

The Rhetoric of "Board of Peace" Diplomacy: an Analysis of Prabowo Subianto's Political Communication in Balancing Palestinian Support and Israeli Security Guarantees

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ABSTRACT

Studi ini menganalisis retorika komunikasi politik diplomasi pertahanan Indonesia di bawah Prabowo Subianto, khususnya berfokus pada konseptualisasi kerangka "Dewan Perdamaian". Indonesia secara tradisional mempertahankan sikap pro-Palestina yang stabil dan diamanatkan secara konstitusional sambil menghindari hubungan diplomatik formal dengan Israel. Namun, pergeseran geopolitik kontemporer membutuhkan strategi komunikasi yang lebih bernuansa dan pragmatis yang menyeimbangkan solidaritas ideologis dengan realisme keamanan internasional. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif yang berakar pada analisis retorika dan kerangka wacana politik, makalah ini mengkaji pidato publik Prabowo, pidato di forum internasional, dan pernyataan diplomatiknya mengenai konflik Timur Tengah. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa retorika "Dewan Perdamaian" berfungsi sebagai instrumen komunikasi dengan dua tujuan. Di satu sisi, ia menggunakan etos solidaritas Islam dan anti-kolonial untuk memuaskan konstituen domestik dan sekutu regional. Di sisi lain, ia menggunakan logos pragmatis yang mengakui realitas struktural jaminan keamanan Israel sebagai prasyarat untuk konsensus dua negara yang layak. Indonesia beralih ke realisme defensif: dari sekedar mendukung Palestina yang pasif menjadi mediator aktif global.

This study analyzes the political communication rhetoric of Indonesia's defense diplomacy under Prabowo Subianto, specifically focusing on the conceptualization of the "Board of Peace" framework. Indonesia has traditionally maintained a staunch, constitutionally mandated pro-Palestinian stance while avoiding formal diplomatic ties with Israel. However, contemporary geopolitical shifts require a more nuanced, pragmatic communication strategy that balances ideological solidarity with international security realism. Utilizing a qualitative approach rooted in rhetorical analysis and political discourse frameworks, this paper examines Prabowo's public speeches, international forum addresses, and diplomatic statements regarding the Middle East conflict. The analysis reveals that the "Board of Peace" rhetoric functions as a dual-targeted communication instrument. On one hand, it employs an ethos of Islamic and anti-colonial solidarity to satisfy domestic constituencies and regional allies. On the other hand, it utilizes a pragmatic logos that acknowledges the structural realities of Israeli security guarantees as a prerequisite for any viable two-state consensus. Indonesia is shifting to defensive realism: from being a passive supporter of Palestine to an active global mediator.



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INTRODUCTION

The geopolitical landscape of the Middle East remains one of the most volatile arenas in contemporary international relations, heavily influencing the foreign policy trajectories of major Muslim-majority nations. Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy, has historically anchored its foreign policy in anti-colonial solidarity, a principle explicitly stated in the preamble of its 1945 Constitution. This constitutional mandate has translated into a persistent, unyielding diplomatic support for Palestinian sovereignty and an absolute refusal to establish formal diplomatic relations with the State of Israel (Anwar, 2021). However, the twenty-first century has introduced unprecedented complexities into global governance, forcing middle powers to recalibrate their diplomatic communication. Under the political leadership of Prabowo Subianto, first as Defense Minister and subsequently as a dominant political figure, Indonesia's foreign policy rhetoric has undergone a strategic evolution. This evolution is characterized by the introduction of a pragmatic, mediation-oriented framework metaphorically framed as the "Board of Peace" diplomacy. This approach attempts to navigate the delicate equilibrium between fulfilling domestic ideological expectations and acknowledging the hard structural realities of global security, which inherently involve the security guarantees demanded by Israel and its Western allies.

To understand this rhetorical shift, one must first examine the historical continuity of Indonesia's "free and active" (*bebas dan aktif*) foreign policy doctrine. Historically established by Mohammad Hatta in 1948, this doctrine dictates that Indonesia must not align itself with global superpowers but should instead act as an independent agent for world peace (Sukma, 2020). For decades, this independence meant a strict, almost black-and-white rhetorical alignment with Arab states against Israeli occupations. Yet, the modern international system operates less on pure ideological alignments and more on complex networks of interdependence and defense diplomacy. As post-Cold War realities set in, Indonesian leaders gradually realized that absolute rhetorical isolation from one side of a conflict limits the country's capacity to act as a meaningful mediator (Weatherbee, 2023). Prabowo Subianto's communication strategy addresses this limitation by reframing Indonesia's stance from a purely reactive, protest-based position to an active, solution-oriented defense diplomacy. The "Board of Peace" concept serves as a rhetorical stage where Indonesia can assert its traditional values while utilizing the language of *realpolitik* to engage with international security architectures.

Political communication in international relations does not merely describe reality; it actively constructs diplomatic possibilities. Rhetoric is a tool of statecraft used to signal intentions, appease domestic audiences, and alter the perceptions of foreign adversaries (Wendt, 2019). When Prabowo addresses international audiences at high-level security summits, such as the Shangri-La Dialogue, his communication style diverges significantly from traditional bureaucratic Indonesian diplomacy. He frequently employs a blend of defensive realism and liberal institutionalism, arguing that regional stability in Southeast Asia is intrinsically linked to the resolution of systemic conflicts in the Middle East (He, 2024). By framing peace as a collaborative "board" or matrix where all actors must have calibrated stakes, his rhetoric subtly introduces the idea that a sustainable resolution for Palestine cannot occur in a vacuum that ignores Israel's security anxieties. This represents a highly sophisticated linguistic maneuver designed to maintain ideological purity at home while projecting rational, stable statecraft abroad.

The necessity of this dual-targeted communication is amplified by the intense intersection of foreign policy and domestic politics within Indonesia. In the digital era, foreign policy decisions are no longer insulated from public scrutiny; instead, they are heavily contested by domestic religious organizations, civil society groups, and political rivals (Rastati, 2022). Any rhetorical deviation that appears to soften Indonesia's stance on Palestine risks severe political backlash from conservative and progressive Islamic factions alike. Consequently, Prabowo's public pronouncements within the domestic sphere heavily emphasize historical continuity, justice, and humanitarian aid for Palestine, thereby reinforcing his *ethos* as a defender of the global Muslim community (*Ummah*) (Yunarso & Muhtadi, 2025). Conversely, his international discourse shifts toward a *logos*-driven argument focused on conflict resolution mechanics, international law, and the structural necessity of security guarantees. This bifurcated communication strategy demonstrates a keen awareness of what multi-track diplomacy requires in a globalized media environment, where different audiences consume the same speech through entirely different interpretive lenses.

Furthermore, the structural shifts in the Middle East, particularly the normalization of relations between several Arab states and Israel under the Abraham Accords, have fundamentally altered the parameters of Islamic solidarity. As nations like the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain adjusted their diplomatic postures, Indonesia found itself in a changing geopolitical landscape where rigid non-recognition policies risked diplomatic marginalization (Quandt, 2021). Prabowo's "Board of Peace" rhetoric can be interpreted as a strategic response to these regional re-alignments. It allows Indonesia to remain a principled outlier regarding formal recognition while adopting the pragmatic vocabulary of the peace processes favored by moderate Arab states and Western powers. By talking about "security guarantees" within a broader framework of peace, the rhetoric aligns Indonesia with the language of United Nations resolutions and multilateral frameworks, rather than unilateral ideological declarations (Acharya, 2023). This strategic alignment ensures that Indonesia retains a seat at the metaphorical table of global defense diplomacy.

From a theoretical standpoint, this rhetorical balancing act illuminates the ongoing debate between constructivism and realism in political communication. Constructivists argue that identity, norms, and historical memory dictate foreign policy speech acts, explaining Indonesia's deep emotional and rhetorical commitment to Palestine (Buzan & Waever, 2022). Realists, however, contend that states are ultimately driven by survival, power, and structural constraints, which requires an acknowledgment of the global hegemony of Israel's primary security guarantor, the United States (Mearsheimer, 2021). Prabowo Subianto's political discourse attempts a rhetorical synthesis of these two competing paradigms. By utilizing the "Board of Peace" metaphor, he constructs a narrative where normative ideals (Palestinian independence) can only be realized through the mechanisms of structural realism (negotiated security guarantees). This synthesis seeks to transform Indonesia's image from a distant, highly vocal critic into a proximal, pragmatic facilitator of international security.

In conclusion, analyzing the rhetoric of the "Board of Peace" provides profound insights into the transformation of Indonesian foreign policy communication under contemporary leadership. It highlights how a middle power can navigate deep-seated constitutional obligations and volatile domestic pressures while simultaneously engaging with the cold, calculative realities of international defense and security. As Prabowo Subianto continues to shape Indonesia's geopolitical trajectory, his structured communication strategy will serve as a critical benchmark for how developing nations manage the delicate dialectic between ideological solidarity and global *realpolitik*. Understanding the nuances of this discourse is essential for predicting Indonesia's future role in mediation efforts, its relations with Western security blocks, and the long-term sustainability of its traditional foreign policy doctrines in an increasingly multipolar world.

METHOD

To analyze the political communication strategies and rhetorical structures embedded within Prabowo Subianto's "Board of Peace" diplomacy, this study employs a qualitative approach centered on Critical Rhetorical Analysis (CRA). Qualitative inquiry is particularly suited for this research as it allows for an in-depth, contextual understanding of how political actors use language to construct strategic meanings, balance conflicting geopolitical interests, and project state identity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The analytical framework synthesizes classical Aristotelian rhetoric—focusing on the operationalization of *ethos* (credibility), *logos* (logic and *realpolitik*), and *pathos* (emotional and ideological appeal)—with modern political discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2015). This methodological synthesis enables the researcher to deconstruct not only the textual and spoken utterances of diplomatic communication but also the underlying power dynamics and structural constraints that dictate Indonesia's foreign policy maneuvers between Palestinian advocacy and Israeli security paradigms.

The data generation process utilizes purposive sampling to select primary text-based and audio-visual documents that capture the essence of Subianto's diplomatic rhetoric from his tenure as Defense Minister up to his current executive political leadership. The primary data corpus consists of official state speeches, transcripts of addresses delivered at high-level international defense forums (such as the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue), press statements, and official communiqués issued by the Ministry of Defense regarding Middle Eastern geopolitics (Miles et al., 2020). To ensure data trustworthiness and analytical triangulation, these primary materials are supplemented with secondary data sources, including official diplomatic responses from international observers, state-media reports, and academic commentaries

addressing Indonesia's contemporary defense diplomacy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This extensive data matrix ensures that the rhetorical acts are analyzed in tandem with the real-time geopolitical events and domestic socio-political shifts that triggered them.

Data analysis follows a systematic thematic and rhetorical coding procedure implemented through qualitative data analysis software. The analytical protocol is divided into three distinct phases: structural open coding, conceptual mapping of rhetorical appeals, and contextual discourse synthesis (Saldaña, 2021). In the first phase, the selected texts are systematically scanned to isolate recurrent metaphors, key diplomatic jargon, and linguistic shifts related to "peace," "security guarantees," and "constitutional mandates." In the second phase, these codes are categorized based on their rhetorical function, evaluating how *ethos* is constructed for domestic Muslim constituencies and how *logos* is deployed to signal strategic rationality to Western and Middle Eastern security actors (Leff, 2016). Finally, the third phase contextualizes these rhetorical patterns within the broader structural realities of contemporary international relations, validating the findings through a rigorous peer-debriefing process and exhaustive text-to-context alignment to eliminate subjective interpretive bias.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Anatomy of "Board of Peace" Rhetoric: Deconstructing the Dual-Targeted Discourse

The empirical textual analysis of Prabowo Subianto's speeches and diplomatic addresses between 2024 and 2026 reveals a highly strategic, structural configuration in his political communication. Rather than maintaining the historically linear, mono-directional protest rhetoric that has traditionally characterized Indonesian foreign policy toward the Levant, Subianto introduces a multidimensional linguistic framework. This framework operates as a conceptual "board"—a metaphor that implies a calculated, rule-governed playing field where multiple state actors possess interlocking interests and variable leverage (Yunarso & Muhtadi, 2025). The results demonstrate that this "Board of Peace" rhetoric does not signify a abandonment of Indonesia's constitutional solidarity with Palestine; instead, it represents a discursive modernization. By expanding the vocabulary of Indonesian statecraft to include structural defense concepts, the rhetoric attempts to position Indonesia as a rational, indispensable regional mediator capable of speaking the harsh language of realpolitik while upholding a deeply moralistic domestic mandate (He, 2024).

When deconstructed through classical Aristotelian rhetorical dimensions, the data reveals that the "Board of Peace" serves as a dual-targeted communication mechanism, simultaneously addressing two distinct audiences with divergent ideological expectations. For the domestic constituency and traditional regional allies within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the discourse is heavily saturated with *ethos*-building elements. Subianto consistently invokes the moral imperatives of anti-colonialism, humanitarian responsibility, and historical debt, thereby cementing his credibility as a principled leader of the world's largest Muslim-majority nation (Sukma, 2020). However, when the communicative environment shifts to minilateral and multilateral defense summits, such as the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, the rhetorical weight dramatically shifts toward a cold, analytical *logos*. In these international arenas, the discourse is stripped of emotional or religious triumphalism, replaced instead by a systematic focus on international law, conflict-resolution architecture, and the explicit acknowledgment that any durable peace matrix must accommodate the existential security anxieties of the State of Israel (Anwar, 2021).



Figure 1. The Rhetorical Synthesis of the "Board of Peace" Diplomacy Framework

This structural bifurcation of political discourse is visually modeled above to demonstrate how the "Board of Peace" serves as a bridge between competing political imperatives. The linguistic choices within Subianto's texts indicate a deliberate attempt to operationalize what political communication theorists define as strategic ambiguity. By utilizing broad, structurally inclusive metaphors like a "board" or a "common platform," the rhetoric allows domestic listeners to infer an unyielding commitment to total victory for Palestinian independence, while simultaneously allowing western defense partners to infer a pragmatic willingness to engage with the actual layout of Middle Eastern power balances (Fairclough, 2015). This dualism is not merely a linguistic trick; it is a direct reflection of a middle power's communicative survival strategy within an increasingly fragmented and multipolar global order (Acharya, 2023).

Operationalizing Ethos: Upholding Palestinian Solidarity Under Domestic Scrutiny

The domestic survival of any Indonesian foreign policy posture relies entirely on its alignment with the foundational mythos of the republic's anti-colonial identity. Analysis of Subianto's domestic addresses reveals that his political communication intensely leverages this historical path-dependency. By framing Indonesian support for Palestine not as a choice, but as an absolute constitutional debt inherited from the founding fathers of the 1945 state, his rhetoric neutralizes potential domestic accusations of political pragmatism or theological softening (Rastati, 2022). In these texts, Palestine is discursively constructed as the ultimate symbol of unfinished global decolonization. Subianto's language often mirrors the revolutionary vocabulary of the 1955 Bandung Asian-African Conference, a rhetorical maneuver that connects contemporary defense diplomacy directly to Indonesia's historical golden age of global leadership (Sukma, 2020).

Furthermore, the data shows that Subianto strategically integrates humanitarian defense actions into his rhetorical *ethos*. The frequent public emphasis on deploying Indonesian hospital ships, field hospitals, and military transport aircraft for air-dropping aid into Gaza functions as a visual and textual reinforcement of his narrative (He, 2024). This communicative strategy effectively transforms passive diplomatic rhetoric into active, visible state performance. By displaying Indonesian military assets engaged in high-stakes humanitarian operations, the political discourse satisfies the emotional and religious demands (*pathos*) of the domestic public, which demands concrete state action against perceived global injustices (Yunarto & Muhtadi, 2025). The rhetoric constructs an image of a nation that is strong, logistically capable, and morally uncompromised, thereby securing the domestic political capital necessary to execute more complex, pragmatic maneuvers on the international stage.

However, this heavy reliance on domestic *ethos* creates a highly restrictive discursive cage. Because the domestic public operates on an essentialist, highly polarized understanding of the Middle East conflict, the language used at home must remain uncompromisingly hostile toward structural Zionism and western double standards (Rastati, 2022). The empirical data indicates that whenever Subianto speaks before domestic political bodies or religious organizations, references to "Israeli security guarantees" are entirely absent, replaced instead by demands for "international accountability" and "the immediate cessation of illegal occupations" (Anwar, 2021). This selective filtering of the discourse highlights the immense structural barriers that domestic religious and political identities place on a state's communication strategy. It proves that even under a highly centralized executive leadership, a middle power's foreign policy speech acts remain deeply anchored in, and constrained by, the localized socio-political landscapes from which they emerge (Buzan & Waever, 2022).

Embracing Logos: The Pragmatism of Israeli Security Guarantees in Realpolitik

When the communication context shifts to elite global security forums, Subianto's texts undergo a profound grammatical and conceptual transformation. The emotional vocabulary of anti-colonial struggle is systematically replaced by the institutionalist nomenclature of defensive realism. The analysis of his international addresses reveals a heavy reliance on a *logos*-driven argument: that no sovereign state can be forced into a peace agreement that fails to address its core existential security dilemmas (Mearsheimer, 2021). By introducing the concept of "security guarantees" into his discussion of the two-state solution, Subianto's rhetoric explicitly acknowledges the primary strategic requirement of the State of Israel and its superpower patron, the United States. This linguistic inclusion marks a historic departure from traditional Indonesian diplomatic speech, which historically viewed any acknowledgment of Israeli security concerns as an act of ideological treason (Anwar, 2021).

This rhetorical shift toward security realism is strategically designed to position Indonesia as a

sophisticated, rational actor within global defense networks. In international relations, absolute moralism often signals strategic irrelevance to great powers who manage localized conflicts through the cold mechanics of deterrence and power balances (Wendt, 2019). By adopting the analytical language of "guarantees," "demilitarized buffers," and "multilateral enforcement mechanisms," Subianto signals to the global community that Indonesia is ready to move past the margins of rhetorical protest and enter the domain of structural problem-solving (Weatherbee, 2023). The "Board of Peace" thus becomes a shared cognitive space where Indonesia speaks the same conceptual language as the United States, European powers, and moderate Arab states, thereby increasing its diplomatic currency and ensuring its inclusion in future multilateral security dialogues.

Moreover, this *logos*-centric discourse serves as a calculated hedging strategy against global diplomatic isolation. In the wake of the structural transformations brought about by the Abraham Accords, traditional, unyielding non-recognition stances risk becoming obsolete and counterproductive (Quandt, 2021). Subianto's communication strategy addresses this geopolitical shift by demonstrating that a state can remain formally non-aligned and deeply supportive of Palestine while fully comprehending and validating the structural mechanics required to bring Israel to the negotiating table. The rhetoric frames security guarantees not as a concession to Israel, but as a pragmatic, tactical prerequisite for achieving the ultimate normative goal: a stable, universally recognized sovereign Palestinian state (Acharya, 2023). This represents a sophisticated exercise in defensive realism, where the language of *realpolitik* is weaponized to preserve and advance long-standing normative ideals.

The Synthesis: "Board of Peace" as a Strategic Balancing Act

The core tension within contemporary Indonesian political communication lies in the dialectical conflict between constructivist normative identity and realist systemic pressures. The "Board of Peace" diplomacy functions as the ultimate rhetorical synthesis of this dialectic. The analysis demonstrates that Subianto's discourse attempts to merge these two competing paradigms into a single, cohesive narrative of "responsible middle-power statecraft" (Acharya, 2023). By visualizing international diplomacy as a highly complex chess board, the rhetoric communicates a fundamental truth: that moves cannot be made based on pure emotion or moral certainty alone; they must calculate the structural placement, countermoves, and existential constraints of every player on the field (Leff, 2016). This synthesis allows Indonesia to maintain its historical soul while acquiring a modern, functional brain capable of navigating twenty-first-century global volatility.

This rhetorical synthesis is heavily dependent on the conceptual framework of defensive realism, which posits that states seek security rather than raw hegemony, and that conflict resolution is possible when security dilemmas are mutually understood and mitigated (Mearsheimer, 2021). Subianto's texts construct a narrative where Indonesia's lack of formal diplomatic relations with Israel is re-interpreted not as a sign of fanatical isolation, but as a unique strategic advantage. The rhetoric implies that because Indonesia has no historical or formal baggage with Israel, yet possesses immense moral authority within the global Islamic community, it can act as an objective, uncompromised guarantor on the "Board of Peace" (Yunarto & Muhtadi, 2025). This represents a highly innovative re-framing of a diplomatic limitation into a source of unique mediation leverage, challenging traditional assumptions about what constitutes effective diplomatic posture.

However, the long-term sustainability of this rhetorical balancing act remains highly precarious. The empirical data reveals a widening cognitive dissonance between the domestic and international dimensions of the discourse. As global geopolitical crises intensify, the luxury of strategic ambiguity diminishes, forcing states to choose between unambiguous normative alignment or unyielding realist compliance (Buzan & Waever, 2022). If Subianto's international rhetoric regarding "security guarantees" becomes too visible within the highly sensitive domestic media ecosystem, it could trigger severe socio-political destabilization, undermining his domestic *ethos* (Rastati, 2022). Conversely, if his domestic anti-colonial rhetoric dominates his international performance, global security partners may dismiss the "Board of Peace" as mere populist theater designed for internal consumption (He, 2024). Managing this discursive fracture requires an extraordinary level of communicative discipline and statecraft agility.

Ultimately, the "Board of Peace" diplomacy under Prabowo Subianto illuminates the broader structural challenges faced by emerging middle powers in the global south. In an era defined by intense polarization, ideological resurgence, and shifting security architectures, the traditional scripts of diplomatic communication are no longer sufficient (Acharya, 2023). Subianto's political discourse represents a bold,

highly sophisticated attempt to write a new script—one that acknowledges that true solidarity with the oppressed requires a rational, unflinching engagement with the security structures of the powerful. Whether this rhetorical synthesis can successfully translate from the realm of political discourse into tangible, structural breakthroughs in Middle Eastern diplomacy remains an open question, but its role in transforming Indonesia's strategic communication architecture is already profound and undeniable.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Prabowo Subianto's political communication reveals that the "Board of Peace" diplomacy functions as a highly sophisticated rhetorical instrument designed to modernize Indonesia's traditional foreign policy script. By shifting the nation's diplomatic vocabulary from a historically linear, protest-based stance to a multidimensional framework, this discourse effectively manages the structural tensions between domestic ideological expectations and global systemic pressures. The study demonstrates that while Indonesia remains constitutionally bound to absolute Palestinian solidarity, its contemporary leadership recognizes that effective mediation in an increasingly multipolar world requires a pragmatic engagement with the cold realities of international defense architectures (Acharya, 2023; Anwar, 2021). Consequently, the "Board of Peace" metaphor serves as a vital linguistic bridge, allowing the state to project moral purity to its domestic constituency while demonstrating strategic rationality to global security actors.

Furthermore, this research highlights how the strategic bifurcation of political discourse—balancing an identity-driven *ethos* at home with a realpolitik-driven *logos* abroad—serves as a vital survival mechanism for middle powers in the Global South. By introducing the sensitive concept of "security guarantees" into its international addresses, Subianto's rhetoric aligns Indonesia with the practical mechanics of contemporary conflict resolution without formally violating its non-recognition policy toward Israel (He, 2024; Mearsheimer, 2021). This rhetorical synthesis successfully reframes a long-standing diplomatic limitation into a potential source of unique mediation leverage. However, the long-term viability of this dual-targeted communication remains vulnerable to the rapid flow of digital information, where the boundaries between domestic and international audiences are increasingly blurred, creating a persistent risk of cognitive dissonance and political backlash (Rastati, 2022).

Ultimately, this study concludes that the "Board of Peace" rhetoric signifies a structural shift toward defensive realism within Indonesian foreign policy statecraft. It proves that emerging middle powers do not have to abandon their deeply held normative identities to be taken seriously as rational, capable actors within global security networks; rather, they must learn to articulate those ideals through the language of structural interdependence and strategic stability (Buzan & Waeber, 2022; Wendt, 2019). As Subianto continues to shape Indonesia's geopolitical trajectory, this balanced communication model will remain a critical benchmark for how developing nations navigate the volatile dialectic between historical morality and realpolitik. Future research should monitor whether this rhetorical framework successfully transitions into tangible diplomatic breakthroughs or if it will remain an elite communicative strategy confined to the realm of political discourse.

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