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ABSTRACT

The 2025 United Nations General Assembly marked a significant moment in revisiting the debate on the recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state. This article examines how four countries—Indonesia, the United States, Turkey, and Brazil—discursively framed their positions on the issue. The study aims to uncover how national interests, ideological orientations, and geopolitical considerations shape diplomatic narratives concerning Palestinian statehood. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research analyses official leaders' speeches, focusing on lexical choices, argumentative structures, and representations of international actors. The findings reveal three distinct patterns of support and one explicit rejection. Indonesia and Turkey strongly endorse Palestinian recognition, grounding their arguments in historical consistency, solidarity with the Islamic world, and commitments to global justice. Brazil supports recognition through a normative–legal and multilateral framing, emphasising international law and the credibility of the United Nations. In contrast, the United States, under Donald Trump's leadership, firmly rejects recognition, framing the issue primarily in terms of security, stability, and strategic interests. This study argues that debates over Palestinian recognition extend beyond legal diplomacy, functioning as symbolic arenas through which states assert political identity, moral positioning, and global legitimacy in contemporary international relations.

Keywords: Palestine; United Nations; foreign policy; humanity

Introduction

Recognition of the State of Palestine has been one of the most contemporary and controversial issues in international relations since Yasser Arafat's speech at the United Nations General Assembly in 1974 and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in the 1990s (Comelli, 2023). Since Palestine gained non-member observer state status at the United Nations (UN) in 2012, the international community has been divided in its response to demands for full recognition of Palestinian sovereignty. State recognition is not only a formal legal act but also a representation of a country's political stance, normative preferences, and strategic calculations in the international system (Badarin, 2024). Countries' attitudes towards Palestine reflect the broader dynamics between multilateralism, national interests, and the politics of great powers. This debate gained new urgency at the 2025 UN General Assembly, which took place amid the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict following the Gaza crisis and increasing global pressure on humanitarian issues and human rights violations (Aldeek & Ding, 2024; Gijón Mendigutía & Abu-Tarbush, 2022). The speeches of heads of state at the forum showed that the Palestinian issue has once again become a litmus test for countries' commitment to the principles of international justice and a rules-based international order.

In his speech, the President of the United States reaffirmed his support for the two-state solution, but consistently avoided explicitly supporting Palestinian recognition at the UN forum. The rhetoric used emphasised Israel's security, regional stability, and the importance of direct negotiations between the conflicting parties. This stance reflects the

realistic approach and strategic interests of the United States as Israel's main ally, while also revealing a normative ambiguity between support for the right to self-determination and commitment to long-term geopolitical alliances (Nichols et al., 2025). In contrast to the United States, the Brazilian President's speech showed a more assertive normative tendency. Brazil explicitly linked the Palestinian conflict to the international community's failure to uphold international humanitarian law and the principle of global justice. The Brazilian President used moral and legalistic language to highlight the suffering of civilians in Gaza and call for more equitable global governance reforms. This stance aligns with Brazil's foreign policy tradition of emphasising multilateralism, strategic autonomy, and the Global South's role in shaping international norms (United Nations, 2025b).

Meanwhile, in his speech, the Indonesian President framed the Palestinian issue as a moral and constitutional matter. Support for Palestine was constructed as part of Indonesia's national identity and its commitment to the independence of nations still under colonial rule. Indonesia's rhetoric emphasised humanitarian solidarity, the enforcement of international law, and the failure of the UN to protect Palestinian civilians. With this approach, Indonesia positions itself as a normative middle power that seeks to utilise multilateral forums to strengthen the legitimacy of the Palestinian struggle diplomatically (Khalik, 2025). The Turkish President, on the other hand, delivered a speech in a more confrontational tone. Turkey openly criticised Western countries and international institutions for their inability to stop the violence in Gaza. Palestinian recognition was presented as a moral and political imperative, not merely a diplomatic option. The Turkish President's rhetoric combined humanitarian language with structural criticism of the global order, while reflecting Turkey's ambitions as a regional and global actor challenging Western dominance on Middle Eastern issues (The Times of Israel, 2025a).

Although all four countries mentioned the Palestinian conflict in their presidents' speeches, differences in narrative, emphasis, and policy orientation show that recognition of Palestine is understood through the lens of different national interests and structural positions. However, academic studies that comparatively analyse the attitudes of these four countries, based on the official speeches of their heads of state at the 2025 UN General Assembly, remain relatively limited. In fact, state speeches are an important discursive source for understanding foreign policy preferences and the construction of national identity in the international arena. Based on these conditions, this study poses the main question: How are the differences in the attitudes of the United States, Brazil, Indonesia, and Turkey towards the recognition of Palestine constructed through their presidents' speeches at the 2025 UN General Assembly? This study departs from the hypothesis that these differences in attitude are influenced by a combination of strategic alliances, normative foreign policy orientations, and countries' positions in the international system hierarchy. The objectives of this study are to analyse and compare the attitudes of four countries—the United States, Brazil, Indonesia, and Turkey—towards the recognition of Palestine based on their presidents' speeches at the 2025 UN General Assembly, as well as to identify the discursive and structural factors that shape each country's position on this issue.

Literature Review

Studies of presidential speeches have long been an important focus in political communication and international relations, particularly because state addresses serve as key instruments in constructing meaning, political legitimacy, and public opinion. Various discourse analysis approaches have been used to reveal how presidents use language to construct social reality, convey ideology, and maintain power in domestic and international political contexts (Kotenko et al., 2023; Zhikhareva & Yakovleva, 2021).

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach has also been widely used to examine presidential speeches, particularly in the context of power legitimacy and political persuasion. An analysis of Joe Biden's acceptance speech as president-elect shows that linguistic strategies such as parallelism, everyday language, and inclusive language were systematically utilised to build solidarity and gain public support (Nădrag & Gălbă, 2022). In addition, the diachronic rhetorical analysis approach also contributes significantly to understanding the evolution of presidential discourse. Studies analysing Memorial Day speeches in the United States using the discourse historical approach found that epideictic rhetoric not only has aesthetic and affective functions but also carries ideological content that helps maintain certain national narratives over time. This shows that presidential speeches are historically and cumulatively shaping collective identity (Wang & Liu, 2018).

In the context of electoral politics, research on discourse strategies and public opinion formation in the 2024 United States presidential campaign reveals how candidates use narrative structures to influence voter perceptions. An analysis of Donald Trump's and Kamala Harris' speeches shows similarities and differences in narrative construction,

particularly in self-characterisation, problem framing, and the representation of political opponents (Qaiwer, 2024). The issue of legitimacy and the construction of out-groups was also the focus of the analysis of presidential speeches. A comparative study of speeches by Donald Trump and George W. Bush revealed the use of evaluative labels, metaphors, and syllogisms as strategies for justifying political decisions and constructing an image of the enemy or the other side. This strategy demonstrates how discourse is used to reinforce the boundaries of 'us' and 'them' in international politics (Molodychenko, 2019). Overall, existing literature shows that discourse analysis of presidential speeches can reveal the mechanisms of persuasion, legitimisation, and public opinion formation in political communication (AlMarayat et al., 2025; Khafaga & Alqahtani, 2023; Lukšić, 2023; Morallo, 2025). However, most studies still focus on domestic contexts or single cases, particularly in the United States. Comparative studies across countries in multilateral forums, such as the UN General Assembly, particularly on the issue of Palestinian recognition, remain relatively limited. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by analysing and comparing presidential speeches from several countries in an international context to enrich our understanding of how discourse is used to shape a country's stance on normative and political global issues.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the main method to examine the linguistic construction, political rhetoric, and ideology contained in the official statements of four state leaders, namely Indonesia, the United States, Turkey, and Brazil, regarding the recognition of Palestine at the United Nations General Assembly on 23 September 2025. This approach was chosen because it can reveal the relationship among language, power, and diplomatic practices in the context of global politics (Fairclough, 2003; Febriyanti & Sundari, 2022).

The research data consists of transcripts of speeches and official diplomatic statements from representatives of the four countries delivered at the 2025 UN General Assembly, as well as official publications accessed through the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) website and statements from each country's foreign ministry. Supporting data include international media reports, official press releases, and relevant foreign policy documents to enrich the analysis's context. The data analysis procedure was carried out in three main stages. First, the identification of discourse structure, including the organisation of arguments, main themes, and the communicative purposes of each speech. Second, linguistic and rhetorical analysis, which includes the use of keywords, modality, metaphors, and persuasion strategies such as contrast, repetition, and moral appeal. Third, ideological analysis, to interpret how the use of language reflects the political positions, national identities, and strategic interests of each country (Sahide, Misran, & Maksum, 2024). This analysis draws on the frameworks of Fairclough (1996) and van Dijk (2006), which combine micro-analysis of text structure with macro-analysis of the broader social and political context. Thus, this study not only highlights the content of diplomatic discourse but also reveals how language functions as a tool of political legitimisation and ideological representation in the international arena. Unlike sampling techniques in quantitative research, the critical discourse analysis approach emphasises the use of smaller, context-rich samples to gain an in-depth understanding of the structure, meaning, and ideology embedded in political texts (Maksum et al., 2024). Therefore, this study focuses on an in-depth analysis of four official speeches delivered by representatives from Indonesia, the United States, Turkey, and Brazil at the 2025 UN General Assembly regarding the issue of recognising Palestine as a sovereign state.

Table 1. List of Speeches by Heads of State at the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

No	Country	Presenter	Number of minutes	Link YouTube
1	United States	Donald J. Trump	57.18	https://youtu.be/wwy1DYCg-Rs?si=iueMEoCMGlIPwJtJ
2	Indonesia	Prabowo Subianto	20.36	https://youtu.be/DWEwZY_aZ0s?si=P6DHHYkWUrHfLTlD
3	Brazil	Lula da Silva	18.57	https://youtu.be/hG8HZJhB4xo?si=UkjEIyJHHo_vb4uQ
4	Turkey	Reccep Tayyip Erdogan	37.06	https://youtu.be/Fhxljv9fN_w?si=EvVj5EVN-uPuo4jX

Source: Processed by the Author (2026)

The main data consists of official transcripts in English published by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA Official Records) and publicly accessible through the official UN website. In addition to the main data, researchers supplemented their analysis with media coverage, major news publications, and relevant social media posts to capture the interpretive dynamics and public reactions to the four countries' diplomatic stances. The main focus of this study is not on the amount of data, but on the depth of linguistic and ideological interpretation. Therefore, the analysis is directed at revealing how language choices, argument structures, and rhetorical strategies are used to frame each country's political and moral position on Palestinian recognition. All transcripts analysed are listed in the research appendix as part of the data source documentation.

To analyse the data systematically, this study used NVivo 12 Plus, qualitative data analysis software developed by QSR International (Burlington, Massachusetts). NVivo enables researchers to manage, code, and visualise discourse data in a structured manner, as well as identify linguistic, rhetorical, and ideological patterns hidden in speech texts. Through features such as text search queries, word frequency analysis, tree maps, and sentiment analysis, this software helps to reveal discourse trends and differences in ideological representation between countries.

In the context of the Palestinian recognition issue, NVivo was used to trace how each country representative framed their political and moral positions, whether through word choice, argument structure, or rhetorical strategies such as moral legitimacy, humanitarian solidarity, or geopolitical interests. The results of NVivo's visualisation and thematic coding then became the basis for critical interpretation using Fairclough (1996) and van Dijk (2006) critical discourse analysis theoretical frameworks. After the transcription process was complete, the author conducted a thorough review and comparison of the manual transcripts against the official transcripts published by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA Official Records) to ensure linguistic accuracy and content consistency. Each speech text from Indonesia, the United States, Turkey, and Brazil was re-verified to reflect the diplomatic statements as delivered in the official UN forum. The data processing procedure can be illustrated in the following diagram:

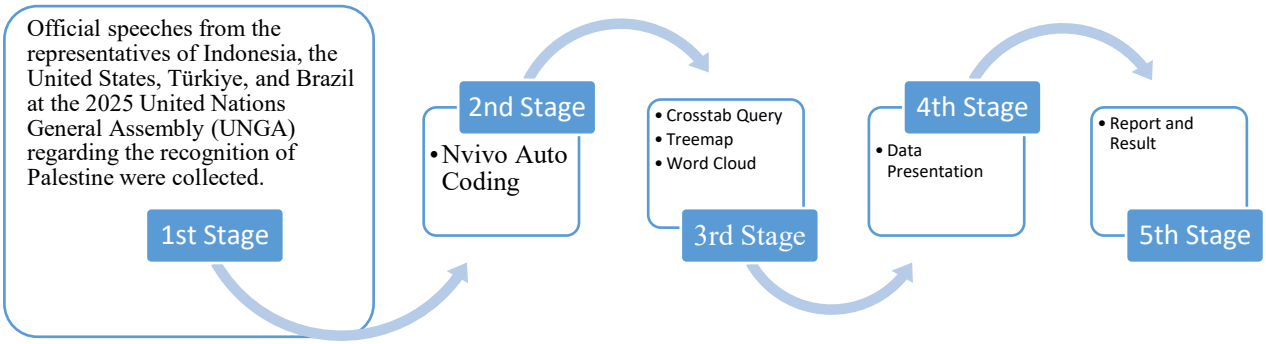


Figure 1. Procedure for analyzing the speech of the head of state using NVivo 12 Plus
Source: Processed by the Author (2026)

Global Recognition

Recognition is a fundamental political act, whereby a state acknowledges an existing factual situation and accepts the legal consequences arising from such recognition (Maksum et al., 2024). In international law and international relations studies, recognition is not merely understood as a cognitive act—that is, knowledge of a political entity's existence—but as a deliberate political decision with legal, diplomatic, and normative implications. In the contemporary international system, recognition increasingly requires the fulfilment of various criteria, including institutional capacity, completeness of legal documents, policy coherence, territorial control, and compliance with international norms (Espinosa & Francisco, 2022).

Recognition of a political entity as a state allows that entity to obtain rights and various privileges in the international community, so that its sovereignty is not only formal, but can also be exercised in a real and meaningful way (Maksum et al., 2024). International recognition is most evident when an established government officially recognises another political entity as a sovereign state. For entities that obtain such recognition, it is one of the most important milestones in their political life, as it places their leaders and citizens on an equal footing with the major actors in global politics (Martín & Gemma, 2022). Recognition also has a broad impact on political stability, security, legal

protection, economic development, and socio-cultural integration, including through access to international organisations, diplomatic networks, and global markets (Carroll, 2018).

Although there is no single universally agreed-upon definition of state recognition, recognition is generally understood as the practice whereby established states accept a new state as an independent entity within the international system (Visoka, 2022). onversely, the absence of recognition often leads to diplomatic isolation, economic limitations, and security vulnerabilities, which significantly complicate a state's ability to navigate political complexities (Hadjigeorgiou, 2024; Maksum et al., 2024). The act of recognising a newly independent state also implies that the recognising state is willing to no longer question the conditions and processes underlying that state's independence in the future. Therefore, recognition serves as an important mechanism for maintaining the stability of the international order by legitimising political entities as sovereign members of the global community. Without recognition, new states will face serious limitations in exercising their sovereignty, particularly in establishing diplomatic relations, conducting international trade, and participating in international organisations (Carroll, 2018). The speeches of heads of state at the United Nations General Assembly serve as a symbolic and political platform to assert their states' positions on global issues, including recognition of Palestine. In the context of global recognition, speeches at multilateral forums such as the UNGA can be understood as a form of discursive recognition, namely the practice of recognition expressed through language, norms, and claims of legitimacy, although not always followed by direct legal action.

Political Symbols

Symbols arise from the fundamental human need to create order in complex and often unstructured experiences, while also giving meaning to that order. This order is social in nature because it is shaped by society and is the result of human construction. As a concrete manifestation of the search for meaning, symbols carry certain values and emotional content and are gradually internalised in everyday life, often without us realising their influence. However, symbols as social constructs are not static, but are constantly being reshaped by ever-changing social experiences (Maksum et al., 2024).

In the political sphere, particularly in relation to power relations, symbols play a very significant role. Government policies and actions—ranging from tax setting to strategic decisions such as declarations of war and monetary policy—directly impact citizens' lives (Xu, 2023). In some cases, the consequences of these policies are clearly observable, although their interpretation remains diverse. In other situations, the government indirectly shapes public perception, so that the impact of policies is only vaguely felt. In both contexts, symbols serve as a means of political communication and a tool for strengthening solidarity and collective identity. However, when the public becomes aware of the use of symbols as political instruments, these symbols may be perceived as tools of manipulation that can weaken social cohesion (Susila et al., 2020a). Symbols occupy a central position in human social structures. Although their role is most easily recognised in formal institutions such as religion or state symbols—for example, flags, national anthems, and state emblems—in essence, symbols are present in all aspects of human life. This is due to the primary function of symbols in simplifying complex phenomena to make them easier to understand. In the context of politics and government, political symbolism is a powerful, almost inseparable instrument that conveys abstract ideas, shapes public perception, and garners political support. However, symbols do not have a single, universally agreed-upon meaning, as their interpretation is always influenced by the social background and individual experiences within a community (Gill & Angosto-Ferrandez, 2018).

Political symbols take many forms, ranging from material objects and individuals to expressions and actions that represent certain institutions, structures, groups, beliefs, or political doctrines. Examples include flags, state leaders, national figures, and cultural works such as music and poetry. Some symbols are deliberately designed for political purposes, while others are pre-existing social practices or elements that have subsequently acquired symbolic meaning. Essentially, any object can function as a political symbol as long as it is associated by individuals or groups with a particular political reality (Theiler, 2017).

Consistency and flexibility are the main characteristics of inclusive political symbols. Symbols enable abstract concepts such as freedom, equality, sovereignty, class, and power to be aligned with concrete experiences in social life. Through symbols, events such as conflict, courage, failure, and tragedy can be transformed into meaningful references for individuals and communities, while also shaping collective memory and shared political identity (Todorova, 2024). Overall, political symbolism is a dynamic and complex phenomenon, closely related to communication, identity, influence, and political strategy. Its historically significant role and its ongoing impact on the contemporary political

landscape make a deep understanding of political symbolism an important necessity for policymakers, the public, and academics alike, as symbols continue to shape political reality in various ways (Overgaard & Coleman, 2025; Susila et al., 2020b).

In the context of speeches by heads of state at the United Nations General Assembly, recognition of Palestine and support for the two-state solution serve as powerful political symbols for building moral legitimacy, ideological identity, and each country's geopolitical position. Similar to the political symbolism of world leaders, manifested through personal style, foreign visits, and narratives of moderation, speeches at the UN forum serve as a symbolic arena where world leaders display their political stances to a global audience.

Result

Analysis of the President's Speeches Using NVIVO 12 Plus

This section presents the results of a comprehensive analysis of the President's entire speech at the 80th UN General Assembly, conducted using NVivo 12 Plus as a qualitative analysis tool. Data processing was carried out through thematic coding of the entire speech text, which was then classified into six sentiment categories: negative, moderately negative, very negative, positive, moderately positive, and very positive. This classification enables the identification of dominant tone trends and the intensity of the rhetoric used. Additionally, in the context of discourse analysis, word frequency tables serve as quantitative evidence that reinforces qualitative findings.

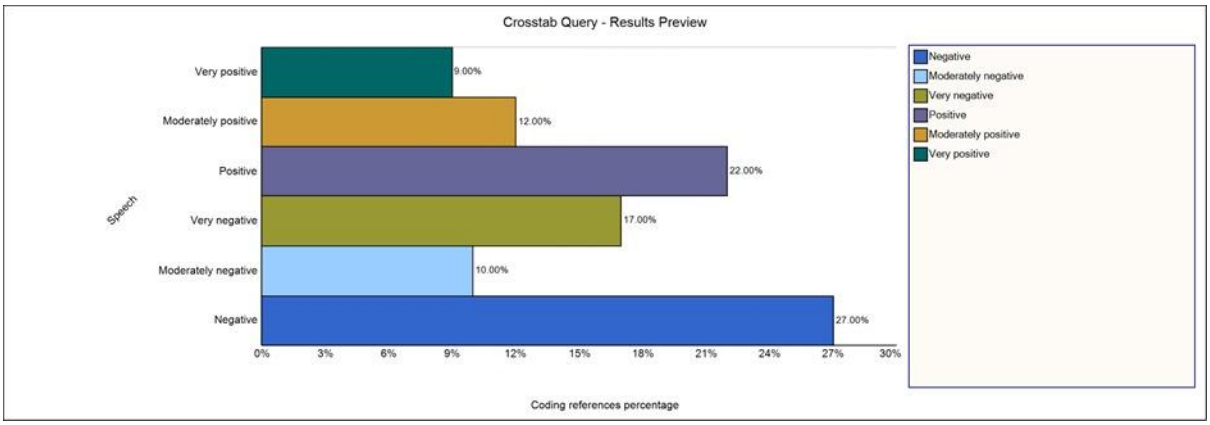


Figure 2. Crosstab Query using NVivo 12 Plus
Source: Processed by the Author (2026)

Based on the results of the crosstab query, all of the presidents' speeches showed a dominance of negative tones at 27%, followed by positive tones at 22%. This dominance of negative tones indicates that the speeches contained substantial criticism and warnings, with an emphasis on various global issues considered problematic, such as international conflicts, humanitarian crises, development inequalities, and geopolitical tensions. However, this negative character cannot be interpreted as mere pessimism, but rather as a reflection of a critical-realistic approach in reading the dynamics of the contemporary international order. The very negative category accounted for 17%, indicating statements with strong rhetorical emphasis, especially when the President highlighted the international community's failure to prevent mass violence, the weak implementation of international law, and structural injustice in the global system. The intensity of rhetoric in this category reveals a discursive strategy aimed at building moral urgency and normative legitimacy before an international audience. Meanwhile, the moderately negative category (10%) represents criticism that is conveyed in a more diplomatic and measured manner, without losing its normative substance.

On the other hand, optimism remains evident across the moderately positive (12%) and very positive (9%) categories. This positive sentiment generally arises in the context of calls to strengthen multilateralism, reform global governance, advance humanitarian solidarity, and commit to peace and sustainable development. The presence of positive tones indicates that the speeches did not stop at criticism, but also offered a normative vision of the direction of improvement for the international system. Overall, the results of the analysis using NVivo 12 Plus show a balanced discourse pattern between structural criticism and constructive expectations. The dominance of negative tones reflects a

critical-realist strategy that affirms the state's moral and political position in responding to global crises (Maksum et al., 2024). However, the presence of significant positive sentiment indicates that the speech continues to place diplomacy, international cooperation, and institutional reform as the normative way forward. This pattern indicates an effort to build international legitimacy by articulating the crisis and projecting collective solutions.

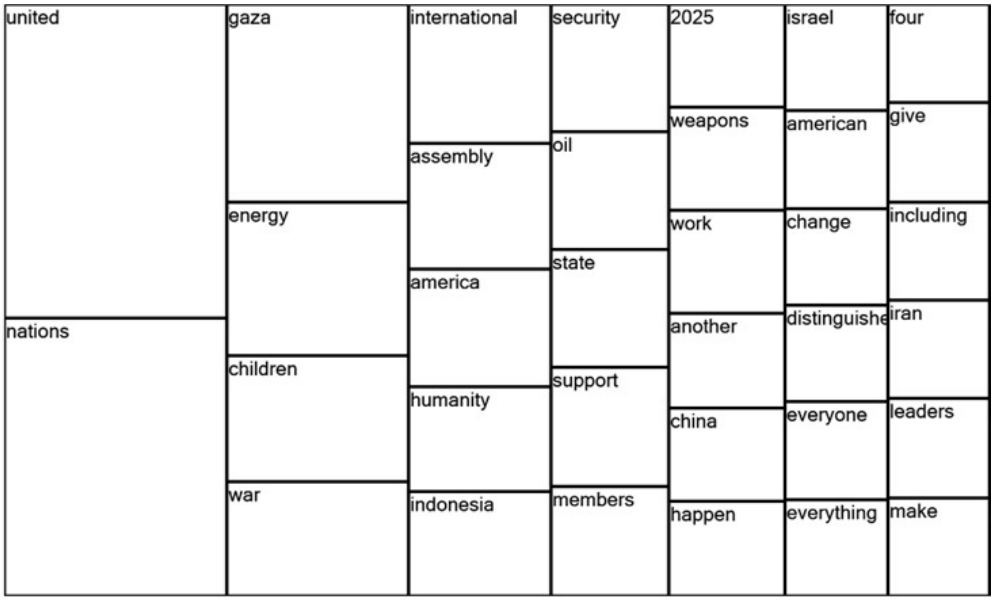


Figure 3. Tree Map using NVivo 12 Plus
Source: Processed by the Author (2026)

Furthermore, based on the tree map visualisation, the words ‘united’ and ‘nations’ occupy the largest area, confirming that the United Nations framework and the principle of multilateralism are central to the President's speech. The dominance of these two terms reveals a discursive strategy that consistently positions the UN as both a key actor in responding to global issues and a source of normative legitimacy for the criticisms and appeals made. The term ‘Gaza’ also occupies a significant space in the tree map, confirming that the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is a major issue. Its association with the words ‘children,’ ‘humanity,’ and ‘war’ reveals a discourse pattern that combines armed conflict with civilian suffering, especially among vulnerable groups. This indicates the use of humanitarian framing, in which conflict issues are presented in terms of their impact on universal human values.

Discourse Analysis of Lula da Silva's Speech on Recognition of Palestine at the 2025 UNGA

At the 80th General Assembly of the United Nations, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva once again served as the first speaker, continuing Brazil's diplomatic tradition dating back to 1955 (Al Jazeera, 2025b). From a political symbolism perspective, this position does not merely represent a protocol order but also conveys international legitimacy and a normative responsibility to shape the direction of global discourse. Historically, Brazil's role as the opening speaker at the General Assembly has evolved into a symbol of the international community's collective trust in the country's commitment to multilateralism (The America Times, 2025).



Word	Length	Count
Brazil	6	10
Democracy	9	7
International	13	6
Attacks	7	4
Countries	9	4
Solution	8	4
Two	3	4
Way	3	4
Conflict	8	3
Created	7	3
Free	4	3
Greater	7	3
Hunger	6	3
Last	4	3
Law	3	3
Members	7	3
Multilateral	12	3

Figure 3. Word Cloud results of Lula's speech using NVivo 12 Plus
Source: Processed by the Author (2026)

Discursively, Lula's speech framed the Palestinian issue within the frameworks of democracy, international law, and multilateralism. This is clearly reflected in the word frequency analysis, where the terms Brazil (10), democracy (7), and international (6) emerged as the dominant terms in the lexicon. The dominance of these words indicates Brazil's self-positioning strategy as a normative actor that claims moral legitimacy based on its historical experience against authoritarianism and its commitment to global democracy. Thus, Palestine is not positioned as a sectoral Middle East issue, but rather as a test of the credibility of democracy and international law.

The presence of the terms solution, two, and way (4 each) confirms that Lula's speeches consistently frame the Palestinian-Israeli conflict within the framework of a two-state solution. Unlike narrow security approaches, the two-state solution is constructed as a legitimate and rational normative path to ending structural conflict. Within this framework, Palestine is treated as a political subject with the right to self-determination, while international recognition is positioned as a prerequisite for sustainable peace. Word frequency analysis also shows the emergence of the terms ‘law’ (3), “multilateral” (3), and ‘members’ (3), which reinforce Lula's criticism of the erosion of multilateralism and the practice of unilateralism in global politics. By emphasising the weak respect for international law and the increase in unilateral actions, Lula implicitly links the suffering of Palestine to the collective failure of the international community to uphold humanitarian norms. In this context, the recognition of Palestine is presented not as a political bias, but as a legal and moral obligation of UN member states.

In responding to Hamas' attacks on Israel, Lula constructed a clear discursive distinction between the violence of non-state actors and the collective rights of the Palestinian people. By stating that Hamas' attacks were ‘unjustifiable’ while rejecting genocide and mass starvation in Gaza—reflected in the use of the words attacks (4) and hunger (3)—Lula rejected the logic of collective punishment. This strategy serves to deconstruct the dominant discourse that often reduces Palestine to being synonymous with terrorism, and returns the conflict to the realm of humanity and structural justice. Overall, the word frequency table serves as quantitative evidence that reinforces qualitative discourse analysis. The lexical patterns that emerge show that Lula's speeches consistently emphasise democracy, multilateralism, and a two-state solution as the foundation for resolving the Palestinian conflict. Thus, Lula positions Brazil as a normative agenda-setter for the Global South, seeking to revive the spirit of humanity and international law while challenging the dominance of unilateral approaches and narrow realism in the contemporary international order (United Nations, 2025c).

Lula utilised this symbolic position to set the agenda on strategic global issues, including the crisis of multilateralism, the rise of authoritarianism, global economic inequality, conflict and allegations of genocide in Gaza, and the dysfunction of global governance. By placing these issues at the forefront of the international forum, his speech served as a normative reference that framed the subsequent debates among member states. This strategy shows that

protocol symbols can be capitalised upon as political instruments in the production of meaning and legitimacy at the global level. Furthermore, Lula constructed a narrative linking the history of the UN's founding, Brazil's domestic experience dealing with authoritarian regimes, and the urgency of establishing a multipolar world order, as well as support for a two-state solution for Palestine and Israel. Through this discursive construction, he positioned himself not only as head of state but also as a moral agenda-setter for the Global South. This political symbol reinforced Brazil's image as a normative actor seeking to revitalise the principles of humanity, multilateralism and global justice, while criticising the tendency towards unilateralism in the contemporary international order.

Lula's speech also carried a symbolic dimension, serving as an implicit criticism of Donald Trump's leadership and the trend towards authoritarianism in global politics. Delivered just before Trump's speech, the momentum was used to emphasise that global democracy was at a critical juncture amid growing unilateralism and the erosion of international norms. The criticism of 'unilateral intervention, arbitrary sanctions, and violations of state sovereignty' represented a normative differentiation between the multilateral-institutional approach advocated by Brazil and the realpolitik practices associated with the Trump administration. Thus, the speech served not only as a statement of foreign policy but also as a symbol of discursive opposition to a model of leadership perceived as undermining the supremacy of international law and global solidarity.

Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump's Speech on Recognition of Palestine at the 2025 UNGA

At the 80th General Assembly of the United Nations, Donald Trump served as the second speaker in his capacity as the United States, the host country of the UN headquarters in New York (CNBC Indonesia, 2025). At the beginning of his speech, Trump openly criticised the malfunctioning teleprompter and stated that the device's operator was 'in big trouble', before finally continuing his speech by reading from a printed script. He also mentioned the broken escalator at the UN headquarters. Symbolically, this moment can be interpreted as representing Trump's characteristic confrontational and anti-elitist communication style, as well as a form of symbolic delegitimisation of multilateral institutions through highlighting technical aspects and facilities.



Word	Length	Count
United	6	44
World	5	33
Countries	9	32
Nations	7	31
Country	7	28
States	6	26
Energy	6	22
Many	4	22
Two	3	15
America	7	13
Global	6	10
Happen	6	10
Even	5	10
Thing	5	10
Today	5	10
Use	3	10
Actually	8	9

Figure 4. Word Cloud results of Trump's speech using NVivo 12 Plus
Source: Processed by the Author (2026)

A word frequency analysis shows that Trump's speeches are dominated by a lexicon of the state, national power, and a nation-state-oriented international system. The dominance of terms such as united, states, country, countries, nations, and America indicates that the international world is constructed as an arena of competition between sovereign states, rather than as a global moral community. Within this framework, Palestine is not positioned as a political subject with the right to self-determination, but rather as part of a conflict configuration that must be managed in the interests of the security of the United States' strategic allies. The emergence of the words 'energy' (22) and 'America' (13) indicates

a shift in the focus of Trump's speech from the humanitarian issue of Palestine to the domestic, national, and economic-political agenda of the United States. This confirms that the Palestinian issue is treated instrumentally, not normatively.

In the context of the Israel–Hamas conflict, Trump constructed an asymmetrical security framing. The strong emphasis on the release of Israeli hostages and the portrayal of Hamas as the sole actor responsible for the war reflects the reduction of the Palestinian conflict to an issue of terrorism (Aljazeera, 2025a). In this discourse, the suffering of Palestinian civilians—including victims of bombing, displacement, and humanitarian crises—does not receive commensurate discursive attention. As a result, the humanitarian dimension of the conflict is marginalised by the logic of security and regional stability. Trump's rejection of the recognition of the Palestinian state demonstrates the consistency of a hard realist view that prioritises the strategic interests of allies over the principles of international law and global justice. The recognition of Palestine by a number of European countries is constructed as a 'political reward' for Hamas, thereby reducing and delegitimising Palestine's political legitimacy. This stance is contrary to the normative approach that views state recognition as an instrument for reviving the two-state solution and preventing ongoing structural violence. The dominance of the lexicon of state and power reveals a pattern of discursive emphasis oriented towards state-centric realism and a rejection of multilateralism. Trump's criticism of the UN—which he described as an ineffective and purely symbolic institution—further emphasised his preference for unilateral US leadership and his rejection of norm-based global governance (The White House, 2025).

Trump's speech also sparked widespread criticism for containing a number of controversial and misleading claims, covering issues ranging from immigration, inflation and climate change to his personal role in resolving global conflicts. He called on Hamas to release Israeli hostages believed to still be held in Gaza and stated that the war must be stopped. However, at the same time, he condemned countries such as France, Britain, Canada, Australia and Portugal for recognising Palestine as a sovereign state, calling the move a 'gift' to Hamas. This position reaffirms the consistency of US policy under his leadership, which rejects recognition of Palestine without comprehensive negotiations (Aljazeera, 2025a). The duration of Trump's speech, which lasted around 56 minutes—far exceeding the 15-minute limit set by the UN—also reinforced the impression of personalising multilateral forums for domestic political interests and affirming individual leadership. In the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict, Trump's approach shows a security orientation that is heavily biased towards Israel and frames the conflict primarily as a matter of terrorism. Palestine is not positioned as a political subject with the right to self-determination, but is reduced to an arena of conflict that must be stabilised for the sake of regional security. The rejection of the recognition of the Palestinian state reflects a hard realist approach that prioritises the strategic interests of allies over the principles of international law.

Discourse Analysis of Prabowo Subianto's Speech on Recognition of Palestine at the 2025 UNGA

At the 80th General Assembly of the United Nations (UN), President Prabowo Subianto delivered his maiden speech live in the General Assembly Hall on 23 September 2025. He appeared third in the first session of the General Debate, after President Lula da Silva and Trump. This position has strong symbolic and diplomatic significance, given that Brazil has traditionally opened the session since 1955, while the United States, as the host, occupies second place. Thus, Indonesia gained a strategic stage that is rare in the history of its participation in this global forum. Prabowo's direct presence marked a new chapter in Indonesian diplomacy after a decade of the president's physical absence from the General Assembly podium. In the past, President Joko Widodo delivered several speeches online during the pandemic, while Indonesia was often represented by the vice president or ministerial-level officials. In this context, Prabowo's direct appearance sends a symbolic message about the revitalisation of Indonesia's role in high-level multilateral diplomacy (Sekretariat Kabinet RI, 2025).



Word	Length	Count
Indonesia	9	14
Peace	5	11
President	9	8
Palestine	9	3
Solution	8	3
Struggle	8	3
Suspicion	9	3
Together	8	3
Towards	7	3
Agriculture	11	2
Aim	3	2
Answer	6	2
Apartheid	9	2
Build	5	2
Change	6	2
Complete	8	2
Confident	9	2

Figure 5. Word Cloud results of Trump's speech using NVivo 12 Plus
Source: Processed by the Author (2026)

Word frequency analysis shows that President Prabowo Subianto's speech was dominated by a lexicon of national identity, peace, and collective commitment, which consistently reinforced a normative-constructive framing of the Palestinian issue. The dominance of terms such as Indonesia (14), peace (11), together (3), and solution (3) indicates that the Palestinian conflict is constructed not only as a humanitarian issue, but also as an arena for the active contribution of states in maintaining international peace. In contrast to a confrontational approach, Prabowo's discourse emphasises Indonesia's position as a mediating actor that prioritises stability, peaceful solutions, and practical responsibility in the multilateral system. In the context of discourse analysis, the word frequency table serves as quantitative evidence that reinforces qualitative findings by showing patterns of discursive emphasis focused on the country's self-positioning and forward orientation. The repetition of these key lexical items reflects Prabowo's rhetorical strategy in framing the Palestinian issue within an inclusive peace narrative, which links the principles of anti-colonialism and global justice with Indonesia's concrete commitment as a major contributor to UN peacekeeping forces, while positioning the international community as a collective partner in achieving a just and sustainable solution.

Substantively, Prabowo's speech emphasised global humanitarian issues, particularly those related to Palestine and Gaza, linking them to Indonesia's historical experience of colonialism. References to this history of colonialism served as moral justification for Indonesia's support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. In his speech, Prabowo stated Indonesia's readiness to send up to 20,000 peacekeeping personnel if the Security Council and the General Assembly so decided. This statement is not merely rhetorical, but reinforces Indonesia's claim as one of the main contributors to UN peacekeeping forces. Thus, the commitment to peace is framed not merely as a norm, but as concrete action (action-oriented diplomacy).

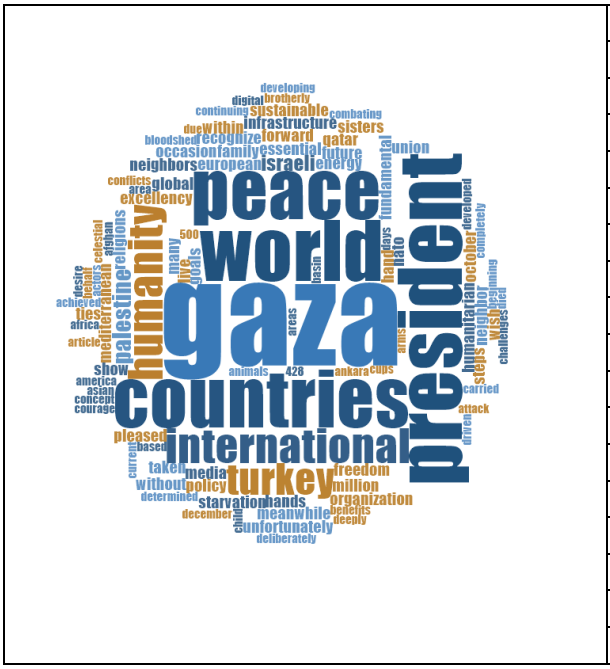
Interestingly, the speech also contained complex symbolic dimensions. On the one hand, Prabowo explicitly supported the recognition of Palestine and the two-state solution as ‘the right side of history.’ On the other hand, he emphasised that the world must also respect and guarantee Israel's security, even ending his speech with the word ‘Shalom.’ This linguistic gesture gained international media attention, with publications such as The Times of India and The Times of Israel assessing the greeting as a symbol of multiculturalism and an unusual message of peace from the leader of the world's largest Muslim country, which has no diplomatic relations with Israel (The Times of Israel, 2025b). From a political symbolism perspective, Prabowo's leading a standing ovation in recognition of Palestine reinforced the discursive message of his speech. This non-verbal gesture serves as symbolic diplomacy, integrating actions, narratives, and policy positions into a cohesive construction of meaning. Palestine is represented as a symbol of global justice and

anti-colonialism, while Indonesia is positioned as an active and non-neutral normative actor of the Global South in international humanitarian issues.

Overall, Prabowo's speech not only conveyed Indonesia's foreign policy agenda but also built the country's image through a combination of moral rhetoric, institutional commitment, and diplomatic symbolism. By combining support for Palestine and recognition of Israel's security, Indonesia is trying to position itself as a bridge-builder in a polarised conflict. This approach reflects a diplomatic strategy that seeks to balance normative idealism with geopolitical pragmatism in the contemporary international order.

Discourse Analysis of Erdogan's Speech on Recognition of Palestine at the 2025 UNGA

In his speech, which lasted approximately 37 minutes and was delivered fourth in order at the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan presented an approach that was emphatically normative–humanitarian as well as confrontational towards Israel (Turkiye Today, 2025)



Word	Length	Count
Gaza	4	30
President	9	19
World	5	18
Countries	9	17
Peace	5	17
Humanity	8	10
International	13	10
Turkey	6	9
Palestine	9	5
Israeli	7	4
Energy	6	3
Essential	9	3
European	8	3
Excellency	10	3
Family	6	3
Forward	7	3
Freedom	7	3

Figure 6. Word Cloud results of Erdogan's speech using NVivo 12 Plus
Source: Processed by the Author (2026)

Word frequency analysis shows that Erdoğan's speech was dominated by the lexicon of humanity, political legitimacy, and global responsibility, which consistently reinforced the normative-humanitarian framing of the Gaza conflict. The dominance of terms such as Gaza (30), humanity (10), world (18), peace (17), and international (10) indicates that the Palestinian crisis is constructed not merely as a regional geopolitical conflict, but as a global moral issue that demands the attention and collective response of the international community.

The repetition of these key lexical items reflects Erdoğan's rhetorical strategy of framing the Palestinian issue within a universal ethical narrative, while positioning the international community as an actor with moral and political responsibility to respond to human rights violations and promote a just and sustainable peace. From the outset, Erdoğan framed the Gaza conflict as a grave violation of humanity and international law, not merely an escalation of ordinary armed conflict. The use of the term 'genocide' to describe Israel's actions is a rhetorical strategy that carries significant moral and legal weight in the international legal regime. By presenting symbolic data on the deaths of children and the suffering of civilians, Erdoğan builds moral legitimacy while activating the emotional dimension of a global audience. This framing positions Gaza as a space of systemic crimes against humanity that demands a collective response and immediate intervention from the international community. From a critical discourse analysis perspective, this strategy

reveals an attempt to construct a reality in which the conflict is understood as an extraordinary humanitarian crisis that violates universal values and the United Nations' founding principles.

Furthermore, Erdoğan expanded the narrative of the Palestinian conflict into the context of regional destabilisation. He accused Israel of not only committing aggression in Gaza, but also expanding its military actions to the West Bank and various regions in the Middle East. This narrative constructs a representation of Israel as an aggressive actor that threatens not only Palestine but also regional security. Within this framework, Erdoğan rejects narrow security-centric logic and asserts that peace cannot be achieved as long as occupation, structural violence and humanitarian crises continue. The speech also demonstrates Turkey's consistency in supporting a two-state solution and the recognition of the Palestinian state. Erdoğan's appeal to countries that have not yet recognised Palestine shows a diplomatic approach that positions such recognition as both a moral act and a political instrument for upholding international law. The mention of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in the context of international legitimacy further emphasises Turkey's support for strengthening Palestine's position in global forums (United Nations, 2025a).

The use of emotional language such as 'the lowest point of humanity' and 'unprecedented cruelty in the last century,' accompanied by images of starving Gazans, demonstrates a rhetorical strategy based on empathy and moral shock. In this way, Erdoğan seeks to shift the focus of the debate from geopolitical calculations to concrete human suffering. This strategy also pressures major countries not to remain passive, and frames the international community as partly responsible for the continuing violence. Furthermore, the accusation against Israel's attack on Qatar broadens the conflict from a humanitarian issue to one of regional stability and international diplomacy. By stating that these actions demonstrate the Israeli government's 'loss of control,' Erdoğan constructs an image of Israel as an actor that not only violates humanitarian law but also threatens the peace process. Compared to Donald Trump's approach, which tends to emphasise national power and scepticism towards multilateralism, Erdoğan used the UN forum to demand collective global responsibility. Thus, this speech was not only a criticism of Israel but also of the international system's failure to protect human rights and prevent mass violence.

Overall, Erdoğan's speech at the 80th UN General Assembly represented Turkey's foreign policy, grounded in moral legitimacy, humanitarian solidarity, and criticism of structures of global injustice. Through normative, emotional, and confrontational discourse construction, Turkey is positioned as an actor that challenges the status quo and calls for the restructuring of international responsibilities in order to achieve sustainable justice and peace.

The following is a table comparing the attitudes of state leaders towards the Palestinian issue at the 80th UN General Assembly:

Table 2. Comparison of Attitudes towards the Palestinian Issue

Country / Leader	Dominant Framing	Key Lexicon (High Frequency)	Construction of the Palestine Issue	Position on the Recognition of Palestine	Ideological Orientation
Brazil (Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva)	Normative–Legal–Multilateral	Brazil, democracy, international, law, multilateral	Palestine is positioned as a test of the credibility of democracy and international law	Strongly supports the recognition of Palestine as a legal and moral obligation of the UN; condemns Israel	Normative democracy, Global South multilateralism
United States (Donald Trump)	State-centric Realism	United States, America, country, nations, energy	Palestine is reduced to a security and conflict-management issue rather than recognised as a political subject	Rejects the recognition of Palestine; considers it a risk to stability and to allies	Hard realism, unilateralism
Indonesia (Prabowo Subianto)	Normative–Constructivist	Indonesia, peace, president, together, solution	Palestine is constructed as an arena for active state contribution in	Supports the recognition of Palestine within a peaceful and multilateral	Normative constructivism, peace-oriented diplomacy

			maintaining international peace	framework; does not explicitly condemn Israel	
Türkiye (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan)	Normative–Humanitarian	Gaza, humanity, world, peace, international	Palestine is positioned as a global moral crisis and a symbol of humanitarian violation demanding collective international responsibility	Strongly supports the recognition of Palestine as a global moral and political obligation; condemns Israel	Normative humanitarianism, global justice orientation

Source: Processed by the Author (2026)

Conclusion

An analysis of the speeches delivered by world leaders at the 80th General Assembly of the United Nations reveals significant differences in the framing of the Palestinian issue, ideological orientation, and attitudes towards recognising the State of Palestine. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva used a normative-legal-multilateral framing, positioning Palestine as a test of the credibility of democracy and international law. This approach emphasised the collective rights of the Palestinian people, rejected the logic of collective punishment, and positioned Brazil as a normative actor of the Global South promoting a two-state solution based on justice and multilateralism. In contrast, US President Donald Trump presents a state-centric realism framing, which reduces the Palestinian conflict to a matter of security and national interest management. Trump's response to the tragedy of 7 October shows justification for Israel's military actions and marginalisation of the suffering of Palestinian civilians, while affirming a preference for unilateral leadership and scepticism towards multilateralism. Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have taken a more constructive normative approach. Prabowo positions Palestine as an arena for Indonesia's active contribution to maintaining international peace, prioritising peaceful diplomacy and multilateralism, and combining support for Palestine with respect for Israel's security. Erdoğan employed a normative–humanitarian framing, emphasising the Gaza crisis as a global humanitarian violation, demanding collective responsibility from the international community, and highlighting the need for Palestinian recognition as a moral and political instrument.

Overall, a comparison of the four leaders reveals a sharp contrast between unilateral and confrontational approaches that emphasise national interests (Trump) and normative, multilateral, and humanitarian approaches that emphasise global justice and collective responsibility (Lula, Prabowo, Erdoğan). This difference reflects the tension between hard realism and normative multilateralism in contemporary international diplomacy and confirms that moral legitimacy and humanitarian framing remain important instruments for shaping global perceptions of the Palestinian conflict.

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Author Contributions

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Data Availability

The secondary data analysed in this study consist of publicly available speeches delivered by the heads of state of the United States, Indonesia, Brazil, and Türkiye at the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2025. The audiovisual materials used in the analysis are publicly accessible through YouTube at the following links: Donald J. Trump, United States (https://youtu.be/wwy1DYCg-Rs?si=iueMEoCMGlIPwJtJ); Prabowo Subianto, Indonesia (https://youtu.be/DWEwZY_aZ0s?si=P6DHHYkWUrHfLTlD); Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Brazil (https://youtu.be/hG8HZJhB4xo?si=UkjEIyJHHo_vb4uQ); and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye

(https://youtu.be/Fhxljv9fN_w?si=EvVj5EVN-uPuo4jX). These data sources are also listed in Table 1 of the manuscript. The speech transcripts were cross-checked against publicly available United Nations General Assembly records, as described in the Methods section. No new primary dataset was generated for this study.

Article Type

Research Article

This manuscript is submitted as a Research Article. The study applies a qualitative research design using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine official speeches delivered by state leaders at the 2025 United Nations General Assembly. The research uses systematically collected speech transcripts and analytical procedures to identify linguistic, rhetorical, and ideological patterns.

Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study did not involve human participants, the collection of personal data, or experimental procedures. Therefore, ethical approval and informed consent were not required.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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