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Narrating Unity and Power: Economic Discourse as Ideological Text in President Prabowo's D-8 Summit Speech

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Abstract

Political speeches delivered in international forums may be read not only as policy statements but also as ideological texts that construct collective identity and narrate power relations. This article examines President Prabowo Subianto's speech at the D-8 Summit as a literary-discursive artifact that articulates economic unity as a central ideological narrative of the Global South. Drawing on Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, the study adopts a qualitative textual approach to analyze lexical patterns, repetition, modality, and evaluative language. The findings indicate that the speech employs economic statistics, historical allusions, and moral appeals to produce a narrative in which unity signifies strength, fragmentation signifies vulnerability, and cooperation becomes a moral and political obligation. References to justice, inclusivity, and solidarity with Palestine further position the D-8 within a shared postcolonial consciousness. The study argues that the speech functions as a narrative of resistance that reimagines economic cooperation as cultural and ideological power. By treating political discourse as a literary text, this article contributes to literary studies by demonstrating how language, ideology, and power intersect in contemporary global narratives.

Keywords: Political Discourse, Ideology, Global South, Literary CDA, Economic Narrative

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INTRODUCTION

The Developing-8 (D-8) organization, established in 1997, represents a significant platform for economic cooperation among developing countries with large Muslim populations: Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey. As a forum for South-South cooperation, the D-8 Summit serves as a critical site for articulating alternative visions of global economic governance and development paradigms that challenge the hegemony of Western-dominated international financial institutions.

President Prabowo Subianto's participation in the D-8 Summit marks a significant moment in Indonesian foreign policy, occurring during a period of global economic uncertainty, shifting geopolitical alignments, and increasing calls for reform of the international economic order. His speech at this forum represents more than diplomatic protocol; it constitutes a carefully constructed ideological text that employs economic discourse to advance political objectives, construct collective identity, and position Indonesia within emerging global power structures.

While economic discourse in international forums is often treated as neutral, technical communication focused on trade figures, investment flows, and development indicators, critical scholars have demonstrated that such discourse is inherently ideological, embedded with power relations, and serves to construct particular versions of social reality. However, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to analyzing how leaders of developing nations employ economic discourse in multilateral settings to challenge existing power structures while simultaneously constructing their own legitimacy and authority.

This study addresses this gap by examining: How does President Prabowo's D-8 Summit speech employ economic discourse as ideological text to construct narratives of unity and power? What linguistic and rhetorical strategies are deployed to achieve these ideological functions? How does this discourse position Indonesia and the D-8 nations within broader global economic and political structures?

Critical Discourse Analysis and Political Economy

Critical Discourse Analysis, pioneered by scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak, provides a theoretical and methodological framework for examining how language use reflects and constructs power relations, ideologies, and social structures. Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which analyzes discourse as text, discursive practice, and social practice, has been particularly influential in studying political and economic communication. Within CDA scholarship, the analysis of economic discourse has emerged as a significant subfield.

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Fairclough's work on the discourse of neoliberalism demonstrates how economic terminology and concepts become naturalized in political communication, serving to legitimize particular economic arrangements while marginalizing alternatives. Similarly, scholars have examined how economic crises are discursively constructed, how austerity measures are justified through linguistic strategies, and how global economic institutions employ discourse to maintain hegemonic power.

Ideology and Discourse

The relationship between ideology and discourse has been extensively theorized within critical linguistics and social theory. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach emphasizes how ideologies are expressed, reproduced, and challenged through discourse, while Althusser's concept of ideological state apparatuses highlights how institutions employ discourse to interpellated subjects and maintain power structures.

In the context of political speech, ideology operates not through explicit argumentation but through naturalized assumptions, metaphorical constructions, and strategic framing that position certain perspectives as common sense while delegitimizing alternatives. Economic discourse proves particularly effective for ideological work because it claims technical objectivity while embedding normative assumptions about social organization, development pathways, and international relations.

South-South Cooperation and Alternative Development Discourse

The discourse of South-South cooperation emerged from post-colonial movements and the Non-Aligned Movement, articulating an alternative vision of international relations based on solidarity among developing nations, mutual benefit, and resistance to neo-colonial economic structures. Scholars have traced how this discourse evolved from the Bandung Conference of 1955 through various institutional forms including the G-77, BRICS, and regional organizations like D-8. Research on South-South cooperation discourse reveals tensions between solidarity rhetoric and competitive national interests, between challenging Western hegemony and seeking integration into global capitalism, and between asserting cultural distinctiveness and adopting universal development models. These tensions manifest in the linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed by leaders of developing nations in multilateral forums.

Indonesian Foreign Policy Discourse

Indonesian foreign policy has historically been characterized by the principle of "*bebas*

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aktif" (independent and active), reflecting non-alignment and active engagement in international affairs. Scholars have examined how Indonesian leaders from Sukarno through Jokowi have employed discourse to position Indonesia as a bridge between different geopolitical blocs, as a leader of the Muslim world, and as a champion of developing nations' interests.

President Prabowo Subianto's foreign policy discourse represents both continuity and change in Indonesian diplomatic communication. His military background, nationalist orientation, and emphasis on economic sovereignty introduce distinctive elements into Indonesian foreign policy rhetoric, warranting careful discursive analysis.

THEORETICAL INSIGHT

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

This study employs Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, which conceptualizes discourse analysis as operating on three interconnected levels:

1. Text Analysis (Description)

This level focuses on the linguistic features of the text itself, including:

a) Vocabulary choices and semantic fields
b) Grammar and sentence structure
c) Cohesion and text organization
d) Metaphorical expressions
e) Modality and evaluation

2. Discursive Practice (Interpretation)

This level examines how the text is produced, distributed, and consumed, including:

a) Intertextuality and interdiscursivity
b) Speech act functions
c) Coherence and interpretive processes
d) Genre conventions and their manipulation

3. Social Practice (Explanation)

This level situates the discourse within broader social, political, and economic contexts, examining:

a) Power relations and hegemonic struggles
b) Ideological effects and subject positioning
c) Social and institutional contexts
d) Historical and cultural dimensions

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Van Dijk's Ideological Square

Complementing Fairclough's model, this study employs Teun van Dijk's concept of the "ideological square," which identifies four strategic moves in ideological discourse:

1. Emphasize Our good things
2. Emphasize Their bad things
3. De-emphasize Our bad things
4. De-emphasize Their bad things

This framework proves particularly useful for analyzing how President Prabowo constructs in-group/out-group distinctions between D-8 nations and Western economic powers.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Drawing on Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory, this study examines how metaphorical constructions in economic discourse shape understanding and legitimize particular policy orientations. Economic metaphors (e.g., "economic engine," "trade barriers," "market forces") are not merely decorative language but cognitive frames that structure how audiences understand economic relations and possibilities.

Legitimation Strategies

Following van Leeuwen's framework, this study analyzes four categories of legitimation strategies:

1. Authorization: legitimation by reference to authority
2. Rationalization: legitimation by reference to utility and goals
3. Moral evaluation: legitimation by reference to value systems
4. Mythopoesis: legitimation through narratives and storytelling

Analytical Framework Integration

These theoretical frameworks are integrated to provide comprehensive analysis of President Prabowo's speech:

Fairclough's model provides the overall analytical structure
Van Dijk's ideological square identifies strategic positioning
Conceptual metaphor theory reveals cognitive framing
Legitimation strategies illuminate how authority and policy are justified

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METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs qualitative research design using Critical Discourse Analysis as both theoretical framework and methodological approach. The research is interpretive in nature, seeking to uncover meanings, ideologies, and power relations embedded in linguistic practices rather than testing hypotheses or establishing causal relationships.

Data Source

The primary data source is President Prabowo Subianto's speech delivered at the D-8 Summit. The complete text of the speech was obtained from official government sources to ensure authenticity and accuracy. The speech represents a complete, naturally-occurring political text suitable for discourse analysis.

Data Characteristics:

1. Genre: Political speech in multilateral diplomatic setting
2. Speaker: President Prabowo Subianto of Indonesia
3. Audience: D-8 member state representatives and international observers
4. Context: D-8 Summit focused on economic cooperation among developing nations
5. Language: English (as the lingua franca of international diplomacy)

Analytical Procedures

The analysis proceeds through systematic stages aligned with Fairclough's three-dimensional model:

Stage 1: Text Description

1. Complete transcription and segmentation of the speech
2. Identification of economic terminology and semantic fields
3. Analysis of grammatical structures, particularly modality and transitivity
4. Examination of metaphorical expressions and their patterns
5. Analysis of cohesive devices and text organization
6. Coding of evaluative language and stance markers

Stage 2: Discursive Practice Interpretation

1. Identification of intertextual references and allusions

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2. Analysis of genre conventions and their strategic deployment
3. Examination of speech acts and their illocutionary force
4. Investigation of coherence strategies and interpretive frameworks
5. Analysis of voice and footing shifts

Stage 3: Social Practice Explanation

1. Contextualization within Indonesian foreign policy traditions
2. Situating within D-8 organizational history and objectives
3. Analysis of power relations between D-8 nations and global economic structures
4. Examination of ideological functions and subject positioning
5. Assessment of implications for South-South cooperation discourse

Validity and Reliability

To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, this study employs several strategies: Triangulation: Multiple theoretical frameworks (Fairclough, van Dijk, Lakoff & Johnson, van Leeuwen) are applied to provide comprehensive analysis and cross-validate interpretations. Systematic Analysis: Explicit analytical procedures and coding schemes are employed to ensure consistency and transparency in interpretation. Contextual Grounding: Interpretations are grounded in detailed knowledge of Indonesian politics, D-8 organizational context, and broader international economic relations. Reflexivity The researcher acknowledges their own positioning and potential biases in interpretation, recognizing that discourse analysis is inherently interpretive.

Ethical Considerations

As the speech is a public political text delivered in an official capacity, no ethical concerns regarding privacy or consent arise. The analysis maintains scholarly objectivity while acknowledging its critical orientation toward examining power relations and ideology.

Limitations

This study focuses on a single speech text, which limits generalizability but allows for deep, detailed analysis. The analysis is conducted on an English-language speech, which may not capture all nuances if the speaker's first language is Indonesian. Additionally, as with all interpretive research, alternative readings of the text are possible, though the systematic application of

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established CDA frameworks enhances analytical rigor.

Analysis

Textual Analysis: Economic Discourse and Linguistic Strategies

Semantic Fields and Vocabulary Choices

President Prabowo's speech employs a rich semantic field of economic terminology that extends beyond technical description to serve ideological functions. Key vocabulary clusters include:

Cooperation and Solidarity Terms: "partnership," "collaboration," "mutual benefit," "collective," "solidarity," "shared prosperity"

These terms construct the D-8 not merely as an economic organization but as a moral community united by common values and interests. The repeated emphasis on mutuality and sharing positions economic cooperation as reciprocal rather than exploitative, implicitly contrasting with neo-colonial economic relationships.

Power and Agency Terms: "strengthen," "empower," "mobilize," "harness," "leverage," "drive"

This vocabulary cluster attributes active agency to D-8 nations, constructing them as powerful actors capable of shaping economic outcomes rather than passive recipients of global economic forces. This linguistic strategy challenges deficit narratives that position developing nations as dependent and powerless.

Development and Progress Terms: "growth," "innovation," "transformation," "advancement," "potential," "opportunities"

The discourse constructs a teleological narrative of inevitable progress, positioning D-8 cooperation as the vehicle for achieving developmental goals. This forward-looking orientation legitimizes current policy directions while constructing optimism about collective futures.

Metaphorical Constructions

Several conceptual metaphors structure the economic discourse:

ECONOMY IS A JOURNEY: References to "pathways," "moving forward," "progress," and "direction" construct economic development as purposeful movement toward destinations. This metaphor implies collective agency in choosing routes and reaching goals.

ECONOMY IS A BUILDING: Terms like "foundation," "pillars," "structure," and "framework" construct economic cooperation as architectural construction requiring solid foundations and careful design. This metaphor emphasizes stability, planning, and collaborative construction.

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ECONOMY IS AN ORGANISM: References to "growth," "vitality," "health," and "strength" construct the economy as a living entity with natural processes. This biologistic metaphor naturalizes certain economic arrangements while implying that cooperation promotes healthy development.

RESOURCES ARE ASSETS TO BE MOBILIZED: Economic resources are constructed as dormant potentials awaiting activation through cooperation. This metaphor positions D-8 leadership as capable of "unlocking" or "unleashing" latent economic power.

Grammatical Features

Modality: The speech employs high modality markers ("must," "will," "need to") to construct necessity and certainty regarding D-8 cooperation. This linguistic strategy leaves little space for alternative perspectives, positioning the proposed cooperation as inevitable and essential.

Transitivity: Analysis of transitivity patterns reveals strategic agency attribution. D-8 nations are consistently positioned as agents of material processes ("we will strengthen," "we are building"), while external forces are often backgrounded or nominalized ("challenges," "obstacles"). This pattern constructs D-8 agency while obscuring external constraints.

Pronoun Usage: The strategic deployment of "we," "our," and "us" constructs collective identity among D-8 nations, while "they" and "their" occasionally mark boundaries with Western economic powers. This pronoun pattern performs identity work, constructing in-group solidarity.

Discursive Practice: Intertextuality and Genre

Intertextual References

The speech draws on multiple discursive traditions:

Non-Aligned Movement Discourse: Echoes of Bandung Conference rhetoric appear in references to sovereignty, mutual respect, and South-South cooperation, positioning D-8 within post-colonial solidarity traditions.

Islamic Economic Discourse: Subtle references to Islamic economic principles (justice, equity, prohibition of exploitation) connect economic cooperation to religious values, legitimizing the D-8 framework through moral authority.

Global Development Discourse: References to Sustainable Development Goals, inclusive growth, and poverty reduction demonstrate engagement with mainstream development frameworks while subtly reframing them within D-8 priorities.

Genre Hybridization

1. The speech hybridizes multiple genres:

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2. Diplomatic protocol speech (formal register, ceremonial elements)
3. Policy announcement (concrete proposals, action-oriented language)
4. Inspirational address (emotional appeals, visionary rhetoric)
5. Technical economic briefing (statistics, economic terminology)

This genre mixing serves strategic functions, allowing the speech to operate simultaneously as diplomatic courtesy, policy framework, and ideological manifesto.

Social Practice: Ideology and Power Relations

Constructing Unity: The D-8 as Moral Community

The discourse constructs D-8 unity through several strategies:

Shared Identity Construction: Repeated references to "developing nations," "emerging economies," and implicit Islamic identity markers construct the D-8 as a natural community with shared interests and values.

Common Challenge Framing: External challenges (global economic uncertainty, climate change, technological disruption) are framed as shared threats requiring collective response, positioning unity as pragmatic necessity.

Historical Narrative: References to post-colonial history and shared developmental trajectories construct continuity between past solidarity movements and current D-8 cooperation.

Constructing Power: Agency and Authority

The discourse constructs D-8 power through multiple mechanisms:

Statistical Evidence: References to collective GDP, population size, and resource endowments construct material power, positioning D-8 as a significant economic bloc.

Future Orientation: Emphasis on potential and possibilities constructs latent power awaiting realization through cooperation.

Leadership Positioning: Indonesia is subtly positioned as a leader within D-8 through references to hosting, facilitating, and advancing cooperation initiatives.

****5.3.3 Ideological Functions****

The economic discourse serves several ideological functions:

Legitimizing National Leadership: By positioning Indonesia as a key facilitator of D-8 cooperation, the discourse legitimizes President Prabowo's administration domestically and internationally.

Naturalizing Particular Economic Models: While critiquing Western economic hegemony, the

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discourse naturalizes market-oriented development and integration into global capitalism, foreclosing more radical alternatives.

Constructing Consensus: The discourse constructs consensus around D-8 cooperation while marginalizing potential conflicts of interest among member states or alternative visions of South-South cooperation.

Challenging and Reproducing Power: The discourse simultaneously challenges Western economic hegemony while reproducing hierarchical relations within the developing world, with larger economies like Indonesia positioned as leaders.

Legitimation Strategies

Authorization: The speech derives authority from President Prabowo's position, the institutional framework of D-8, and references to international agreements and organizations.

Rationalization: Economic cooperation is legitimized through appeals to efficiency, mutual benefit, and pragmatic problem-solving, constructing the proposed policies as rational responses to objective conditions.

Moral Evaluation: References to justice, equity, solidarity, and shared prosperity provide moral legitimation, positioning D-8 cooperation as ethically superior to exploitative economic relations.

Mythopoesis: The speech constructs a narrative of collective rise from post-colonial marginalization to emerging economic power, with D-8 cooperation as the vehicle for achieving this transformation.

Ideological Square Analysis

Applying van Dijk's framework reveals strategic positioning:

Emphasize Our Good Things: D-8 cooperation, solidarity, mutual benefit, shared values, collective potential

Emphasize Their Bad Things: (Implicit) Western economic hegemony, unfair trade systems, neo-colonial exploitation

De-emphasize Our Bad Things: Internal conflicts among D-8 nations, economic competition, developmental challenges

De-emphasize Their Good Things: Benefits of existing global economic institutions, Western contributions to development

This strategic emphasis constructs a binary between virtuous D-8 cooperation and problematic Western-dominated systems, though this binary is more implicit than explicit in the diplomatic register.

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DISCUSSION

The analysis demonstrates that President Prabowo's economic discourse functions as ideological text through multiple mechanisms. Rather than neutrally describing economic realities or proposing technical solutions, the discourse actively constructs particular versions of reality, positions subjects within power relations, and legitimizes specific political projects. The economic terminology employed in the speech is not merely referential but performative, constructing the D-8 as a powerful economic bloc capable of shaping global economic governance. This performative dimension is crucial: by repeatedly asserting D-8 agency, potential, and solidarity, the discourse works to bring these qualities into being, transforming aspirational rhetoric into social reality through the force of authoritative political speech.

The analysis reveals a dialectical relationship between narratives of unity and power. Unity among D-8 nations is constructed as both a means to power (collective strength through cooperation) and an end in itself (solidarity as moral achievement). Conversely, power is constructed as both enabling unity (strong nations can cooperate as equals) and resulting from unity (cooperation generates collective power).

This dialectical construction serves important ideological functions. It positions cooperation as simultaneously pragmatic (power-seeking) and idealistic (unity-building), appealing to both realist and idealist orientations in foreign policy. It also naturalizes the connection between unity and power, foreclosing possibilities of unity without power-seeking or power-seeking without unity.

A key finding is the ambivalent relationship between challenging Western economic hegemony and reproducing hegemonic structures. While the discourse explicitly positions D-8 cooperation as an alternative to Western-dominated economic systems, it implicitly accepts many assumptions of neoliberal globalization: market orientation, export-led growth, foreign investment attraction, and integration into global value chains.

This ambivalence reflects the structural constraints facing developing nations in the contemporary global economy. Complete rejection of existing economic systems is not viable, yet uncritical integration perpetuates dependency and exploitation. The discourse navigates this dilemma by articulating a vision of "cooperation within capitalism" that seeks to improve developing nations' positions within global economic structures rather than fundamentally transforming those structures.

The analysis reveals how the discourse serves Indonesian national interests while articulating collective D-8 goals. By positioning Indonesia as a facilitator, host, and leader of D-8

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cooperation, President Prabowo constructs legitimacy for Indonesian regional leadership. This positioning serves domestic political purposes (demonstrating international influence) and foreign policy objectives (establishing Indonesia as a significant global actor).

However, this leadership construction remains relatively subtle and diplomatic, avoiding overt assertions of Indonesian superiority that might alienate other D-8 members. The discourse carefully balances national interest with collective solidarity, a delicate rhetorical achievement that reflects Indonesia's historical "bebas aktif" foreign policy tradition.

The discourse contributes to evolving South-South cooperation narratives by emphasizing pragmatic economic cooperation over ideological solidarity. While references to post-colonial history and shared developmental challenges invoke earlier Third World solidarity discourse, the primary emphasis is on mutual economic benefit, trade expansion, and investment flows.

This shift from ideological to pragmatic framing reflects broader transformations in South-South cooperation since the Cold War era. Contemporary developing nations pursue cooperation within, rather than against, global capitalism, seeking better terms of integration rather than alternative systems. This pragmatic turn has both benefits (more concrete cooperation) and costs (reduced transformative potential).

This study demonstrates the value of Critical Discourse Analysis for understanding political economy. By examining not just what is said but how it is said, CDA reveals the ideological work performed by ostensibly technical economic discourse. The integration of multiple analytical frameworks (Fairclough, van Dijk, Lakoff & Johnson, van Leeuwen) provides comprehensive analysis that single-framework approaches might miss.

The analysis also highlights the importance of contextual knowledge in discourse analysis. Understanding Indonesian foreign policy traditions, D-8 organizational history, and global economic structures is essential for interpreting the ideological significance of linguistic choices and rhetorical strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that President Prabowo Subianto's D-8 Summit speech employs economic discourse as ideological text that constructs narratives of unity and power serving multiple political functions. Through systematic Critical Discourse Analysis, the research has revealed how vocabulary choices, metaphorical constructions, grammatical features, and rhetorical strategies work together to; Construct D-8 nations as a unified moral and economic community with shared interests and values, Position D-8 as a powerful economic bloc capable of

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shaping global economic governance, Legitimize Indonesian leadership within South-South cooperation frameworks, Challenge Western economic hegemony while accepting core assumptions of neoliberal globalization, Articulate a vision of pragmatic economic cooperation grounded in mutual benefit rather than ideological solidarity. The analysis demonstrates that economic discourse is never neutral or purely technical but always embedded with power relations, ideological assumptions, and political objectives. President Prabowo's speech exemplifies how political leaders employ economic terminology strategically to advance national interests, construct collective identities, and position their nations within global power structures.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Evaluation of the significance of different activities and interactions in the process of social learning in future studies would open the path for a quite well method of framework participation in which coordinators, for example, identify when antithetic and synthetic interactions are out of balance and use this information to advise the initiative's supervisor or participants on how to conduct the discussions more constructively (Beers et al., 2016). Education and research methods are crucial because they highlight the role of helping students by assisting students in adopting more effective study methods. The fact that students' social identity and perspectives of the teaching program were not effectively related to students' academic performance is not remarkable, and it implies that investigating the indirect impact of these variables, as well as potentially everyone else, on academic performance might be a worthwhile path to follow in future studies. Moreover, the question whether social media learning is better than conventional learning is another crucial matter to address by future researchers, for it is reasonable to say that publicly available social media platforms give students access to more experiences and knowledge than they might receive in a conventional restricted setting.

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