

## DECODING HIDDEN MEANINGS: A PRAGMATIC AND VAN DIJK'S CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF INDONESIA'S DIPLOMACY DILEMMA IN MODERN DIPLOMACY

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| Article Info                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| <p><b>Keywords:</b><br/><i>Ideology; Reader<br/>Perception; News<br/>Media</i></p> <hr/> <p>The Authors (s): This is an open-access article under the This work is licensed under a <a href="#">Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License</a>.</p>  | <p>This study used critical discourse analysis to analyze Indonesia's diplomatic discourse in BoP membership, focusing on the dimension of implicature meaning, and also using Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory in analyzing the author's social cognition, as well as the role of the media in shaping public perception. The findings show that Indonesia's membership, rather than being a breakthrough in peace diplomacy, has instead raised critical scrutiny of the consistency of the "Bebas Aktif" principle. The BoP's decision to exclude Palestine and expand membership to Israel exhibits bias that creates perceptions of injustice, while the involvement of prominent political figures such as Donald Trump reinforces the impression that peace diplomacy is more directed by particular interests than universal values. The social context analysis also highlights how the media, particularly Modern Diplomacy, frames political issues through ideologically biased narratives, thus influencing public opinion and trust in Indonesia's foreign policy. This study contributes to the development of scientific knowledge by emphasizing that diplomatic discourse is not merely formal communication, but rather an instrument that shapes a country's legitimacy and international image.</p> |

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Critical Discourse Analysis is an interdisciplinary discourse analysis that combines linguistics, sociology, and political studies to understand how power and ideology in society both influence and are influenced by discourse. To comprehend how discourse creates social configurations and helps to create social and political order, critical discourse analysis is utilized (Alejandro & Zhao, 2024). An analytical framework that highlights the function of discourse in politics and society is used in critical discourse analysis, combined with empirical techniques to reveal it. The objective is to comprehend language mechanisms in the socio-political context of discourse creation and reception in order to assess its function and possible consequences.

Critical discourse analysis, according to van Dijk (1993), seeks to pinpoint the structures, tactics, or traits of texts, discussions, oral exchanges, and communication events that contribute to the perpetuation of social power relations. Additionally, according to van Dijk (1993), critical discourse analysis can examine the rhetoric, style, or meaning of texts to identify tactics that purposefully conceal social power relations, such as minimizing, denigrating, or leaving implicit the accountability of powerful actors for the events portrayed in the text. Critical discourse analysis shows how language patterns, tactics, and structures in texts or communications both replicate and conceal social power dynamics. This strategy draws attention to the ways in which influential persons try to evade accountability by using strategies like suggesting or disparaging facts.

By showing how these concealed meanings are frequently used to replicate social power relations in political communication, Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis method enhances pragmatics. According to Dey (2023), pragmatics entails determining the speaker's implicit meaning in addition to creating the sentence's stated meaning. Thus, pragmatics can be characterized as the study of what is not explicitly said, which is contingent upon the speaker's understanding of the message they want to convey to the audience in a variety of situational settings. In order to analyze the speaker's objectives and presumptions and show how these are reflected in their communication behavior when speaking to an audience, listeners or readers might use pragmatics to analyze the meanings involved.

Recent analytical studies have explored how digital media acts as an ideological agent that is not neutral, but rather contributes to shaping public perceptions of political and social issues (Noviyanti et al., 2024; Khalil, 2020; Sabahat et al., 2025; Mukhtarullina et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2023; Mustofa & Zawawi, 2025). Additionally, prior studies have looked at how political actors regulate meaning through diplomatic language as a rhetorical and strategic weapon (Boborykin, 2025; Supriatin & Napitupulu, 2025; Al-Fatih, 2025; Lu & Zhou, 2024; Khramchenko, 2023). Overall, these studies show how language in diplomacy and the media not only transmits messages but also develops, upholds, and challenges meaning, power, and legitimacy in a larger socio-political context, despite the various focuses of earlier research.

To improve comprehension, however, a study that links diplomatic implicit meanings with foreign policy representations and incorporates pragmatic analysis into Van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework is required. In this study, a news discourse titled *"Indonesia at The Board of Peace: Realistic Choice or Subtle Coercion?"* from the media Modern Diplomacy is examined. The discourse portrays an ambiguous diplomatic narrative amidst geopolitical tensions around the world. The news item highlights a discrepancy between Indonesia's *"Bebas Aktif"* ethos and how it is portrayed in international media, where diplomatic language structures frequently conceal strategic implications that must be deciphered to prevent perception distortion.

The research question, which is based on the gap analysis, is how the integration of pragmatic analysis and Van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework reveals the author's social cognition and implied meaning in Indonesian diplomatic texts that influence how foreign policy is portrayed internationally. Accordingly, the goal of this study is to use pragmatic analysis to determine the implied meaning in Indonesian diplomatic texts published by Modern Diplomacy, examine the author's social cognition using Van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework, and uncover the process of creating foreign policy representations that affect readers' opinions of Indonesian foreign policy. Additionally, to close the gap, this study examines how Indonesia is portrayed in diplomatic documents by integrating pragmatic analysis with Van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework. By linking the text's microstructure with the author's social cognition to influence the reader's perception, these two methods disclose the implied diplomatic meaning. This work generates a thorough and contextual diplomatic discourse analysis model, in contrast to earlier research that concentrated on domestic politics or general framing.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

Van Dijk's socio-cognitive analysis and pragmatic analysis were combined in this qualitative research method with discourse analysis. Hidden meanings, ideologies, and representations generated in the Modern Diplomacy discourse titled "*Indonesia at The Board of Peace: Realistic Choice or Subtle Coercion?*" published on February 20, 2026, were revealed using this method. The aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the language, rhetorical devices, and socio-political background of the article. Pragmatics is crucial for identifying implicit diplomatic messages because, as emphasized by Lumanlan (2024), it focuses on how speakers communicate meaning in real world communication situations.

The aforementioned article are the primary focus of this research. Purposeful sampling was used to select these texts because they align with the original research objective of applying Van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory and pragmatic analysis to analyze discourse meaning and ideology within a text. To ensure that the analysis focused on utterances that most accurately reflect the topic under study, careful text selection was conducted. This allows the research to delve deeper into the implicit meanings within the texts.

This research employed a document analysis approach. Key sections were highlighted for review after a thorough reading of the discourse. A coding system based on two main ideas served as the research tool. The first is pragmatic analysis. The linguistic study known as pragmatics examines how speakers convey meaning in everyday communication situations, taking into account social dynamics, cultural backgrounds, and contextual elements that influence interpretation beyond the meaning of spoken words. Pragmatic analysis examines how the communication context including the speaker, what is said, the context in which the words are used, the delivery style, and the intended impact on the audience shapes the meaning of an utterance (Lumanlan, 2024). Specifically, this research employed implicature analysis to fully understand the conversation. Implicature is an additional meaning understood by the listener without the speaker's explicit statement. According to Culpeper et al. (2017), implicature always uses indirect methods to convey additional messages from the speaker.

Second, the social cognition dimension is used in Van Dijk's socio-cognitive analysis. According to van Dijk, social cognition is a cognitive process in which language users, as social actors, interpret social structures (identities, roles, and relationships) into particular mental representations created from the collective knowledge of society. Through the cognitive bridge of mental models, this then affects how discourse is produced and understood (van Dijk, 2021). This dimension, which also makes use of the social analysis dimension, looks at how discourse is utilized to uphold or disseminate power (domination) in society. Discourse is viewed as a means of influencing public opinion. Van Dijk defines social cognition as a cognitive process in which language users, as social actors, interpret social structures (identities, roles, and relationships) into particular mental representations derived from society's common knowledge. This then affects how speech is generated and comprehended via the cognitive bridge of mental models (van Dijk, 2021). This dimension looks at how language is used to maintain or spread power (domination) in society. It also makes use of the social analysis dimension. Discourse is thought to be a way to sway public opinion. According to van Dijk (2006), ideology is the collective representations of a social group that serve as the foundation for group attitudes and beliefs that govern the production of discourse using ideologically biased personal mental models. Additionally, according to van Dijk (1995), ideology in particular is the fundamental framework that underpins a group's collective mental processes and shared social representations. Ideologi, which serves as a filter in word choice, is how ideology impacts discourse, which in turn shapes how society perceives social reality.

In order to investigate how the language of the text expresses ideas, reflects the author's way of thinking, and reveals the ideology and socio-political relations that impact the writing, this study combines pragmatic analysis techniques with Van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework.

This combination results in a socio-cognitive analysis that uses Van Dijk's model to analyze the author's social cognition, highlights the underlying ideology, particularly the implied meaning (implicature) in Indonesian diplomatic texts published by Modern Diplomacy, and reveals the process of creating foreign policy representations that affect readers' perceptions of Indonesian foreign policy.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Result

The analysis employing the following guiding questions produced the following sentences: 1) Does the sentence or paragraph's argument make sense in light of current research findings? Does the argument seem rational, too? 2) Do the results of this study relate to the goals and prior research? 3) Does this article support or refute earlier studies? The following are the sentences:

“Rather than constituting a breakthrough in peace diplomacy, this membership has raised critical scrutiny about the consistency of Indonesia’s long-standing foreign policy principles.” (Data 1)

“As an organization dedicated to the promotion of global peace, the BoP has notably excluded Palestine, an immediate victim of the ongoing conflict, while extending membership to Israel. This is particularly contentious given that Israel is widely accused of human rights violations in the Palestinian territories.” (Data 2)

“If the independence of Palestine is not made the primary goal, the BoP risks becoming merely a mechanism for conflict stabilization rather than a serious effort to resolve the root causes.” (Data 3)

“Rather than being collective, the BoP appears to be an instrument of the personal political interests of Donald Trump, even though he will not serve as President of the United States of America in the next period.” (Data 4)

“Through the BoP, Indonesia is seen as having the opportunity to transform from a mere subject of global policy to a shaper of international norms.” (Data 5)

“This is reflected in its relatively soft diplomatic stance, including statements by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that rarely mention Trump directly, instead using the term “United States” generically. This pattern indicates excessive caution in maintaining bilateral relations between the two countries. In this context, Indonesia’s membership in the BoP can be read not merely as a strategic choice but as a form of subtle pressure from the US. Economic and political diplomacy often go hand in hand, and international forums are often used as bargaining tools for major interests. If this is the case, the principle of “bebas aktif” has the potential to be reduced to a response to external forces, rather than a real expression of sovereign policy.” (Data 6)

“As a country with a tradition of active diplomacy, Indonesia should continue to prioritize an inclusive, multilateral approach based on international law. Active participation should be a means of strengthening global norms, rather than becoming trapped in political structures rife with narrow interests.” (Data 7)

“International institutional participation should therefore constitute a deliberate strategic choice, not an outcome shaped by asymmetric power relations.” (Data 8)

According to the aforementioned sentences, the article on modern diplomacy titled *"Indonesia at The Board of Peace: Realistic Choice or Subtle Coercion?"* contained elements related to implicature, social cognition, and social context. The article's primary concern was the controversy surrounding Indonesia's admission to the international membership organization BoP.

## 3.2 Discussion

### 3.2.1 Implicature Analysis

According to data 1, membership which was first seen as a step forward in peace diplomacy has instead sparked questions and concerns about Indonesia's foreign policy's coherence. By using the word *"rather than"* and terms like *"critical scrutiny"* and *"Indonesia's long-standing foreign policy principles,"* the author suggests that this action and Indonesia's diplomatic heritage are at odds.

According to data 2, the claim that *"the BoP has notably excluded Palestine,"* suggests a lack of concern for the conflict's victims, giving the perception that Palestinian suffering is not significant in the peace agenda. Supported by the statement *"while extending membership to Israel,"* the author suggests a genuine injustice since only Israel is acknowledged as a member of the BoP despite Israel and Palestine being at odds. In a similar vein, the statement *"Israel is widely accused of human rights violations,"* implies that the BoP's choice is more in line with diplomatic strategy.

According to data 3, the author states that *"If the independence of Palestine is not made the primary goal, the BoP risks becoming merely a mechanism,"* suggesting that the BoP's primary function as a peace council has been diminished in the absence of Palestinian freedom and independence. By using the term *"rather than a serious effort to resolve the root causes,"* the author further emphasizes the idea that the BoP's measures fall short of addressing the fundamental issue.

According to data 4, the author implies that the organization is only a political tool by using the term *"the BoP appears to be an instrument,"* *"the personal political interests of Donald Trump,"* which suggests that BoP is more concerned with personal agendas than with international peacekeeping missions, comes next, creating the appearance of partisanship.

According to data 5, the statement *"through the BoP"* suggests that this organization is viewed as a strategic way for Indonesia to strengthen its position in the world. Furthermore, it is said that *"Indonesia is seen as having the opportunity to transform from a mere subject of global policy to a shaper of international norms."* According to the author, Indonesia has the chance to change its status right now, moving from a passive to an active role in shaping international policy as both a policy recipient and a decision maker.

According to data 6, states that *"Indonesia's membership in the BoP can be read not merely as a strategic choice but as a form of subtle pressure from the US,"* the author suggest that outside forces have some effect over Indonesia's policies. The statement *"economic and political diplomacy often go hand in hand"* suggests a transfer of interests, making the international council a vehicle for negotiations. Then, it is said that *"the principle of bebas aktif" has the potential to be reduced,"* suggesting that Indonesia's foreign policy has become meaningless and has become a tool for reacting to outside pressure rather than a decision that should be made in accordance with state values.

According to data 7, the sentence *"As a country with a tradition of active diplomacy,"* the author implicitly anticipates that Indonesia will continue to uphold the ideals of *"Bebas Aktif"* as a country with a history of active diplomacy. The statement *"should continue to prioritize an inclusive, multilateral approach"* indicates that Indonesia is expected to deviate from the principle of freedom and activeness if it does not encourage cooperation. Furthermore, the statement *"active participation should be a means of strengthening global norms,"* indicates that Indonesia's involvement must be constructive and not merely symbolic to project an image of improving the international system. On the other hand, the statement *"rather than becoming trapped in political structures rife with narrow interests,"* indicates that Indonesia risks losing its independence if it only pursues pragmatic goals or short-term gains.

According to data 8, the author's usage of the phrase *"international institutional participation should therefore constitute a deliberate strategic choice,"* implies that Indonesia

can be perceived as merely following the flow without a clear direction if such participation is inconsistent. Additionally, the statement *"not an outcome shaped by asymmetric power relations"* suggests that Indonesia runs the risk of losing its independence if it gives too much influence to other nations.

This pragmatic analysis thus highlights the fact that diplomatic language is more than just a formal declaration. According to Boborykin (2025), language used in diplomacy may never be impartial since it shapes public opinion of any event and legitimizes political decisions. In this discourse study, conflict, compromise, and the path of Indonesian foreign policy are subtly expressed through the use of diplomatic jargon. According to Supriatin & Napitupulu (2025), diplomatic discourse tries to hide the ambiguities and tensions of meaning present in this language. The author's use of discourse-producing terms conveys an implicit message that friction between ideal values and outside pressures is implied by Indonesian diplomacy and the BoP position. For discourse producers to accomplish communication objectives and improve message interpretation, language strategies including metaphors, hyperbole, and rhetorical inquiries are essential (Khramchenko, 2023). The BoP is perceived as ignoring conflict victims, legitimizing parties accused of violating human rights, and running the risk of becoming a tool of certain political objectives due to diplomatic rhetoric that is crafted using specific language tactics. Although Indonesia is thought to have a strategic opportunity to become a worldwide standard setter, its position could be interpreted as caving in to outside pressure. Therefore, rather than merely adhering to pragmatic interests or constrained political frameworks, Indonesia's international participation must genuinely result from a deliberate strategy to promote global principles. According to the book, Indonesian diplomacy is at a crossroads between defending the idea of *"Bebas Aktif"* and dealing with other forces' dominance. As a result, the discourse text's language transmits both explicit critique and implicit interpretations that are revealed through pragmatic implicatures. The pragmatic aspect emphasizes how word choice, narratives, and diplomatic speech acts create specific meanings in the context of international politics, as mentioned in (Al-Fatih, 2025). Additionally, Lu & Zhou (2024) highlighted that pragmatic techniques in diplomacy focus on how words, quotations, and utterances are employed to create meaning, image, and ideology in cross-border exchanges.

### 3.2.2 Social Cognitive Analysis

According to previous studies of pragmatic implicature, many words, phrases, and sentences have implicit meanings created by the author when constructing discourse. Therefore, a social cognitive analysis was conducted, focusing on the author's ideological components that influence discourse production. As previously said, through cognitive bridges of mental models, language users' ideologies, which are founded on representations of social structures, affect the creation and comprehension of discourse (van Dijk, 2021). Additionally, according to (Rahman & Nurhadi, 2024), public reactions and policies can be influenced by the ideology expressed in discourse. Thus, in social cognitive analysis, ideology refers to how the author's opinions, convictions, and appraisals of a subject affect the creation of discourse. The analysis results that follow are derived from the preceding explanation:

According to the author, Indonesia's admission *"rather than constituting a breakthrough in peace diplomacy,"* really calls into question the coherence of foreign policy tenets. The author's ideology, which highlights the significance of upholding the principles of independence and action, is reflected in this.

The statement *"BoP has notably excluded Palestine, an immediate victim of the ongoing conflict, while extending membership to Israel,"* highlights an injustice and upholds the principle of justice. The statement that *"the BoP risks becoming merely a mechanism for conflict stabilization,"* which rejects diplomacy that is merely formal in nature and ignores actual difficulties, further clarifies this viewpoint.

Furthermore, the author assesses that *"the BoP appears to be an instrument of the personal political interests of Donald Trump,"* implying a critique of the dominance of great powers in international forums. This view confirms the author's ideology, which rejects the subordination of Indonesian diplomacy to external interests.

The sentence *"Indonesia is seen as having the opportunity to transform from a mere subject of global policy to a shaper of international norms,"* and *"its relatively soft diplomatic stance,"* demonstrates the view that excessive caution can undermine the principle of independence and activity. The sentences *"Indonesia should continue to prioritize an inclusive multilateral approach"* and *"deliberate strategic choices"* demonstrate the author's ideology, which emphasizes the importance of sovereignty, independence, and policy consistency in diplomacy.

Therefore, the discourse writer's social cognition represents a critical ideology that opposes the dominance of limited interests and outside influences in international relations while supporting justice, substantive peace, and Indonesian diplomatic sovereignty. According to Adlah & Hamdani (2023), social cognition is the study of the author's knowledge and comprehension within a specific social environment during the text production process. As a result, the social cognition analysis of the discourse *"Indonesia at the Board of Peace: Realistic Choice or Subtle Coercion?"* examines how the author's portrayal of Indonesian foreign policy shapes their ideology and beliefs, which in turn affects how the discourse is produced. This is consistent with the claim made by Yusar et al. (2020) that the author uses the discourse text to propagate this belief in order to persuade readers to adopt his viewpoints. Azhara et al. (2023) highlight that social cognition has two meanings: first, it illustrates how the author produces the text; second, it describes how the author absorbs society values and uses them to construct the text.

### 3.2.3 Social Context Analysis

An additional social context analysis was conducted to investigate how discourse in global media can influence readers' views on an issue, based on an examination of the ideological components of social cognition, which then influence discourse formation. Noviyanti et al. (2024) Online media use language to influence public opinion in addition to disseminating information. The author integrated his ideology into Indonesian diplomatic discourse, which then influenced readers' opinions about Indonesian foreign policy. According to Mukhtarullina et al. (2024), a journalist's primary goal in mass media discourse is to communicate their views, thoughts, feelings, and evaluations to readers. The following are the findings of the social context analysis:

This investigation demonstrates how information shapes readers' perceptions while influencing the creation and reception of discourse. While weaker parties lose representation, nations with robust political access and backing more readily acquire legitimacy. This may give the impression that international bodies support more powerful actors rather than being impartial. This diplomatic conversation from Indonesia also shows how powerful people can use their connections to shape global policy. This may give the appearance that international diplomacy is more frequently motivated by the interests of powerful nations or people than by universal justice values. The perception that Indonesia is in a difficult situation, trying to maintain the idea of "freedom and activity" while nevertheless caving in to pressure from powerful nations, might be created by the country's comparatively forgiving approach.

As a result, readers' perceptions of Indonesian diplomacy and the Board of Peace (BoP) can be influenced by the country's diplomatic discourse, which can highlight how power and access disparities lead to injustice, undermine legitimacy, and raise questions about the coherence of foreign policy ideals. Political discourse in the media has a global appeal and has the power to influence public opinion on important events and realities, as mentioned in (Khalil, 2020). Additionally, a social context study reveals how readers' impressions of Indonesian foreign

policy are shaped by Modern Diplomacy media, leading them to believe that it no longer adheres to the principle of "*Bebas Aktif*." This is consistent with how news outlets shape public views and attitudes by presenting political crises in an ideologically biased manner (Sabahat et al., 2025). In general, readers from other countries can be influenced by the diplomatic discourse provided by Modern Diplomacy media. As previously said, diplomatic discourse is a structured method of political communication that has a big impact on how a nation is seen abroad (Liu et al., 2023).

By demonstrating how implied words shape the author's ideology and affect readers' perceptions of Indonesian diplomacy, this study suggests that the combination of pragmatic analysis and Van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework enhances the theory of critical discourse analysis. It also offers a useful lesson that diplomatic language is never neutral. This study's limitations include the use of a single text as a sample, which means that the findings cannot be applied to all diplomatic discourses; difficulties in deciphering implied meanings, which are heavily influenced by the political context; and a restricted social cognitive analysis, which only considers the author's ideology without contrasting it with other cognitive components. In order to identify patterns of consistency or change in ideology and representation in Indonesian diplomatic discourse, it is suggested that future research broaden the sample to include visual as well as textual media and be undertaken constantly over time.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Indonesia's diplomatic discourse in its participation in the BoP is not only connected to political strategy but also creates social representations that lead to views of unfairness, dubious legitimacy, and skepticism regarding the consistency of the free and active principle. This research analysis also emphasizes how the media, especially Modern Diplomacy, shapes public opinion and confidence in Indonesian foreign policy by framing political issues through ideologically biased narratives. However, given this study only examines one media outlet and one diplomatic situation, it has limits, thus it is important to use caution when extrapolating the results. Overall, by demonstrating that diplomatic discourse is a codified type of political communication and has a major impact on a nation's worldwide view, this study advances scientific understanding.

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