

The Controversy over Indonesia's Participation in the Board of Peace: A Thematic Analysis of Republika.co.id

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to analyze how Republika.co.id (March 1-4 edition) organizes and presents the controversy surrounding Indonesia's participation in the Board of Peace based on the Thematic Analysis structure of Braun & Clarke (2012).

Methodology: This study uses a constructivist paradigm, a qualitative approach, and Thematic Analysis from Braun and Clarke (2012). The research data consists of ten hard news published in Republika.co.id on March 1-4, 2026, which were purposively selected regarding the controversy surrounding Indonesia's involvement in the Board of Peace.

Results: The research identified four main themes: evaluation of Indonesia's policy in the Board of Peace (BoP), the questionable legitimacy of the Board of Peace (BoP), the contradiction between the Board of Peace's peace rhetoric and military practices on the ground, and the delegitimization of the Board of Peace's international leadership. Among the four themes, the evaluation of Indonesia's policy in the Board of Peace (BoP) is the most dominant because it is closely related to the issue of national sovereignty, the consistency of Indonesia's independent and active foreign policy, and Indonesia's diplomatic position amidst increasing geopolitical tensions. The research findings show that Republika.co.id builds a critical and normative narrative by emphasizing moral legitimacy, foreign policy accountability, and humanitarian considerations.

Applications/Originality/Value: This research enriches the study of reflexive thematic analysis in journalism studies and provides an understanding of the relationship between editorial orientation, media representation, and the construction of geopolitical reality.

Introduction

Changes in the global geopolitical landscape in recent years reflect increasingly complex and unpredictable dynamics (Zahidi, 2026). This is characterized by, among other things, increased competition between major powers, particularly the United States and China, escalating conflicts in the Middle East, and the strengthening of identity politics in various countries (Khan et al., 2024).

Indonesia, as a country with a tradition of "free and active" foreign policy, faces challenges amidst an increasingly fragmented world. The principle of "free and active" demands that Indonesia position itself skillfully in international forums without losing domestic legitimacy (Nugraha, 2022; Simatupang & Panggabean, 2022; Afriansyah & Nasu, 2025). This foreign policy is at stake when it touches on sensitive issues, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict (Fadlillah & Komarudin, 2026) or geopolitical rivalries (Medina et al., 2025).

Indonesia's participation in the Board of Peace (BoP), initiated by United States President Donald Trump in early 2026, is a concrete example of this dynamic. President Prabowo Subianto's attendance at the BoP Summit in Washington, D.C., and the signing of an agreement related to the forum, were projected by the government as part of Indonesia's active contribution to maintaining global stability and peace (Prayudhia, 2026). However, this policy was not universally accepted by the public and generated various responses in the public sphere.

Public response revealed sharply differing perceptions of Indonesia's participation in the BoP. Some viewed the move as a form of active Indonesian diplomacy in maintaining world peace, while others worried that such involvement could potentially shift Indonesia's foreign policy orientation or align with Indonesia's historical commitment to the Palestinian struggle (Hidayatullah.or.id, 2026). These differing perceptions then developed in the public sphere and were mediated through mass media coverage, which constructed and presented various perspectives on the issue.

In this context, the role of the press becomes crucial. McLuhan, quoted by Baran & Davis (2009), stated that media is an extension of humanity, enabling the dissemination of information across time and space. This role is realized through editorial policies in selecting, highlighting, and presenting certain aspects of social reality as part of the media agenda (West & Turner, 2017). Thus, the process of news preparation involves various considerations that influence how reality is constructed and conveyed to the audience.

Based on these conditions, news reporting is influenced by various factors inherent in the media institution itself. This condition aligns with Shoemaker & Reese's (2014) theory that several factors influence media content, including editorial routines, organizational pressures, professional values, and media ideology. Rusadi (2015) argues that media ideology is key to understanding how media position themselves and operate within the realm of social, economic, and political contestation. The influence of these various factors is reflected in how the media selects, highlights, and frames events, thus producing a particular representation of reality for the audience.

The process of constructing this representation of reality aligns with the social construction theory proposed by Berger & Luckmann (1966, 1990). Both stated that social reality is formed through the processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. This framework was later adapted by Hamad (2004) in his study of mass media. According to Hamad, mass media plays an active role in constructing social reality through the use of symbols and language, the packaging of current issues, and media agenda placement. Through this process, the reality constructed by the media is internalized by the audience as everyday knowledge that is considered normal and legitimate.

The reality constructed by the media is shaped by the content of the messages conveyed and the habits of society in accessing, using, and using media as a reference for understanding various social events. These habits demonstrate that the influence of media extends beyond its content to the social practices that accompany its use. In this context, Couldry (2003) introduced the concept of "media rituals," namely various practices that reinforce the assumption that media is central to society's access to social reality. Through these practices, society increasingly accepts and considers the central role of media in shaping their understanding of social reality. This central position also allows the media to determine how reality is represented to the public.

This position makes it crucial to examine the process by which the media constructs reality. The reality presented by the media is not an objective reflection of an event, but rather the result of a process of selecting, interpreting, and compiling information (Mast & Temmerman, 2021; Fadeji et al., 2025). Therefore, every news report is a construction influenced by the perspectives, values, and interests espoused by the media.

In this context, a number of literatures indicate that ideological orientation, media ownership structure, and audience segmentation influence the construction of news narratives (Agarwal & Priti, 2022; Baccino, 2025; Aktari, 2025; Psychari, 2025; Theine et al., 2025). In other words, in editorial practice, news is shaped through the determination of perspectives influenced by media orientation and audience characteristics (Truyens & Picone, 2021; Belair-Gagnon et al., 2020; Shin & Miller, 2025; Dodds et al., 2023; Kristensen & Bro, 2024). Consequently, the resulting news narrative will emphasize certain themes. Therefore, to understand how an event is represented by the media, an approach is needed that can identify and interpret the themes that emerge in news texts.

Based on these considerations, this study employed thematic analysis, referring to Braun and Clarke (2012), who defined it as an approach to identifying, analyzing, and interpreting themes in qualitative data. Ahmed & Matthes (2017) and S. K. Ahmed et al. (2025) added that thematic analysis focuses on the most prominent, meaningful, coherent, and analytically valuable themes. In the context of media research, Siregar et al. (2026) emphasized that themes in news texts can serve as units of analysis to understand how an event is represented through news narratives produced in the newsroom.

The relevance of thematic analysis encourages the need to examine how this approach has been applied in previous research, particularly in media studies addressing Indonesian politics and foreign policy. Several studies have examined media coverage of political and foreign policy issues (Assefa,

2024; Masduki et al., 2023; Setiawati & Roziqin, 2024; Hkikmat & Komara, 2024; Rahmadan & Setiawati, 2021). However, these studies generally do not utilize thematic structure as a basis for identifying issue formation in media texts. Therefore, media studies on Indonesian political and foreign policy issues that use thematic analysis as the primary approach are relatively limited.

This limitation opens up space for research that examines news content and identifies how thematic structure shapes media representations of events. Therefore, this study offers a novel approach by identifying issue structure through thematic analysis to explain the process of constructing reality as a media representation. Through this approach, this research seeks to uncover tendencies of ideological construction reflected in online journalism practices in Indonesia.

Research Objectives

1. How does the thematic structure shape the representation of the controversy surrounding Indonesia's involvement in the Board of Peace (BoP) in *Republika.co.id* news?
2. How does the thematic structure of *Republika.co.id* news shape the editorial representation of the controversy surrounding Indonesia's involvement in the Board of Peace (BoP)?

Research Questions

1. To uncover the thematic structure that shapes the representation of the controversy surrounding Indonesia's involvement in the Board of Peace (BoP) in *Republika.co.id* news coverage.
2. To uncover the thematic structure of *Republika.co.id* news coverage in shaping the editorial representation of the controversy surrounding Indonesia's involvement in the Board of Peace (BoP).

Research Methodology

This research is grounded in a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative approach, as proposed by Denzin & Lincoln (2009). Both view social reality as the result of the construction and interpretation of actors within a specific socio-cultural context. Building on this perspective, this study positions the controversy surrounding Indonesia's participation in the BoP as a reality constructed through media reporting practices. This paradigm serves as the basis for determining the data sources and analytical approach used.

In line with this framework, *Republika.co.id* news articles from March 1–4, 2026, were selected as the primary data source. Data analysis was conducted manually using thematic analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2012), through the application of inductive coding. The analysis stages included data familiarization, initial coding, theme discovery, theme review, and theme definition. This approach places the integrity of the news content as the basis for analysis, enabling a deeper understanding of the complexity of the issues constructed by the media.

The data analyzed were obtained through purposive sampling, with the criteria being hard news articles discussing the controversy surrounding Indonesia's participation in the BoP. Based on these criteria, 10 news articles from *Republika.co.id* were selected as the research corpus. Data collection was limited to the March 2026 edition because this period is considered a crucial phase when the intensity of news coverage and the dynamics of controversy reach significant levels.

Results and Discussion a. Thematic Structure and Issue Interconnection

The coverage of the Indonesian polemic in the BoP in the March 2026 edition of *Republika.co.id* included 10 purposively selected news stories analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis approach. This approach offers methodological flexibility, allowing for interpretation and

acknowledging the researcher's subjectivity in the analysis process (Pearson et al., 2025). Therefore, thematic analysis emphasizes the importance of reflexivity, transparency in the analytical process, and sensitivity to context in producing credible and academically meaningful findings. Through this coding process, meanings within news texts were identified and grouped into themes.

The coding results yielded four theme categories within the news stories. "Evaluation of Indonesian Policy in the BoP" was the most dominant theme, with five stories, followed by "Legitimacy of the BoP Questioned" with two stories. Furthermore, "BoP Rhetoric versus Military Practices in the Field" appeared in one story, and "Delegitimization of International Leadership" appeared in two stories. This distribution shows that there are variations in emphasis in the news which then form the basis for discussion on each theme.

1. Thematic: Evaluation of Indonesian Policy in BoP

a. **"Ini Kekhawatiran Pakar Jika Indonesia Tetap di BoP Saat Amerika-Israel Menyerang Iran"** (Experts' Concerns if Indonesia Remains in the BoP When America and Israel Attack Iran) - March 3, 2026, 09:25 WIB. (Firmansyah, 2026). The theme "Evaluating Indonesia's Policy in the BoP" was dominant in this news, with calls for the government to review Indonesia's position in the BoP. The Iran versus US-Israel conflict was seen as a situation that could influence the direction of Indonesian foreign policy. Hendra Maulana Saragih emphasized that Indonesia needed to "be careful not to get involved in any country's internal conflicts of interest or politics."

This statement indicated concerns that involvement in the BoP could undermine the principle of an independent and active foreign policy that Indonesia has long upheld. The evaluative narrative was further strengthened when Hendra called this situation "a major moment for Indonesia to rethink."

In this context, the evaluation also concerned the protection of Indonesia's national interests and diplomatic relations with many countries. *Republika.co.id* created the impression that foreign policy needed to be continuously and carefully reviewed so that Indonesia could maintain a balance between its commitment to peace and its own political sovereignty.

b. **"Giliran Purnawirawan Jenderal Desak RI Mundur dari BoP"** (Retired Generals Urge Indonesia to Withdraw from the BoP) - March 3, 2026, 16:57 WIB. (Zamzami, 2026). This *Republika.co.id* report demonstrates the strong pressure to evaluate Indonesia's BoP policy, especially following the escalation of the conflict between Iran and the US and Israel. Criticism comes from retired military personnel who believe Indonesia's involvement has the potential to deviate from the principles of an independent and active foreign policy. In the report, the FPP-TNI (Indonesian National Armed Forces) asserted that Indonesia's involvement in the BoP could "eliminate the independence of national diplomacy" and drag Indonesia into a particular "global security bloc." This concern reflects anxiety that Indonesia's position as a non-aligned nation and supporter of world peace is beginning to be jeopardized.

Furthermore, the rejection of the deployment of TNI troops to Gaza demonstrates an evaluation of the constitutional aspects and international legitimacy of this policy. The statement that foreign troops without a full UN mandate could be perceived as "occupying forces" demonstrates Indonesia's moral and historical sensitivity to the Palestinian issue. In this context, the BoP evaluation relates to efforts to maintain the consistency of Indonesia's diplomatic identity and remain committed to a just and sovereign peace.

c. **"Agresi AS-Israel ke Iran Momentum Indonesia Keluar dari *Board of Peace*"** (US-Israeli Aggression Against Iran: Momentum for Indonesia to Leave the Board of Peace) - March 3, 2026, 21:23 WIB. (Noroyono & Muhyiddin, 2026). This report demonstrates how the escalation of the conflict between Iran and the United States and Israel has become a crucial momentum for the evaluation of Indonesia's policy within the BoP. The criticisms raised concern the relevance of Indonesia's position

within it. Connie Rahakundini Bakrie stated that the BoP "is no longer a Board of Peace, but has become a Board of War," a statement reflecting disappointment with international political practices deemed contrary to the spirit of peace. On the other hand, the push for Indonesia to return to a position of "nonalignment or nonalignment" demonstrates a longing for Indonesia's independent and free and active diplomatic identity. In this context, the evaluation of the BoP serves to maintain the moral and historical direction of Indonesian diplomacy. This narrative obscures Indonesia's position as a country known for consistently supporting peace and Palestinian independence through balanced and sovereign diplomacy.

d. **“Akademisi UGM Desak Evaluasi RI Gabung BoP dan Perjanjian Dagang dengan AS”**

(UGM Academics Urge Evaluation of Indonesia's Joining the BoP and Trade Agreement with the US) - March 4, 2026, 02:47 WIB. (Intandari, 2026). This news positions Indonesia's BoP policy as the object of critical evaluation, particularly from an academic perspective. UGM academics believe that Indonesia's involvement does not fully align with the basic principles of an independent and active foreign policy. This is evident in the statement that there is "rejection of Indonesia's foreign policy that sides with aggressors" and concerns that this policy "has the potential to erode the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia."

The evaluation focuses on structural and legal aspects, particularly regarding the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART), which is deemed "deviant and detrimental to state sovereignty." This criticism is based on an impact analysis, such as the need to revise "laws, presidential decrees, and presidential regulations," which demonstrate the significant consequences of this policy.

Thus, the BoP is a policy that requires comprehensive reexamination. This academic narrative emphasizes the importance of state prudence in maintaining a balance between global engagement and the ongoing protection of national sovereignty.

e. **“UII Kritik Sikap Pemerintah soal Konflik di Kawasan Timur Tengah, BoP dan ART Ikut Disorot”** (UII Criticizes Government's Stance on Middle East Conflict, BoP and ART Also Under the Spotlight) - March 4, 2026, 07:40 WIB. (Intandari, 2026). In its statement, the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII) placed Indonesia's participation in the BoP under serious policy evaluation. The primary criticism was directed at the consistency of Indonesia's foreign policy, which it deemed "inadequately assertive in responding to the Israeli and United States military attacks on the Islamic Republic of Iran." This was interpreted as an indication of a weakening implementation of the principle of "freedom and activeness," which has long been the foundation of Indonesian diplomacy.

UII assessed that involvement in the BoP "has the potential to undermine the principle of free and activeness and undermine the consistency of Indonesia's stance," particularly in the context of support for Palestinian independence. Furthermore, the ART trade agreement was also evaluated because it "has the potential to weaken Indonesia's bargaining position and undermine national economic sovereignty." From this perspective, UII encouraged a rational and transparent policy review. This evaluation reflects a push to ensure that Indonesia's foreign policy remains grounded in sovereignty, accountability, and long-term national interests amidst ever-changing global dynamics.

2. Thematic: BoP Legitimacy Questioned

a. **“Anggota DPR: Agresi AS-Israel ke Iran Bukti BoP Tidak Bawa Perdamaian”** (House of Representatives: US-Israel Aggression on Iran Proves BoP Doesn't Bring Peace) - March 1, 2026, 10:52 WIB. (Noroyono, 2026). The theme "BoP's Legitimacy Questioned" appears dominant in this news report, raising doubts about the BoP's sincerity and effectiveness as an international peacekeeping institution. The US-Israeli attack on Iran is positioned as a point that reinforces public skepticism about the peace

mission the BoP has long campaigned for. TB Hasanuddin stated that the aggression has made the public "increasingly unconvinced that the BoP truly has a sincere mission for peace."

This statement demonstrates how the BoP's moral legitimacy has been eroded by the actions of countries involved in escalating the conflict. The narrative is further strengthened when the BoP is called an "empty promise (*pepesan kosong*) of peacemaking" because the facts on the ground show that the war is actually escalating. In this context, the BoP's legitimacy is questioned from an institutional perspective, as well as from the consistency of its values. *Republika.co.id* creates the impression that peace institutions will be difficult to trust if their political and military practices actually deepen regional tensions.

b. **“AS-Israel Serang Iran, AWG Menilai *Board of Peace* Bukan Instrumen Perdamaian”** (US-Israel Attack on Iran, AWG Assesses Peace Board Not an Instrument of Peace) - March 3, 2026, 11:20 WIB. (Permana, 2026). This report demonstrates growing doubts about the legitimacy of the BoP amidst the escalating conflict between Iran and the US and Israel. The narrative constructed associates the BoP with geopolitical interests and the practice of great power domination. The Aqsa Working Group (AWG) considers the US-Israel attack on Iran to be “the first concrete manifestation of the Board of Peace,” demonstrating that the BoP “is not an instrument of peace, but of imperialism.” This statement demonstrates how the BoP’s moral and political legitimacy is beginning to be openly questioned.

This legitimacy crisis deepened when the BoP was deemed to have failed to stop the violence in Palestine. The AWG called the BoP “increasingly absurd and losing its moral and legal legitimacy,” a phrase that reflects the loss of trust in the institution. In this context, the report captures public anxiety that an institution purporting to promote “peace” is actually present alongside increasing aggression and humanitarian suffering in the Middle East.

3. Thematic: Delegitimacy of BoP Leadership Questioned

a. **“Ketua MUI: Serangan AS-Israel ke Iran Runtuhkan Legitimasi BoP”** (MUI Chairman: US-Israel Attack on Iran Destroys Legitimacy of BoP) - March 1, 2026, 04:25 WIB. (Zamzami, 2026).

The theme “Delegitimizing International Leadership in the BoP” appears strongly in this report, with direct criticism of Donald Trump as Chairman of the BoP. The news narrative creates the impression that the BoP crisis reflects the collapse of the moral authority of the leaders behind the forum. Sudarnoto Abdul Hakim called the US-Israel attack on Iran “concrete evidence that Trump is truly a destroyer and destroyer of peace.”

This statement demonstrates the delegitimization of an international leader who previously championed a peace agenda. The criticism intensified when Trump was accused of “hijacking the word peace for his hegemonic and imperialistic ambitions.” In this context, the BoP leadership was perceived as losing public trust because its military actions were deemed contrary to the values of peace it campaigned for. *Republika.co.id*’s narrative demonstrates how the legitimacy of global leadership depends heavily on the consistency between diplomatic rhetoric and concrete actions on the ground. When that consistency collapses, trust in international institutions also weakens.

b. **“MUI: Trump Terbukti Perusak Brutal Perdamaian, BoP Pimpinannya tak Bisa Dipercaya”** (MUI: Trump Proven to be a Brutal Destroyer of Peace, BoP Leaders Cannot Be Trusted) - March 3, 2026, 06:54 WIB. (Muhyiddin, 2026). The theme “Delegitimizing International Leadership in the BoP” is strongly evident in this report, with sharp criticism of Donald Trump as the BoP leader. The US-Israeli attack on Iran symbolized the collapse of the moral authority of global leadership that previously championed a peace agenda. Sudarnoto Abdul Hakim called Trump a “brutal destroyer of peace” and assessed that “the BoP he leads cannot be trusted as a body that will create peace.”

This statement demonstrates the delegitimization of international leaders who are seen as failing to maintain consistency between their diplomatic rhetoric and political actions. In this narrative, the BoP is described as merely “an imperialistic camouflage,” thus the institution's legitimacy also

collapses along with its leadership crisis. Republika.co.id creates the impression that trust in international institutions is highly dependent on the moral integrity of their leaders.

4. Thematic: BoP Political Rhetoric versus Military Practice on the Ground

“**Pakar: Serangan AS ke Iran Jadi Ujian Kredibilitas *Board of Peace***” (Expert: US Attack on Iran Tests Board of Peace's Credibility) - March 1, 2026, 09:04 WIB. (Rezkisari, 2026). The theme “BoP Political Rhetoric versus Military Practice on the Ground” is strongly evident in this report, as the contradiction between the peace narrative constructed by the BoP and the reality of escalating war in the Middle East emerges. Ahmad Khoirul Umam assessed that the US-Israeli attack on Iran has “sharpened the contradiction between the rhetoric of stability and military practice on the ground.”

This statement demonstrates that the language of diplomacy and peace that has been attached to the BoP is actually confronted with the aggressive actions of the countries involved. In this context, the BoP is seen as a symbol of a global political paradox. The credibility of the peace narrative is tested when military force continues to be used as the primary instrument for conflict resolution. Moreover, concerns that US-Israeli actions could constitute a "reengineering project for the balance of power in the Middle East" suggest the existence of larger geopolitical interests behind the rhetoric of regional stability. Republika.co.id's narrative demonstrates that international peace will be difficult to believe in if it is not accompanied by consistent, concrete actions on the ground. These findings were obtained from an analysis of the news corpus that served as the research data source.

The research corpus consists of 10 news articles concerning the controversy surrounding Indonesia's participation in the BoP published by Republika.co.id during March 2026. The list of news articles analyzed is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Controversial News on Indonesia's Involvement in the Board of Peace (BoP) on Republika.co.id (March 2026)

No	News Title	Edition	Author Name (Journalist)	Initial Code	Category Theme
1.	MUI Chairman: US-Israel Attack on Iran Destroys Legitimacy of BoP	March 2026, 04:25 WIB	1, Fitriyan Zamzami	BoP Trump loses legitimacy	Delegitimization of international leadership in BoP
2.	Expert: US Attack on Iran Tests Board of Peace's Credibility	March 2026, 09:04 WIB	1, Indira Rezkisari	BoP's Credibility at Stake	BoP's Political Rhetoric vs. Military Practices on the Ground
3.	House of Representatives: US-Israel Aggression Against Iran Proves BoP Does Not Bring Peace	March 2026, 10:52 WIB	1, Bambang Noroyono/ Fitriyan Zamzami	BoP 'empty promises' (<i>pepesan kosong</i>) for Palestinian peace	BoP's legitimacy is questioned
4.	MUI: Trump Proven to be a Brutal Destroyer of Peace, BoP Leaders Cannot Be Trusted	March 2026, 06:54 WIB	3, Muhyiddin/ A.Syalaby Ichsan	Trump is a Brutal Destroyer of Peace	Delegitimization of international leadership in BoP

5.	Experts' Concerns If Indonesia Remains in the BoP When America and Israel Attack Iran	March 3, 2026, 09:25 WIB	Teguh Firmansyah	Indonesia's Sustainability in the BoP	Evaluation of Indonesia's policies in the BoP
6	Retired Generals Urge Indonesia to Withdraw from the BoP	March 3, 2026, 16:57 WIB.	Fitriyan Zamzami	Retired general urges RI to withdraw from BoP	Evaluation of Indonesia's policies in the BoP
7.	'US-Israeli Aggression Against Iran: Momentum for Indonesia to Leave the Board of Peace'	March 3, 2026, 21:23 WIB	Bambang Noroyono, Muhyiddin/ Andri Saubani	RI urged to leave BoP	Evaluation of Indonesia's policies in the BoP
8.	US-Israel Attack on Iran, AWG Assesses Peace Board Not an Instrument of Peace	March 3, 2026, 23:20 WIB	Fuji Eka Permana/Muhammad Hafil	BoP is not an instrument of global peace	BoP's legitimacy is questioned
9.	UGM Academics Urge Evaluation of Indonesia's Joining the BoP and Trade Agreement with the US	March 4, 2026, 02:47 WIB	Wulan Intandari/ Karta Raharja Ucu	Criticism of the inequality of international agreements	Evaluation of Indonesia's policies in the BoP
10.	UII Criticizes Government's Stance on Middle East Conflict, BoP and ART Also Under the Spotlight	March 4, 2026, 07:40 WIB	Wulan Intandari/ Fernan Rahadi	Criticism of BoP and ART	Evaluation of Indonesia's policies in the BoP

Table 1 shows that Republika.co.id's thematic structure is interwoven, forming a single issue configuration. This relates to Indonesia's position within the BoP amidst the escalating Iran–US–Israel conflict. This interweaving demonstrates how foreign policy issues, the legitimacy of international institutions, and global military practices are interconnected within a dynamic discourse space. At the thematic structural level, evaluations of Indonesian policy within the BoP serve as the primary entry point. Narratives from academics and institutions such as UII and UGM assert that Indonesia's involvement "has the potential to undermine the principle of free and active participation" and "weaken state sovereignty." This evaluation touches on legal and economic aspects. This is evident in criticisms of the Bylaws (ART) agreement, which is considered unequal and poses a risk to national sovereignty. This theme then connects to the questioned legitimacy of the BoP. Various actors have called the BoP "lost its moral, political, and legal legitimacy," and even "not an instrument of peace, but rather imperialism." Here, policy evaluations transform into a crisis of confidence in the institution itself.

Furthermore, the delegitimization of international leadership within the BoP reinforces the intertwined issues. Figures like Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu have been described as "brutal destroyers of peace," suggesting that the legitimacy crisis is institutional, personal, and symbolic.

International leadership is positioned as a factor deepening distrust in the BoP.

Meanwhile, the theme of political rhetoric versus military practice on the ground binds all issues. Experts emphasize the "contradiction between the rhetoric of stability and military practice on the ground," as evidenced by the escalation of attacks in Iran and the Middle East. This highlights the gap between the BoP's peace narrative and the reality of ongoing violence.

Thus, the intertwining of these four themes demonstrates that the BoP is a strategic yet confrontational issue in Indonesian foreign policy, sparking controversy within society. Furthermore, the BoP brings together geopolitical interests, a legitimacy crisis, and the tension between the ideal of peace and the reality of armed conflict. In this context, Indonesia is positioned as both a diplomatic actor and a subject whose consistency in upholding the principle of freedom and activity is continually being tested amidst complex global dynamics.

b. Editorial Representation: Ideology and Perspective of Editorial Policy

The research results show that the theme of "Evaluating Indonesian Policy in the BoP" on *Republika.co.id* emerged as the most dominant theme compared to the other three. This dominance indicates that *Republika.co.id* positioned the BoP controversy as an issue directly related to the direction of Indonesian foreign policy. This finding also indicates an editorial emphasis on certain aspects of the event deemed to have greater significance for the Indonesian public interest.

This emphasis is reflected in *Republika.co.id*'s editorial attention, which is directed more towards the diplomatic consequences facing Indonesia than the dynamics of the military conflict in the Middle East itself. This choice demonstrates that the media performs an informative function (Baran & Davis, 2009) and engages in a process of meaning-making (reality construction) by selecting and highlighting aspects of reality deemed most relevant to the audience (Mast & Temmerman, 2021; Fadeji et al., 2025). In this context, the BoP issue is presented as a space to evaluate the consistency of Indonesia's foreign policy, particularly in upholding the principles of an independent and active foreign policy, national sovereignty, and commitment to international peace. These findings reinforce the view that the existence of media is closely linked to political life because the media plays a role in shaping public understanding of political issues (Valič et al., 2023).

These empirical findings can be explored through a constructivist perspective, which views news reporting as the construction of reality through a process of selecting, emphasizing, and organizing facts, thus producing specific meanings for the audience. This view aligns with Berger and Luckmann's (1966, 1990) social construction theory, which explains that reality is shaped through processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. In the context of mass media, this social construction process occurs through the activities of media organizations and the journalistic work of journalists who process reality into news.

In line with Berger and Luckmann's ideas, Barnard (2018) describes the realm of journalism as a continuously evolving social construct. Therefore, journalists are "social actors" who are essentially "reflective actors" in negotiating social values and meanings. Echoing Barnard, Mulyana (2024) emphasized that media organizations are the result of human social construction, particularly of journalists and press institutions as a whole. According to Mulyana, through a process of internalization, journalists observe and absorb various events occurring in the field. Furthermore, through a process of externalization, journalists interpret the reality they encounter in the field and construct it into news stories in written and visual forms. Published news then enters the next stage, namely the process of objectification as a social reality accessible to the public, while the audience internalizes the meaning contained therein.

In the context of this research, this process is reflected in the way *Republika.co.id* selects certain aspects of the event (BoP) to focus on in its reporting. The choice of perspective, sources, and emphasis on specific impacts demonstrates that reporting does not simply reflect reality but rather constitutes a construction of that reality. Thus, *Republika.co.id*'s focus on the diplomatic consequences of the BoP is a result of social construction, representing how the media interprets the event according to its perspective.

The process of social construction in the context of mass media is further explained by Hamad (2004), who asserts that the media constructs reality through the process of selecting facts, using language, selecting sources, and arranging relationships between facts into a coherent narrative. The findings of this study indicate that the dominant theme of evaluating Indonesian policies is not solely

a consequence of the development of the Iran–United States–Israel conflict, but rather the result of editorial decisions regarding aspects deemed most important to gain public attention as part of the media agenda (West & Turner, 2017). Thus, news reporting not only functions to convey facts, but also shapes how readers understand Indonesia's position in global geopolitical dynamics (Aktari, 2025).

According to Shoemaker and Reese (2014), media content is influenced by various levels, from journalistic routines and media organizations to institutional factors, and even the ideology that underlies editorial orientation. Similarly, Masduki et al. (2023), Rusadi (2015), and Sudibyo (2009) emphasize that factors originating from sources and media ideology also influence how an event is reported. The information conveyed by sources shapes the perspective of the news, while media ideology influences the process of selecting facts, emphasizing issues, and presenting information to the audience (Truyens & Picone, 2021; Belair-Gagnon et al., 2020; Shin & Miller, 2025; Dodds et al., 2023; Kristensen & Bro, 2024). The influence of these various factors is reflected in the thematic structure of the news reports found in this study.

In this study, the emergence of the theme of evaluating Indonesian policies, followed by the themes of legitimacy of the Board of Peace, delegitimization of international leadership, and the contradiction between peace rhetoric and military practices, demonstrates that these four themes form an interconnected construct of meaning. The interconnectedness of these themes results in a coherent interpretation of the BoP issue. Thus, readers are guided to understand that Indonesia's involvement in the BoP is a matter of consistency in Indonesia's foreign policy identity amidst increasing international geopolitical rivalry.

The four themes identified in this study also represent the meaning constructed by *Republika.co.id* regarding the controversy surrounding Indonesia's involvement in the BoP, initiated by Donald Trump. This perspective aligns with Nimmo's (2011) view that communication is a process of social interaction through which humans construct meaning about reality and exchange that meaning through symbols. In the context of this study, news texts function as communication symbols that convey specific meanings to the audience. Through the selection of facts, use of language, selection of sources, and emphasis on specific themes, *Republika.co.id* conveys information about the Board of Peace and shapes readers' understanding of the controversy. Thus, the inter-thematic relationships found in this study represent the structure of meaning constructed by the media, not simply a collection of topics appearing in news reports.

This construction of meaning cannot be separated from the editorial orientation underlying media reporting practices. From a media studies perspective, editorial orientation is reflected through mechanisms of emphasis, repetition of themes, and relationships between themes that gradually shape specific meaning tendencies. Similarly, ideological orientation, media ownership structure, and audience segmentation also influence the construction of news narratives (Agarwal & Priti, 2022; Baccino, 2025; Aktari, 2025; Psychari, 2025; Theine et al., 2025). This perspective helps explain how a media outlet's institutional identity is reflected in its reporting practices. In the context of this research, understanding this orientation needs to be situated within the historical development and institutional identity of *Republika.co.id*.

Furthermore, this construction of meaning demonstrates that the media's function as a framebuilder of interpretation remains intact despite the transformation of journalism practices in the digital era. The development of digital media has indeed changed the process of news production and distribution, but it has not eliminated the media's role in shaping how audiences understand an event (Mellado et al., 2018). This study's findings show that although *Republika.co.id* operates as an online media outlet required to present news quickly, its thematic structure still places moral legitimacy, policy accountability, and national interests as the primary framework for understanding the BoP controversy. These findings demonstrate that technological transformation does not eliminate the media's editorial orientation, but rather presents it in a different form through the dynamics of news mechanisms (Yılmaz, 2025).

This editorial orientation can be traced through the history and institutional identity of *Republika.co.id*. This media outlet inherits the editorial orientation of *Republika.co.id*, which has had a historical closeness to the Indonesian Muslim community and a strong focus on humanitarian and Islamic issues since its inception (Sudibyo, 2009). *Republika.co.id* was first published on January 4, 1993, at the initiative of Muslim figures from the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association (ICMI) under the leadership of Bacharuddin Jusuf (BJ) Habibie (Ismail, 2018). The organization was founded during the New Order era with the support of President Soeharto. From the beginning, the media outlet has been committed to voicing the aspirations of Muslims. Although now operating in an increasingly competitive digital media landscape, these institutional characteristics remain part of *Republika.co.id*'s editorial identity. This identity provides a crucial context for understanding how *Republika.co.id* constructs international issues, including coverage of the BoP. The findings of this study indicate that this editorial orientation is reflected in the emphasis on moral legitimacy in reporting on the BoP. The criticisms raised are primarily directed at the inconsistency between the rhetoric of peace and the practical use of military force. Thus, evaluations of the BoP are constructed based on ethical considerations and political accountability, rather than solely on strategic interests or geopolitical calculations (Assefa, 2024; Setiawati & Roziqin, 2024; Hikmat & Komara, 2024; Rahmadan & Setiawati, 2021). These findings indicate that editorial orientation is reflected in the choice of issues and in the relationships between themes that shape the overall meaning of the news.

These relationships between themes align with Braun and Clarke's (2012) view that themes in thematic analysis do not simply group data based on similar content but rather represent a structure of meaning that organizes the entire data. Thus, the meaning of a news report is shaped by each theme separately, as well as by the interrelationships between themes that create a coherent narrative. This perspective provides a foundation for understanding how the thematic structure of *Republika.co.id*'s reporting constructs specific interpretations of the BoP.

The concept of theme as a structure of meaning is clearly evident in the findings of this study. The theme of evaluating Indonesian policies serves as the organizing axis for the relationships between themes, further reinforced by the themes of BoP legitimacy, the delegitimization of international leadership, and the contradiction between peace rhetoric and military practices. The interconnectedness of these themes creates a narrative configuration that leads readers to view Indonesia's involvement in the BoP as a diplomatic issue related to moral dimensions, international legitimacy, and national interests.

c. Implications for Indonesian Foreign Policy

The findings of this study have several implications for understanding the dynamics of Indonesian foreign policy, particularly regarding how foreign policy is perceived, discussed, and negotiated in the public sphere through media coverage. In *Republika.co.id*'s coverage, Indonesia's involvement in the BoP is presented as a diplomatic decision at the state level. At the same time, the news is positioned as an issue that sparks normative debate regarding the direction and consistency of Indonesian foreign policy based on the principle of "free and active." This representation demonstrates that media coverage plays a crucial role in shaping public interpretations of foreign policy.

One implication of these findings is the strengthening role of the domestic public sphere in shaping foreign policy legitimacy (Redeker et al., 2026). The analyzed coverage demonstrates that various nonstate actors, such as academics, civil society organizations, religious figures, and former military officers, have significant space to interpret foreign policy. This situation indicates that Indonesian foreign policy is both a government domain and part of a broader public discourse. In such situations, the legitimacy of foreign policy is determined by the government's strategic considerations and the extent to which the policy gains normative acceptance within the public.

In this public sphere, the principle of an independent and active foreign policy appears to be a primary normative reference in evaluating government policy. Research findings indicate that Indonesia's involvement in the BoP is associated with concerns about potential deviations from this

principle, particularly when Indonesia is perceived as being too closely aligned with the interests of certain global powers. This suggests that the principle of an independent and active policy serves as a foundation for foreign policy and a benchmark used by various actors to assess the legitimacy and consistency of the government's diplomatic decisions.

On the other hand, research by Fadlillah and Komarudin (2026) shows that President Prabowo continues to affirm Indonesia's commitment to Palestinian independence through active diplomacy at the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and various bilateral forums. This policy is considered to strengthen Indonesia's bargaining position internationally, enhance its strategic role in the Islamic world, and broaden global recognition, even though Indonesia has not yet become a dominant power in the Asian region. This discrepancy demonstrates that media representations of foreign policy do not always align with official government explanations or the findings of other studies. In contrast, the media provides an evaluative space that emphasizes legitimacy and normative consistency as part of the process of shaping public opinion.

This difference between media representation and government policy can be explored in the way foreign policy is formulated. Fadlillah and Komarudin (2026) show that President Prabowo's commitment to the principle of "freedom and active" is manifested through various international diplomatic measures. However, the implementation of this principle is influenced by how leaders interpret and implement it within the policy context at hand. Similarly, Putra (2025) explains that changes in Indonesian foreign policy at the beginning of Prabowo's administration were influenced by international structural factors, beliefs, and the leader's mindset as an individual. Thus, the leader's interpretation of the principle of "freedom and active" is reflected in foreign policy choices. This condition subsequently becomes the object of media and public evaluation in assessing the consistency of Indonesian diplomacy amidst the dynamics of international politics.

Thus, these findings simultaneously demonstrate the importance of the normative dimension in understanding Indonesian foreign policy. However, this dimension has received relatively little attention in academic studies. Nugraha (2022) emphasized that aspects beyond domestic functions, such as the ideological, normative, and social dimensions of Indonesian foreign relations, are often overlooked. Furthermore, the influence of the social and normative dimensions of Indonesian foreign policy on the international community, including in the formation of international norms and the socialization of legitimate behavior, has also been understudied. In other words, the findings of this study contribute by demonstrating that the normative dimension influences foreign policy formulation and serves as an important basis for media construction and public evaluation of such policies.

This contribution is reflected in the finding that evaluations of the BoP do not emerge as standalone issues, but are constructed within the context of news coverage of the United States–Israel and Iran conflicts. Thus, the context of international conflict serves as a framework that shapes how the media represents Indonesia's position on the BoP. These findings suggest that the public's interpretation of Indonesian foreign policy is influenced by media coverage of various international events. In this process, the media acts as a bridge between international political dynamics and local interpretations, shaping public perception of Indonesian foreign policy (Assefa, 2024).

The formation of public perception through this reporting impacts how the public understands foreign policy issues and has implications for the acceptance of government policies. When policies, such as Indonesia's involvement in the BoP, are perceived controversially, the narratives that develop in the public sphere have the potential to influence the level of legitimacy and public acceptance of those policies. Therefore, the findings of this study underscore the importance of the government managing foreign policy communication in a more open, transparent, and responsive manner to the dynamics of public opinion (Asad & Irfan, 2024). Public support is a crucial prerequisite for successful foreign policy implementation (Arslan, 2025). Similarly, Zink (2019) asserts that modern diplomacy demands the ability to negotiate internationally, while simultaneously developing strategic communications capable of explaining policy rationale to the domestic public in a transparent and consistent manner.

d. Novelty and Theoretical Contributions

This research offers a novel contribution to media studies by examining how *Republika.co.id*'s coverage of the controversy surrounding Indonesia's involvement in the BoP through Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis approach. Unlike conventional content analysis or framing analysis, this research positions themes as reflexive constructions of meaning that develop through the interaction between data, researchers, and the socio-political context surrounding news production. This approach serves as the basis for this research to identify the interrelationships between themes that shape the construction of meaning more comprehensively (Pearson et al., 2025).

The application of this approach yields empirical contributions to the study of Indonesian media and foreign policy. To date, research on media representation has focused primarily on issues such as ASEAN, bilateral diplomacy, or regional security. By using the BoP as a case study, this research demonstrates how global geopolitical issues involving the United States, Israel, and Iran are constructed in national media coverage, thus shaping discourses related to Indonesia's diplomatic identity. In this process, the reporting reflects the dynamics of international conflict and constructs an evaluative space that questions the consistency of Indonesia's foreign policy based on the principle of 'bebas dan aktif' (free and active).

These empirical findings also provide theoretical contributions to the development of thematic analysis in media studies, particularly in understanding the process of meaning production in international relations issues. This research demonstrates that the four identified themes function as analytical categories and represent interconnected meaning structures that shape the construction of media reality. Through these thematic structures, the media simultaneously negotiate the legitimacy of international institutions, the credibility of global leadership, and Indonesia's normative position in world peace governance.

This theoretical contribution is evident in the ability of thematic analysis to explain how thematic structures in news coverage reflect news content and serve as a mechanism connecting international events with domestic discourse. In the BoP case, international conflict is represented as a trigger for evaluations of Indonesian foreign policy. Thus, this study demonstrates that the media places global geopolitical issues within a domestic political context. Through this process, international events are interpreted as a reflection of the identity and direction of Indonesian foreign policy.

The theoretical implication of these findings is that foreign policy legitimacy in the information age is shaped through both formal diplomatic practices and representational processes in the public sphere. In this process, the media plays a crucial role in shaping how policies are understood, debated, and evaluated by the public. Therefore, this study confirms that thematic analysis is a relevant approach to explaining the process of producing political meaning. This meaning is both shaped by the state and negotiated through journalistic practices in the media.

These findings collectively emphasize the novelty of this research, which integrates Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis approach with the study of media representation in the realm of foreign policy. This integration demonstrates the usefulness of thematic analysis in identifying dominant themes in news coverage. This approach plays a role in explaining how global conflict is interpreted as a discourse on the legitimacy of Indonesian foreign policy, particularly regarding Indonesia's participation in the BoP.

Conclusion

This study examines how *Republika.co.id* represents the controversy surrounding Indonesia's involvement in the BoP through a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This research focuses on news texts published during the escalation of the United States–Israel conflict against Iran. The research findings indicate that the BoP issue, as an international geopolitical phenomenon, is simultaneously constructed as a discursive arena reflecting domestic debates regarding the direction and principles of Indonesian foreign policy. In this process, the media functions as a conveyor of

information and as a constructor of meaning that connects the dynamics of global conflict with national diplomatic identity.

Based on the thematic analysis, this study identifies four main interconnected themes: the evaluation of Indonesia's involvement in the BoP, the BoP's legitimacy crisis as a peace institution, the delegitimization of the BoP's leadership, and the tension between peace rhetoric and military practices on the ground. These four themes form a configuration of meaning that demonstrates the BoP's representation as a symbol that raises questions about the consistency, credibility, and moral orientation of global peace governance.

This configuration of meanings demonstrates that Republika.co.id's reporting tends to shift its focus from external conflicts to internal reflections on Indonesia's position within the international system. The conflict in the Middle East provides a context that encourages evaluative discourse on Indonesian foreign policy, particularly regarding the implementation of the "free and active" principle as the foundation of national diplomacy. In this context, the media serves as a space for articulation, bringing together various actors to discuss Indonesia's involvement in the BoP. Through this space, academics, religious leaders, civil society organizations, and political actors construct and negotiate the meaning of Indonesia's involvement in the BoP.

From a thematic analysis perspective, this research's findings emphasize that themes are the result of the construction of meaning formed through the interaction between data, researchers, and the surrounding social context. Therefore, the four identified themes are crucial for representing the content of the news and revealing how diplomatic controversies are constructed as issues of legitimacy and political identity. These findings demonstrate that meaning regarding the BoP is continuously produced and negotiated through media representation practices.

This interpretation also provides a conceptual contribution to the study of media and political communication. This research demonstrates that thematic structures in news reporting function to organize information and act as a mechanism for producing social meaning that frames the public's understanding of international political issues. In the context of international relations, the media plays a role in transforming global conflicts into discourses relevant to national interests, values, and identities. Thus, the BoP issue serves as a debate about global peace institutions and a reflection of Indonesia's position within contemporary geopolitical dynamics.

The implications of these findings suggest that the legitimacy of foreign policy in the public sphere is determined by diplomatic achievements and by how those policies are represented and interpreted in the media. Media representations can strengthen or diminish public perceptions of the consistency, credibility, and moral orientation of foreign policy. Therefore, the media plays a strategic role as a space for public deliberation, shaping public understanding of complex international issues and influencing how the public assesses the direction of state policy.

However, this research has limitations due to its focus on a single online media outlet and a relatively limited reporting period. Therefore, further research could broaden the scope of analysis by comparing BoP representations in media with different ideological orientations. Future research could combine a thematic approach with other methods, such as in-depth interviews or audience reception analysis, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the meaning-making process in news reporting.

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