy and the Global South. Leadership and International Relations. Arrangement of National Defense and Security Institutions. Foreign Debt and National Sovereignty. Defense, Security, International Relations, and Geopolitics. The South China Sea Conflict and Indonesia's Role in Managing the Conflict. Globalization and the Promotion of Nusantara Popular Culture to Support Economic Growth. Ethical Standards of Leaders and the Ability to Maintain National Defense, Security, and Sovereignty. Responses to Statements by Other Presidential Candidates in the Third Debate of the 2024 General Election. National Defense and Priority Improvement of Defense Equipment Strength. Consistency of Attitude Toward the Defense Budget and Security Policy. Transparency and Ethics in the Discussion of National Defense Issues. The Decline of Indonesia's Military Strength and Capability Index at the Global Level. Response to Criticism of the Minimum Essential Force (MEF) Achievements and Transparency of the Ministry of Defense's Performance. Prabowo Subianto's Closing Statement. This segment was used in data collection and observation

### **Research Data and Discussion**

This section referred to the data that were collected, observed, or generated and discussion during the research process and were used to answer the research questions.

### Power Relation Function In CDA

In Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the power relation function referred to the ways in which language was used to enact, confirm, legitimize, reproduce, or challenge power structures within a discourse.

Table 1 Power Relation Function In CDA

Function	Purpose	Example
<b>Enacted</b>	Exercised authority through speech	“We deployed troops to protect the border.”
<b>Confirmed</b>	Reinforced dominant norms or values	Opened with a religious greeting
<b>Legitimized</b>	Justified authority or decisions	Referred to the 1945 Constitution
<b>Reproduced</b>	Maintained existing power structures	Used formal and hierarchical language
<b>Challenged</b>	Questioned or resisted power	Claimed the government favored corporations

### Table

To facilitate understanding, the data collection of this table explanation of result or discussion and each sentence contained in represented 17 power that lead to each power relation table the findings and discussion of the research result are concisely summarized and presented in the table below:

Table 2 Power Relation Function In CDA

Power relation function	Dimension of Discourse			Content of segment	The Total power relation	Example of result/discussion
	Micro-structural	Meso-structural	Macro-structural			
<b>Enacted</b> Power was enacted when social actions or practices clearly demonstrated domination or	✓	✓	✓	Table 4.1	15	<i>“Therefore, in order to be a prosperous nation, we must our wealth.”</i> In terms of social and political structure and meaning, this statement showed that it linked natural resources to the
				Table 4.2	3	
				Table 4.3	4	
				Table 4.4	-	
				Table 4.5	3	

control. Such as a manager giving orders emphasizing a particular perspective.				Table 4.5	1	people's well-being, and proposed the protection of resources as a solution. Both ideas constructed a new solution: the state had to guard its resources.  (Table 4.1, no 15).	
				Table 4.6	1		
				Table 4.7	2		
				Table 4.8	2		
				Table 4.9	2		
				Table 4.10	3		
				Table 4.11	1		
				Table 4.12	2		
				Table 4.13	-		
				Table 4.14	1		
				Table 4.15	-		
				Table 4.16	3		
				Table 4.17	4		
				Total 47			
<b>Confirmed</b> Power was confirmed when behaviors or discourses supported or reinforced existing power structures. For instance, the media wrote news according to the government's narrative, making official views seem "correct" or accepted by society.	✓	✓	✓	Table 4.1	4	<i>"It was not just about buying technology but about mastering the knowledge and systems that must be controlled."</i> In the statement's social and political structure and meaning, it advocated knowledge sovereignty over passive consumption, asserted national control over technology and intellectual property, and reinforced the need for technological independence as a political strategy.  (Table 4.2, no 5)	
				Table 4.2	1		
				Table 4.3	2		
				Table 4.4	1		
				Table 4.5	2		
				Table 4.5	2		
				Table 4.6	4		
				Table 4.7	3		
				Table 4.8	-		
				Table 4.9	1		
				Table 4.10	4		
				Table 4.11	-		
				Table 4.12	-		
				Table 4.13	-		
				Table 4.14	-		
				Table 4.15	1		
				Table 4.16	2		

				Table 4.17	2	
				Total 29		
<b>Legitimed</b> Power was legitimized when actions or discourses provided normative, moral, or legal justification for domination. The government created laws that strengthened certain authorities, emphasized that a policy was “for public interest.”	✓	✓	✓	Table 4.1	21	<p><i>“In international relations, what matters most for Indonesia is our geopolitical and economic interests.”</i></p> <p>In the statement’s social and political structure and meaning, highlighted the nation’s prioritization of practical interests in global affairs, asserted a realist foreign policy grounded in national self-interest, and justified its foreign policy orientation based on strategic national interests.</p> <p>Through these principles, the statement reflected a pragmatic approach to international relations, emphasizing the pursuit of national advantage and strategic interests.</p> <p>(Table 4.3, no 1)</p>
				Table 4.2	2	
				Table 4.3	6	
				Table 4.4	2	
				Table 4.5	2	
				Table 4.5	3	
				Table 4.6	3	
				Table 4.7	3	
				Table 4.8	4	
				Table 4.9	3	
				Table 4.10	7	
				Table 4.11	2	
				Table 4.12	3	
				Table 4.13	1	
				Table 4.14	5	
				Table 4.15	13	
				Table 4.16	6	
				Table 4.17	8	
				Total 94		
<b>Reporduced</b> Power was reproduced when social practices and discourses continually maintained and transmitted dominant structures across generations.	✓	✓	✓	Table 4.1	10	<p><i>“Bapak-bapak, ibu-ibu sekalian yang saya hormati,”</i> In the statement’s social and political structure and meaning, formal and respectful greetings were used, the speaker was positioned above the people, and a hierarchical social structure was maintained.</p> <p>(Table 4.1, no 6)</p>
				Table 4.2	-	
				Table 4.3	-	
				Table 4.4	-	
				Table 4.5	-	
				Table 4.5	-	
				Table 4.6	-	
				Table 4.7	-	
				Table 4.8	-	

				Table 4.9	-	
				Table 4.10	-	
				Table 4.11	-	
				Table 4.12	-	
				Table 4.13	-	
				Table 4.14	-	
				Table 4.15	-	
				Table 4.16	-	
				Table 4.17	-	
				Total 10		
<b>Challenged</b>  Power was challenged when actions, discourses, or strategies resisted or attempted to change domination structures. Social protests, journalistic critiques, or alternative discourses questioned official policies or dominant norms.	✓	✓	✓	Table 4.1	4	<p><b><i>I believed that Mr. Anies was too theoretical.</i></b> In terms of social and political structure and meaning, a critique was expressed emphasizing practicality over theory. The speaker's pragmatic approach was differentiated from others' abstract ideas, and opposing views were questioned to assert a more concrete, action-based stance.</p> <p>(Table 4.2, no 1)</p>
Table 4.2	3					
Table 4.3	-					
Table 4.4	3					
Table 4.5	-					
Table 4.5	2					
Table 4.6	3					
Table 4.7	4					
Table 4.8	4					
Table 4.9	-					
Table 4.10	3					
Table 4.11	5					
Table 4.12	1					
Table 4.13	4					
Table 4.14	3					
Table 4.15	2					
Table 4.16	6					
Table 4.17	-					
Total 47						

## Discussion

Prabowo's speech in the third debate, it was important to provide an overview of how his discourse reflected and reinforced power structures both socially and politically. The following summary highlighted the key segments of his speech, showing how each part contributed to the maintenance of social hierarchies and the consolidation of political authority, and this was also supported by other studies that analyzed it through the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. Prabowo's speech in the 2024 presidential debate enacted, confirmed, and legitimized, reproduced and challenged power relations through both social and political structures:

1. In the third debate, Prabowo's speech asserted, confirmed, and legitimized power relations through social and political structures. In the segment emphasizing nationalism and connection with the people, he strengthened national identity and social solidarity, thereby maintaining existing social hierarchies while also affirming his political legitimacy as a unifying figure and protector of the people. In the segment addressing defense and sovereignty, the speech reinforced his political authority by demonstrating competence in leadership and challenging debate opponents, while socially fostering public support for a figure perceived as capable of protecting the nation. In the segment challenging his opponents, Prabowo asserted political dominance and reinforced public perception of decisive leadership, maintaining his social legitimacy as a reliable leader. Overall, the speech demonstrated how political and social discourse were interconnected in reproducing and legitimizing dominant power dynamics. Thus, the speech both reproduced and challenged power relations within the context of the election.
2. This align with the research Critical Discourse Analysis of Political Speech on Human Rights By Prabowo Subiyanto in The First Debate of The 2024 Presidential Election of Khoiron Harun (2025) has similarity both pieces of research employed the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to uncover hidden power relations within political discourse. However, there was a difference in the focus of analysis between the two. The research explicitly distinguished between social and political structures, and was more directly focused on how these structures reconstructed or challenged power relations in Prabowo Subiyanto's speech during the 2024 presidential debate.
3. In contrast, the research conducted by Khoiron Harun (2025) used the theme of Human Rights (HR) as an entry point for analysis. Its main focus was on how the

issue of human rights was used in political discourse to legitimize ideological interests and political strategies, without explicitly separating the social and political dimensions of the context. This research showed that Prabowo Subianto's speeches during the 2024 election debates, both in terms of social issues and the political context, were closely related to how power was exercised and justified. In the first debate, the issue of Human Rights (HAM) played an important role in showing who was morally trustworthy. Prabowo did not directly address past human rights violation accusations but instead described them as political attacks from his opponents. By doing this, he tried to turn the criticism around so it would not damage his image and instead strengthen his position as someone unfairly targeted. So, power was defended not by evidence but by changing how people viewed the issue.

4. However, in the third debate, which focused on defense and security, his approach was different. Human rights were not seriously discussed and were considered less important compared to stability and military strength. Prabowo appeared as a strong figure, knowledgeable and experienced about global threats. He used his expertise in defense to show that only he could protect the country. In this debate, power was justified not through moral values but by the ability to provide protection and stability. This difference showed that the way human rights and power were talked about could change depending on the situation. According to Michel Foucault's theory, power is not only shown through positions or rules but also through ways of speaking, presenting knowledge, and shaping people's views of a problem. In conclusion, in both debates, Prabowo used different strategies to maintain his image and power building a moral image in the first debate, and showing strength and expertise in the third debate. This demonstrated how discourse (ways of speaking and arguing) was used strategically in politics to strengthen or protect power.
5. In Prabowo Subianto's speech, the following aspects were noteworthy:
  - a) Seventeen (17) segment contents (pages 24 content of segment and pages 25 table of segment)
  - b) Three (3) dimensions of discourse: microstructural, mesostructural, and macrostructural (pages 21–26).

c) Five (5) functions of power relations, including the total power relations in 17 segment that were enacted (47), confirmed (29), legitimized (94), reproduced (10), and challenged (47).

#### 4. Conclusion

This research aimed to analyze Prabowo Subianto's speech in the third presidential debate of the 2024 election using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach based on Norman Fairclough's model. The third debate specifically raised the themes of defense, security, international relations, and geopolitics, which were strategic issues in the political and social domains. By using the CDA approach, this study examined how social and political structures in the speech shaped, reinforced, or challenged unequal power relations. Based on the analysis of discourse data and the socio-political context of the debate, the following conclusions were drawn:

#### Social Structure in Prabowo Subianto's Speech

Prabowo Subianto utilized this debate to emphasize the importance of national stability, sovereignty, and people's welfare in the context of defense and security. In delivering his ideas, he used language that highlighted the state's position as the protector of the people and emphasized the role of the military as a key institution in maintaining national sovereignty. This showed how his speech reproduced hierarchical power relations, in which the state and military were positioned as the highest authorities in ensuring social security.

In addition, he used narratives that touched on issues such as poverty, inequality, and the needs of the common people, especially in the context of the impact of globalization and geopolitical instability. His speech portrayed him as a figure who cared and was ready to protect the people from both external and internal threats. Thus, the social structure built in his speech confirmed and legitimized traditional paternalistic power relations, where the leader was the protector, and the people were the ones who needed to be protected. However, on the other hand, Prabowo also delivered criticisms of previous policies, indicating an effort to challenge the old social structure and introduce a new vision that was more pragmatic and nationalistic.

#### Political Structure in Prabowo Subianto's Speech

On the political level, Prabowo framed himself as a leader with a proven track record and long-standing experience in defense and international relations. He used geopolitical and global security issues such as regional conflicts, tensions in the South China Sea, and threats to national resilience to reinforce his political position as a strong and credible figure in that field. Through this narrative, he created political legitimacy for himself as the most suitable

figure to lead Indonesia amid global dynamics. The discourse strategies used by Prabowo also challenged the old political power structure, particularly through criticisms of foreign policy and defense systems that he considered ineffective. By stressing the need for defense independence and an active yet firm foreign policy, he constructed a political image that was not only defensive but also diplomatically offensive. His speech indirectly offered a reconfiguration of power relations in foreign policy and defense, in which Indonesia was emphasized as an active actor that must be respected on the global stage.

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