

INDONESIA'S CHANGING POLITICAL STANCE ON PALESTINE IN THE PRABOWO ERA: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract

Since the escalation of Israeli attacks on Gaza on 7 October 2023, the humanitarian crisis which considered as genocide have prompted Indonesia to take a stand. Historically, Indonesia has consistently supported Palestinian independence in accordance with the mandate of its constitution and the principle of “Bebas-Aktif” foreign policy. However, differences can be observed in Indonesia’s approach toward the Gaza Genocide during the administration of President Prabowo Subianto. This study analyzes the shift in Indonesia’s foreign policy toward the Gaza genocide under the presidency of Prabowo Subianto. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research utilizes data obtained from academic journals, presidential speeches, official government statements and foreign policy documents. The findings indicate that during the early Prabowo era, with Foreign Minister Sugiono, Indonesia began to show a more pragmatic approach that seeks to balance humanitarian commitments with strategic national interest. This reflected in Indonesia’s more cautious use of the term “genocide” at the 2025 UN General Assembly and its participation in the Board of Peace initiative. This research aims to understand the dynamics of Indonesian diplomacy in addressing humanitarian issues in Gaza, identify the factors influencing these changes and assess their implications for Indonesia’s “Bebas-Aktif” foreign policy.

Keywords: Genocide, Bebas Aktif, Soft Power Diplomacy.

Abstrak

Sejak memburuknya serangan Israel ke Gaza pada 7 Oktober 2023, kejahatan kemanusiaan yang dikategorikan sebagai genosida telah mendorong Indonesia untuk turut menyatakan sikapnya. Secara historis, Indonesia konsisten mendukung kemerdekaan Palestina sesuai amanat konstitusi dan prinsip politik luar

negeri “Bebas-Aktif”. Namun, dalam perkembangannya pada periode pemerintahan Prabowo Subianto, terdapat perbedaan kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia dalam menanggapi Genosida Gaza. Penelitian ini mengkaji perubahan kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia di masa pemerintahan Prabowo Subianto melalui pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan pengumpulan data dari jurnal, pidato pernyataan resmi presiden dan pemerintahan di era Prabowo. Hasil dari penelitian ini menemukan bahwa pada era Prabowo melalui Menteri Luar Negeri Sugiono, mulai terlihat adanya pergeseran ke arah pendekatan pragmatis yang berusaha menyeimbangkan komitmen kemanusiaan dengan kepentingan strategis nasional. Hal tersebut terlihat dari gaya komunikasi Indonesia yang kini cenderung hati-hati menyebut istilah “genosida” di Sidang Umum PBB 2025, hingga bergabung dalam inisiatif Board of Peace. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami dinamika diplomasi Indonesia dalam menyikapi isu kemanusiaan di Gaza, mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi perubahan, serta menilai konsekuensinya terhadap kebijakan luar negeri “Bebas-Aktif” Indonesia.

Kata kunci: *Genocide, Bebas Aktif, Soft Power Diplomacy*

INTRODUCTION

The Israeli attacks on Gaza, Palestine, worsened on October 7, 2023. The destruction of public spaces and the rising death toll from Israeli attacks prompted the United Nations (UN), along with several countries, to condemn the violence and call for their cessation (Muhammadin et al., 2023). Israeli attacks on Palestinian territories have actually been ongoing for decades, however, the latest escalation has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of civilians. According to data from the Hamas Ministry of Health, as of September 23, 2024, 41,467 civilians have been killed and 95,921 injured, with 27.38% of the victims being children and 15.19% women (Saleh, 2025). Given the massive death toll, the situation can no longer be categorized as a war, but rather as the Gaza Genocide (Phalnikar, 2023).

Since its independence, Indonesia has enshrined support for Palestine as part of its constitutional mandate, particularly in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution, which rejects all forms of colonialism. The Indonesian government has generally maintained a consistent stance pro-Palestine and firmly supports Palestinian independence as a sovereign state. Rooted in the principles of anti-colonialism and “Bebas Aktif” foreign policy, Indonesia has consistently declined to establish diplomatic relations with Israel (Satris, 2019).

The principle of “Bebas Aktif” foreign policy serves as a crucial foundation for this stance. “Bebas” means Indonesia does not align with any specific bloc or power on the international stage. Meanwhile, “Aktif” signifies that Indonesia remains actively engaged in fostering global peace. In

the context of Palestine, this principle ensures Indonesia's position is not merely neutral, rather, Indonesia actively defends Palestinian rights without being bound by the interests of any major power.

Consistent with this stance, Indonesia expresses its support for Palestine through participation in international forums, such as the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The Indonesian government condemns acts of violence by advocating for the cessation of conflict and the protection of civilians in Palestine, particularly in Gaza. In addition, Indonesia regularly provides humanitarian aid in the form of funds, medical personnel, and logistics to the Palestinian people (Mudore, 2019). On the diplomatic front, Indonesia also advocates for the two-state solution as a path to peace, so that Palestine and Israel can coexist securely (Kementerian Sekretariat Negara RI, 2026).

Indonesia's foreign policy regarding the genocide in Gaza has shown a stark contrast in diplomatic approaches across the two most recent administrations, from Joko Widodo to Prabowo Subianto. This comparison highlights how Indonesia has positioned itself amid the escalating conflict, shifting from a previously vocal stance in defense of international law toward a more pragmatic approach focused on peaceful resolution. During the Jokowi administration, Indonesia adopted a more confrontational and firm stance in international forums. Through Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, Indonesia sought to hold Israel accountable for the Gaza Genocide. This stance was also reflected in Indonesia's support for South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice regarding war crimes and genocide, as well as Retno's walkout during the Israeli Ambassador's speech at the UN Security Council session (Widyrianto, 2025).

Under the Prabowo administration, Indonesia has tended to adopt a softer diplomatic approach. While remaining committed to supporting Palestinian independence and rejecting crimes against humanity, Prabowo has been cautious about explicitly naming Israel as responsible for the acts of genocide in Gaza (Tempo, 2025). This pragmatic approach was further reinforced by the signing of the Board of Peace (BoP) in January 2026, an international organization initiated by the U.S. President Donald Trump.

This study aims to analyze the shift in Indonesia's political stance toward the situation in Palestine under Prabowo Subianto's administration, the factors driving this shift, and its potential consequences for Indonesia's soft power.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies serve as an important foundation for identifying research gaps and positioning this study within the existing literature. Satris (2019) examined Indonesia's efforts to consistently mobilize international support for Palestinian independence through international organizations such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United Nations (UN). However, the study is limited to Indonesia's foreign policy during the administration of President Joko Widodo.

Aprianti et al. (2025) analyzed the diplomatic rhetoric employed by Foreign Ministers Retno Marsudi and Sugiono in expressing Indonesia's support for Palestine. Their findings indicate that Retno Marsudi's speeches were characterized by stronger calls to action, whereas Sugiono's rhetoric emphasized emotional support and solidarity with the Palestinian people.

A study conducted by Manuel et. al (2025) examined Israel's military operations in Gaza following the escalation of violence in October 2023 through the lens of international law, particularly the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention. The study concluded that the actions carried out by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), which resulted in the deaths of more than 46,000 civilians, predominantly women and children, met the criteria of genocide.

Nugraha and Maura (2023) investigated Indonesia's foreign policy objectives regarding the Palestine-Israel conflict between 2014 and 2023 using Mohtar Mas'ood's (1990) theoretical framework and a qualitative approach. Their findings suggest that Indonesia prioritized the promotion of human security in Palestine. This study provides a useful reference for understanding the policy orientation of the Jokowi administration and for assessing whether similar priorities were maintained or altered under the Prabowo administration.

Fadlillah and Komarudin (2026) examined Indonesia's foreign policy toward Palestine during the administration of President Prabowo Subianto. Utilizing Rosenau's Foreign Policy Analysis framework, the study found that the government strengthened its commitment to Palestinian independence through active engagement in international diplomacy. Such efforts contributed to reinforcing Indonesia's position as a middle power in international politics.

Nurika et al. (2023) explored the role of preventive diplomacy in responding to the escalation of the Gaza conflict since October 2023. Their work provides a conceptual framework for understanding the diplomatic instruments available to Indonesia, particularly in comparing the preventive diplomatic approaches adopted during the Jokowi and Prabowo administrations in response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Maksum et al. (2024) examines Indonesia's foreign policy during President Joko Widodo's term in response to Israel's participation in the 2023 U-20 World Cup in Indonesia. Israel qualified as a participant, while Indonesia has no diplomatic relations with Israel and supports Palestinian independence. In this situation, Indonesia sought to balance its desire to remain the host of the tournament and comply with FIFA regulations with its foreign policy commitment to supporting Palestine based on the principle of "Bebas Aktif" foreign policy.

Furthermore, Aswar & Munzilin (2025) discuss the solidarity movement among the Indonesian public in response to the Palestinian crisis following Israel's attack on Gaza in October 2023. Although Indonesian civil society has provided support through political action and humanitarian aid, the movement remains largely confined to Muslim groups and has not yet been widely integrated. Nevertheless, Indonesia has significant potential to build a stronger solidarity movement, given the existence of an open political space, support from political elites, and the absence of repressive measures against actions pro-Palestinian actions.

Despite the growing body of literature on Indonesia's foreign policy toward Palestine, limited attention has been given to a comparative analysis of Indonesia's diplomatic approach across different administrations. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the differences in the direction and implementation of Indonesia's foreign policy toward Palestine under the administrations of Prabowo Subianto. Guided by the principles of Indonesia's "Bebas Aktif" foreign policy and its

commitment to humanitarian solidarity, this study aims to identify the factors influencing policy decisions and shifts in diplomatic style between the two administrations.

More specifically, the research focuses on Indonesia's response to the genocide in Gaza. It compares the diplomatic strategies, political positions, and policy actions undertaken by each administration in international forums. In addition, the study evaluates the extent to which Indonesia has maintained consistency in upholding its fundamental foreign policy principles amid increasingly complex geopolitical challenges.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To analyse the shift in Indonesia's stance on the Palestinian issue, particularly during Prabowo Subianto's leadership, which has differed from that of previous administrations, this study will examine the factors influencing this shift using the concept of soft power.

Soft Power is a term introduced in the 20th century by Joseph Nye, referring to a nation's ability to influence other nations through culture, ideology, and various institutional activities (Kumari, 2025). Soft Power can be demonstrated in many ways, such as Cultural Diplomacy which involves the export of films, music, art, literature, and culture that showcase a nation's positive aspects. Political Ideology and Values involve promoting democracy such as human rights and the rule of law to build global influence. Diplomatic Engagement can take the form of peace efforts, multilateral cooperation, and conflict resolution to shape a nation's standing on the global stage. Lastly, Public Diplomacy involves direct communication and negotiation with foreign nations to influence a country.

Soft power has now become a vital tool for nations in shaping global dynamics, fostering international cooperation, and achieving diplomatic objectives without relying on military force or economic pressure. However, if soft power is implemented inconsistently, it can undermine policy, reducing its credibility and effectiveness in a country's foreign policy.

The outcomes of international relations also include efforts toward conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In this context, the soft power analyzed here is Diplomatic Engagement, specifically

examining how Indonesia's stance on the Palestinian issue is perceived globally during Prabowo's administration, which differs from that of previous administrations.

The researchers also drew upon the theory of foreign policy decision-making developed by Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen Jr. (2010), which outlines an analytical approach to foreign policy that focuses on the processes and dynamics of decision-making. According to them, the foreign policy decision-making process can be influenced by several factors: psychological, domestic and international factors.

Firstly, psychological factors refer to the characteristics, mindset, and perceptions of decision-makers in understanding the international situation. Foreign policy decisions are often influenced by a leader's beliefs, past experiences, emotions, and personalities. In some cases, leaders tend to interpret information based on their existing views and rely on historical experience as a reference when making decisions. Furthermore, leadership style and openness to new information also determine how a policy is developed and implemented.

Secondly, domestic factors encompass various domestic conditions that can influence a country's foreign policy. These factors may include economic interests, public opinion, domestic political dynamics, and the electoral cycle. In certain circumstances, governments may use foreign policy issues or military actions to divert public attention from domestic problems. Furthermore, political leaders must consider public support and interest of domestic groups, as these can either constrain or strengthen the policy choices made at the international level.

Thirdly, international factors relate to the influence of the global environment on policy decision-making. These factors include security threats, arms races, alliances formation, unforeseen events, and the characteristics of other nations that are partners or adversaries. Sudden developments in international events can force a country to change the direction of its foreign policy rapidly. In addition, relations with other countries and pressure from the international community are also important considerations in determining policy on the global stage.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive-comparative approach to examine Indonesia's foreign policy towards the genocide in Gaza during the administrations of President Prabowo Subianto. The research relies entirely on secondary data sources, including academic journals, books, official speeches and statements from both presidents, government documents, and media reports. The period of analysis covers the Prabowo Subianto administration (2024–present). Data were analysed using an inductive approach, whereby specific findings from various sources were identified, interpreted, and subsequently synthesised into broader conclusions regarding the differences in Indonesia's foreign policy towards Palestine under Prabowo administrations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia adheres to the “Bebas Aktif” foreign policy principle, grounded in two main pillars: the ideal and the constitutional. The ideal foundation of Indonesia's foreign policy is Pancasila, which embodies fundamental values such as humanity, justice, and peace serving as a guiding framework for every foreign policy decision (Windiani, 2010). These values ensure that Indonesia's foreign policy not only pursues national interests but also upholds moral principles in international relations. The constitutional foundation is enshrined in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Article 1, which states that independence is the right of all nations. The “Bebas Aktif” foreign policy is always interpreted as a moral obligation to oppose all forms of colonialism, such as in the issue of the occupation of Palestine. Based on this, Indonesia has never recognized Israel's sovereignty over Palestine for eight decades.

Since the Presidency of Sukarno (1945–1967), Indonesia has upheld its image as an anti-colonialist nation. Indonesia fully supports Palestinian rights stems not only from humanitarian considerations but also from a sense of shared experience as a nation that was once colonized, as well as a sense of brotherhood, since Palestine was the first country to recognize Indonesia *de facto* on September 6, 1944. Soekarno's support included banning diplomatic relations, refusing to participate in forums attended by Israel, and rejecting the UN's 1947 plan to partition Palestine as outlined in Resolution 181 (Hendropriyono, 2025). Further support was evident at the 1955 Asian-

African Conference, which addressed the issue of Palestinian colonization. Sukarno asserted that the Palestinian issue was a manifestation of global decolonization. He refuted the notion that it was merely part of a Middle Eastern conflict and called for resistance against Western imperialism, particularly as embodied by Israel. During this era, Indonesia also boycotted Israel at various international events, such as the 1958 World Cup.

During the Presidency of Soeharto (1967–1998), Indonesia's relationship with Palestine evolved into institutional diplomatic ties. Both countries played a role in joining the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) that was established in 1969, with Indonesia becoming one of the founding members to strengthen solidarity among the world's Islamic nations. Through this organization, Indonesia had the official opportunity to voice political and diplomatic support for Palestinian independence at the international level, culminating in the opening of an embassy for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Jakarta in 1989 (Hendropriyono, 2025). This support has reinforced Indonesia's image as a country committed to and fully supporting Palestinian independence, while also strengthening Indonesia's position as an active advocate for international issues.

During the Reform era, from the Habibie to Jokowi (1998–2024), Indonesia has not only supported Palestine as a matter of normative solidarity through remote support, but has also provided more concrete support by advocating for it on the global stage. This was evident when Indonesia sponsored the upgrade of Palestine's status to that of a non-member observer state at the United Nations in 2012 (Hendropriyono, 2025). This status is crucial for strengthening Palestine's political standing in the international community, even though it has not yet been fully recognized as an independent state.

Indonesia's commitment to advocating for Palestinian independence is not only realized through diplomacy in various international forums but is also carried out by providing humanitarian aid. The Indonesian government actively channels assistance in the form of humanitarian funds, logistics, and other necessary supplies (Kemenkes, 2023). This aid is also focused on the health sector through the deployment of professional medical personnel, the provision of medicines, and medical equipment to local hospitals. To enhance the effectiveness of aid distribution, Indonesia collaborates with international organizations such as the World Food

Programme (WFP) when there is a threat of famine due to the food crisis in Gaza (Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025). In addition to emergency aid, Indonesia contributes through training assistance in various sectors, including technology, agriculture, and infrastructure, to improve humanitarian conditions in Palestine (Putriani, 2025).

Support for the situation in Gaza also comes from the solidarity of the Indonesian public through various humanitarian aid initiatives. One example is the fundraising campaign for the construction of the Indonesian Hospital in Northern Gaza. This project was initiated by the Medical Emergency Rescue Committee (MER-C) to support medical services on the front lines of the conflict (MER-C, 2025). The involvement of civil society organizations has greatly aided the distribution and collection of aid. Nahdlatul Ulama, through its NU Care LAZISNU program, frequently distributes logistics, clean water, and other emergency supplies to the Palestinian people. These initiatives demonstrate that Indonesian society's solidarity with Palestine is not merely symbolic but is realized through direct assistance to alleviate the impact of the humanitarian crisis.

The various forms of support provided over the years have established Indonesia's image as one of the countries that is vocal, consistent, and firm in supporting the Palestinian struggle and rejecting the normalization of relations with Israel. Even during the presidency of Jokowi, this stance has become increasingly firm through statements by Retno Marsudi, who has actively condemned Israel's aggression against Gaza. At the 2023 UN General Assembly Emergency Session, Retno urged the opening of humanitarian aid access, rejected the forced displacement of Gaza's civilian population, and condemned the bombing of civilian facilities, describing such actions against humanity (Detik News, 2023). However, since Prabowo was inaugurated as President of Indonesia in October 2024, a slight shift in Indonesia's foreign policy approach toward the Palestinian-Israeli issue has begun to emerge. This difference can be seen in Prabowo's statements at the 2025 UN General Assembly and his meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron in 2025.

In a joint press statement with French President Emmanuel Macron at the Merdeka Palace in Jakarta on May 28, 2025, Prabowo stated. "Once the State of Palestine is recognized by Israel, Indonesia is ready to recognize Israel, and we are ready to establish diplomatic relations with Israel." Then he emphasized, "We must also recognize and guarantee Israel's right to exist as a sovereign

state, its security must also be respected and guaranteed,” (National Defense Council of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025).

Prabowo made another statement in his speech at the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York, United States, on September 23, 2025. In that speech, Prabowo reiterated his support for the two-state solution.

“We must have an independent Palestine, but we must also recognize, respect, and guarantee the safety and security of Israel. Only then can we achieve true peace,” (Indonesian Cabinet Secretariat, 2025).

Indonesia’s shift in diplomatic approach is also evident in its participation in international forums involving Israel. In January 2026, Prabowo was among the world leaders who signed the Board of Peace Charter, initiated by the U.S. President Donald Trump, aimed at overseeing the transition process, maintaining security, and reconstructing Gaza post-conflict (BPMI Setpres, 2026). At the first Board of Peace (BoP) Summit, Prabowo even committed to deploying troops to the International Stabilization Force (ISF) to achieve peace in Gaza (Tempo, 2026). This shift in approach reflects Prabowo’s era, which tends to be pragmatic and directly engaged in peace efforts. This change is also influenced by several factors that differ from previous eras, particularly during the Jokowi and Prabowo administrations.

Factors that Influencing Indonesia’s Foreign Policy Toward Gaza

During the 10 years of Jokowi’s administration, Indonesia’s stance toward Israeli aggression in Palestine appeared more firm and vocal in condemning it at international forums. This stance was grounded in interrelated moral, political, and constitutional considerations. First, Indonesia’s support for Palestine aligns with the preamble of the 1945 Constitution, which affirms that independence is the right of all nations (Wati & Burdah, 2024). Based on this mandate, Indonesia has, from the outset, had a moral foundation to reject all forms of oppression and violence. Thus, support for Palestine embodies Indonesia’s consistency in upholding the anti-colonial principle, which is an integral part of its foreign policy identity (Kementerian Sekretariat Negara RI, 2018).

Second, Indonesia’s position on the international stage also influences this stance. As a nation playing a role in various global forums, including the UN, Indonesia bears a moral responsibility to

advocate for justice and humanity. Based on this position, the government's firm stance against Israel's attacks on Gaza is not merely for diplomatic purposes but also demonstrates its role as an active advocate for humanitarian values amid international conflicts (Madu, 2021).

Third, domestic pressure. Public support, particularly from Islamic organizations and civil society groups, provides strong impetus for the government to adopt a firmer stance against violence in Palestine. This pressure compels the government to demonstrate clear alignment with public aspirations (Sarjito, 2023). Therefore, the firm stance under the Jokowi administration can also be seen as an effort to maintain public trust while affirming that Indonesia's foreign policy is inseparable from the voice of its people. This not only strengthens the legitimacy of foreign policy but can also counter misleading narratives regarding policies often linked to religious sentiments.

The shift in foreign policy during the Prabowo era, which tended toward pragmatism and strategic stability, was also influenced by his personal background and international dynamics. Prabowo has a long military background before entering national politics, including his experience within the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) prior to the collapse of the New Order regime in 1998 (Anwar, 2024). This experience continued when he served as Indonesia's Minister of Defense from 2019 to 2024, reinforcing his involvement in defense and security issues. His focus on stability shaped a tendency toward a more pragmatic approach in foreign policy and a hands-on approach to international issues. A hands-on approach refers to a leader who is directly involved in diplomacy to enhance his country on the international stage (Setiawan, 2024). This approach is evident in how, since the start of his leadership, Prabowo has more frequently expressed Indonesia's stance on the Palestinian issue directly rather than through his Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In responding to the acts of genocide in Gaza, Prabowo has maintained Indonesia's position in support of Palestinian independence and against human rights violations. He emphasized the importance of the two-state solution as a means to achieve peace, arguing that Palestinian independence must be accompanied by guarantees of Israel's safety and security (BPMI Setpres, 2025). At the same time, Prabowo also maintains cooperation with the United States in the defense sector through joint military exercises, military equipment modernization, and military education (US Embassy Jakarta, 2026). This stance demonstrates Prabowo's pragmatism not only supporting

Palestine but also considering strategic relations with the United States, which is known for supporting the normalization of relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords.

Indonesia's stance is also influenced by international factors that place its foreign policy between moral solidarity with Palestine and the nation's strategic interests. Prabowo faces an unstable global situation, particularly following Donald Trump's protectionist economic policies, which once again raised the threat of trade tariffs against the United States trading partners, including Indonesia. The U.S. President's tariff policy had threatened Indonesian products with tariffs as high as 32%, before they were eventually reduced to 19% following a trade agreement (Breuninger, 2025). This situation has made the Indonesian government more cautious about taking a position that is too firm against the Western bloc. The government's focus has shifted to maintaining national economic stability, foreign investment, exports, and international trade relations. Consequently, the issue of genocide in Gaza is now intertwined with global geopolitical and economic considerations (Yadav, 2025).

Another factor is the emergence of the Board of Peace (BoP) as a new alternative in global peace governance. Indonesia's joining the BoP indicates that the Indonesian government wishes to remain active on the Palestinian peace issue, and this new international forum outside the UN is seen as more capable of responding to conflicts quickly and flexibly. Nevertheless, Indonesia's involvement in the BoP poses a challenge in maintaining the independence of its foreign policy. The BoP's structure risks making member states overly reliant on the organization's decision-making direction, whereas Indonesia should uphold the principle of "Bebas Aktif" diplomacy (Natamiharja et al., 2026).

The shift in Indonesia's diplomatic approach to the Gaza issue during the Prabowo era has drawn widespread criticism, particularly following its accession to the BoP. Former Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa, criticized Indonesia's involvement in the forum, arguing that the BoP charter does not explicitly address

Gaza or Palestine and is overly focused on Donald Trump. In his view, such a model could conflict with the principle of state equality and Indonesia's "Bebas Aktif" foreign policy (Ariesta, 2026).

Criticism also came from a civil society coalition that argued the government had insufficiently involved the public in decision-making regarding Indonesia's relations with the United States. Ardi Manto Adiputra, Director of Imparsial, stated that foreign policy regarding Palestine and trade cooperation with the United States are strategic issues that should be openly discussed with the House of Representatives (DPR) and the public (Adzkia, 2026). He also criticized the BoP for not specifically focusing on Palestine, thereby potentially contradicting the principles of international peace.

Indonesia's involvement in the BoP has also faced opposition from civil society organizations such as the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI). The MUI highlighted Israel's participation as a member of the forum, noting that Israel should be held accountable for the occupation in Palestine. True peace should prioritize the rights and sovereignty of the people, yet the MUI does not see the BoP demonstrating this (Tempo, 2026).

The Impact of Shifts in Indonesia's Foreign Policy

This shift in Indonesia's approach has had a clear impact on Indonesia's soft power position on the global stage. On the positive side, a more cautious and pragmatic approach has given Indonesia broader diplomatic maneuvering room. This approach has helped Indonesia maintain good relations with its strategic partners, such as the United States, China, and European nations. During Prabowo's administration, Indonesia successfully secured billions of dollars in investment commitments from the United States and signed an agreement to purchase major defense systems from France (Yuniar, 2025).

However, on the other hand, this shift has also had less favorable implications for Indonesia's soft power. One such implication is the diminished perception of Indonesia's consistency as a country long known for its firm stance on anti-colonial and humanitarian issues. Some observers perceive a decline in moral firmness within Indonesia's foreign policy, which could influence public perception both domestically and internationally (Wahyunto, 2026). This is evident from the results of a 2025 survey by the Median Institute of 907 respondents from 38 different provinces, in which 74.9% of respondents disagreed with Prabowo's statement regarding the establishment of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Israel (Hutajulu, 2025). The majority of respondents

chose that Indonesia should never establish such relations, indicating that public support for Indonesia's firm stance in defending Palestine remains strong.

Indonesia's foreign policy should remain firm in condemning Israel's acts of genocide in Gaza, in accordance with the mandate of the Indonesian Constitution, which rejects all forms of colonialism. Based on this principle, Indonesia should not signal any narrative of recognition toward Israel in any form, as this could legitimize the actions taken against Palestine. Indonesia's involvement in the BoP also needs to be reconsidered, as the forum aims for post-conflict reconstruction of Gaza without involving Palestinian representation as the affected party.

Opposition to Indonesia's involvement in the BoP also comes from 79 civil society organizations that view the forum as being dominated by specific political interests. Imparsial Director Ardi Manto stated that involvement in the BoP risks dragging Indonesia away from its principle of "Bebas Aktif" foreign policy (Tempo, 2026). Moreover, the forum does not reflect justice as it only involves the Israeli side, and its decision-making system is solely focused on the chairman, the United States, which is not neutral.

Similarly, regarding involvement in the International Stabilization Force (ISF), Usman Hamid as Executive Director of Amnesty International Indonesia, argued that deploying Indonesian military forces to Gaza risks legitimizing Israel's occupation of Palestine (Amnesty International, 2026). Therefore, Indonesia should firmly withdraw from the ISF if its mandate does not prioritize the protection of the Palestinian people. Overall, Indonesia needs to reconsider its involvement in international forums and policies that could undermine the consistency of its stance regarding the Palestinian struggle. This stance is crucial for maintaining Indonesia's image as a defender of Palestinian independence and the rights of its people, based on the principles it has long upheld.

CONCLUSION

Indonesia has, to date, maintained a long track record of supporting and advocating for Palestinian independence. This aligns with the principle of "Bebas Aktif" and the mandate of the Constitution, grounded in the values of Pancasila and a rejection of all forms of colonialism worldwide. Since the era of Prabowo Subianto, there has been a significant shift in foreign policy

approach. During the Prabowo era has adopted a softer approach, continuing to support Palestinian independence while committing to opening new avenues for diplomatic relations with Israel if a two-state solution is achieved. This policy shift is influenced by several factors, including Prabowo's military background, pressure from the U.S. tariff policies, and his leadership style which tends to centralize decision-making around the president and limit openness to public opinion. This shift could weaken Indonesia's soft power, especially its diplomatic engagement, as it may reduce the impression of Indonesia's consistency of supporting anti-colonialism and humanitarian values. As a result, it could affect Indonesia's image both at domestic and abroad.

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