



Board of Peace and the Role of Personalised Diplomacy

Can Prabowo Successfully Navigate Public Resistance?

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Executive Summary

Indonesia's decision to join the Board of Peace signals a shift toward personalised diplomacy, expanding strategic access while aiming to placate domestic scrutiny in the public sphere.

Despite conditional accommodation among foreign policy and religious elites, survey findings expose a legitimacy gap; scepticism over intent, costs, and benefits of Palestinian statehood is driving a wedge between elite alignment and public conviction.

The durability of this shift will depend on credible strategic returns and clear justification of commitments, failing which, scepticism may constrain Indonesia's diplomatic flexibility.

Introduction

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto has consciously eschewed traditional foreign policy in favour of personalised diplomacy where foreign policy decisions are driven by personal relationships with foreign leaders and domestic political considerations, rather than traditional diplomatic channels.

Nothing captured this dynamic more clearly than Indonesia's decision to join the United States (US)-initiated Board of Peace (BoP) on 22 January 2026,¹ a decision taken much to the bewilderment of the traditional foreign policy elite and leaders of the Muslim community.

Personalised or leader-driven diplomacy is nothing new. The best expression of it was the 1972 meeting between US President Richard Nixon and Chairman Mao Zedong.² Other historical examples include West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's cultivation of close ties with East Germany and the USSR through *Ostpolitik*, followed by the "détente" between President Richard Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. More recently, such leader-driven models are observed in Turkey (Erdogan) and India (Modi's focus on personal outreach).

The old international order is unravelling, and the BoP reflects a new international reality where states are increasingly adjusting to the latticework of smaller, specialised, and overlapping partnerships in regions like Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and now the Middle East rather than relying solely on broad, post-WWII institutions. This logic is evident in the emerging minilateral structures in the Indo-Pacific³ over the past decade, centred on the US and its allies, and driven by a shared desire to decelerate China's rise.

Washington's shift from over-assuring its alliance partners to seeking "partnership, not dependency" was the unambiguous message from Secretary of State Marco Rubio's speech at the Munich Security Conference.⁴ While jarring to some, this resonates with traditional Indonesian foreign policy thinking, which has long viewed alliances as regressive used primarily to clearly delineate adversaries and enemies. For Prabowo, a leader-to-leader approach offers a "quick fix" to international problems, allowing him to bypass formal and sometimes rigid diplomatic channels.

¹ Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, "President Prabowo Signs BoP Charter, Concrete Action to Gaza Peace," Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 22 January 2026, <https://setkab.go.id/en/president-prabowo-signs-bop-charter-concrete-action-to-gaza-peace/>

² Richard M. Nixon, "Asia After Viet Nam," *Foreign Affairs*, 1 October 1967, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/1967-10-01/asia-after-viet-nam>

³ Sarah Teo, "The Rise and Endurance of Minilaterals in the Indo-Pacific," *The Interpreter*, 27 December 2024, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/rise-endurance-minilaterals-indo-pacific>

⁴ U.S. Department of State, "Secretary of State Marco Rubio at the Munich Security Conference," U.S. Department of State, 14 February 2026, <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/02/secretary-of-state-marco-rubio-at-the-munich-security-conference>.

Accepting the World as It Is

Indonesia's decision to join the BoP reflects a diplomatic orientation that took shape following US President Donald Trump's electoral victory in 2024, coinciding with President Prabowo Subianto's growing inclination to cultivate closer engagement with Washington.⁵

The personalised tone of this engagement became particularly visible during the Gaza Peace Summit in Sharm El-Sheikh in October 2025, when Prabowo casually asked President Trump if he could meet his son, Eric Trump.⁶ Although the exchange was informal, the episode offered a glimpse into a diplomatic approach that appears increasingly comfortable relying on personal access and interpersonal familiarity to navigate complex international relationships.

This preference for leader-driven engagement is further evidenced by Indonesia's evolving relationships with several Middle Eastern states also aligned with the BoP. Gulf actors have deepened their engagement with Jakarta through a combination of economic partnerships and strategic cooperation. Qatar, for instance, has pledged US\$2.5 billion towards Indonesia's ambitious affordable housing programme. This includes plans to construct one million homes over five years as part of Prabowo's broader pledge to build three million new dwellings during his term.⁷ Likewise, the United Arab Emirates continues to expand its economic footprint in Indonesia through a range of infrastructure and development projects, with more than US\$46 billion in investment commitments secured from the Gulf state in recent years.⁸ Additionally, Prabowo's longstanding personal affinity with Jordan's leadership, particularly his close rapport with King Abdullah II, provides another diplomatic channel.⁹ This is complemented further by defence cooperation with Turkey focused on military modernisation, reflecting Indonesia's parallel effort to strengthen security partnerships with key regional actors¹⁰.

⁵ "Prabowo Keen to Congratulate Trump in Person," *Antara News*, 12 November 2024, <https://en.antaranews.com/news/333829/prabowo-keen-to-congratulate-trump-in-person>.

⁶ "Indonesia President Prabowo Subianto Caught on Hot Mic Asking to Meet Eric Trump at Egypt Gaza Peace Summit," *The Guardian*, 14

October 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/14/indonesia-president-prabowo-subianto-hot-mic-asking-meet-eric-trump-egypt-gaza-peace-summit>.

⁷ Resty Woro Yuniar, "Indonesia's 3 Million Homes Push Gets US\$2.5 Billion Boost from Qatar," *South China Morning Post*, 27 June 2025, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/economics/article/3315983/indonesias-3-million-homes-push-gets-us25-billion-boost-qatar>.

⁸ Sheany Yasuko Lai, "Indonesia Expects More Investment from UAE after Talks between Prabowo and Sheikh Mohamed," *Arab News*, 27 February 2026, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2634661/world>.

⁹ Jayanty Nada Shofa, "Prabowo Arrives in Amman to Meet Old Friend Jordan's King," *Jakarta Globe*, 25 February 2026, <https://jakartaglobe.id/news/prabowo-arrives-in-amman-to-meet-old-friend-jordans-king>.

¹⁰ "Indonesia's Prabowo, Turkey's Erdogan Agree to Bolster Ties," *The Straits Times*, 12 February 2025, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesias-prabowo-turkeys-erdogan-agree-to-bolster-ties>.

Within this wider network of relationships, Indonesia's participation in the BoP can be interpreted as part of a broader attempt to situate itself within emerging diplomatic alignments shaping the political future of the Middle East.

There is also a symbolic dimension to this engagement. Prabowo has repeatedly framed Indonesia's international role through the lens of national stature, arguing that it should not remain peripheral to major diplomatic initiatives given the country's demographic scale and geopolitical weight. Participation in the BoP therefore carries an element of prestige signaling, the projection of Indonesia as an actor willing to assume a visible role in an international effort to address one of the most persistent conflicts in global politics.

The reality is that Prabowo believes that there is no other game in town¹¹ and personalised diplomacy is the only way to influence outcomes in Gaza. To that end, Indonesia has initially committed to a US\$1 billion contribution¹² to the BoP but then vacillated and now states that it will not pay the \$1 billion joining fee for permanent membership¹³. However, it is still prepared to send peacekeeping forces¹⁴ into Gaza as part of the United Nations-mandated multinational International Stabilization Force¹⁵.

Ultimately, this engagement serves both external and domestic purposes. It expands Indonesia's diplomatic presence abroad while reinforcing Prabowo's recurring narrative that the nation must act in accordance with its status as a "*negara besar*",¹⁶ a nation of considerable geopolitical weight.

¹¹ "Prabowo Subianto di Board of Peace: Indonesia Siap Ikut Serta Demi Perdamaian Gaza," *Metro TV*, YouTube video, 22 January 2026, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiDjtMc_SCs.

¹² "Indonesia Pastikan Bayar Iuran Lembaga Buatan Trump Senilai Rp16 Triliun," *Wartakota Tribunnews*, 4 February 2026, <https://wartakota.tribunnews.com/news/881117/indonesia-pastikan-bayar-iuran-lembaga-buatan-trump-senilai-rp16-triliun>.

¹³ "Indonesia says no to \$1 billion fee for Trump's 'Board of Peace' seat," *The Japan Times*, 23 March 2026, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2026/03/23/asia-pacific/politics/indonesia-trump-board-of-peace/>.

¹⁴ "Indonesia Gabung Board of Peace: Kontroversi dan Dampaknya," *BBC News Indonesia*, 28 October 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c0174e412pwo>.

¹⁵ "Between Duty and Danger: Indonesia's Bold Peacekeeping Push in Gaza," *The Straits Times*, 1 March 2026, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/between-duty-and-danger-indonesias-bold-peacekeeping-push-in-gaza>.

¹⁶ Ferry Sandi, "Prabowo: Kadang Kita Gak Sadar Kita Ini Bangsa Besar," *CNBC Indonesia*, 20 December 2025, <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20251220152345-4-695948/prabowo-kadang-kita-gak-sadar-kita-ini-bangsa-besar>.

Criticism

Foreign policy typically does not elicit strong public response as compared to domestic issues. However, with social media, this dynamic is now nuanced and changing. Criticism of Indonesia's membership in the BoP has emerged from across the political and religious spectrum, involving figures such as former ambassador to the US Dino Patti Djalal,¹⁷ former vice president Jusuf Kalla,¹⁸ law professor Hikmahanto Juwana,¹⁹ director of the Gusdurian Indonesia Network Alissa Wahid,²⁰ prominent Islamist figure Habib Rizieq Shihab,²¹ vice chairman of the Indonesian Ulama Council Cholil Nafis,²² and leaders within Muhammadiyah.²³

These criticisms revolve around several core concerns: President Trump's dominating position within the BoP; doubts regarding the realisation of an independent Palestine state; suspicions over US-Israel complicity to deny Palestinian aspirations; the exorbitant US\$1 billion fee; and the lack of input from the Gazan population in the reconstruction phase.

With unabating public resistance evident, Prabowo invited former foreign ministers, former diplomats,²⁴ opposition figures,²⁵ and leaders of Islamic organisations (Muhammadiyah, NU, and MUI) to a meeting in early February to explain his rationale. The meeting successfully assuaged the concerns of the elite, leading to conditional acquiescence by most participants with the proviso that Indonesia must withdraw from the BoP if Palestinian independence is not attained.²⁶

¹⁷ "Empat Lampu Kuning Indonesia Gabung Dewan Perdamaian," *Tempo*, 27 January 2026, <https://www.tempo.co/politik/empat-lampu-kuning-indonesia-gabung-dewan-perdamaian-2110304>.

¹⁸ "JK Buka Suara soal RI Gabung Board of Peace Besutan Trump," *CNN Indonesia*, 6 February 2026, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20260206182718-32-1325491/jk-buka-suara-soal-ri-gabung-board-of-peace-besutan-trump>.

¹⁹ "Wanti-wanti Pakar ke Indonesia Usai Israel Gabung Board of Peace," *DetikNews*, 13 February 2026, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-8353843/wanti-wanti-pakar-ke-indonesia-usai-israel-gabung-board-of-peace>.

²⁰ "Jaringan Gusdurian Indonesia Menolak Dewan Perdamaian Trump," *Kompas.id*, 2 February 2026, <https://www.kompas.id/artikel/en-jaringan-gusdurian-indonesia-menolak-dewan-perdamaian-trump>.

²¹ "Soal Board of Peace, Habib Rizieq: Jangan Percaya Amerika dan Israel," *Suara Islam*, 4 February 2026, <https://suaraislam.id/soal-board-of-peace-habib-rizieq-jangan-percaya-amerika-dan-israel/>.

²² "MUI Minta RI Mundur dari Board of Peace, Ini Sederet Alasannya," *Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, 28 January 2026, <https://mui.or.id/baca/berita/mui-minta-ri-mundur-dari-board-of-peace-ini-sederat-alasannya>.

²³ "Muhammadiyah Khawatir Indonesia Melunak Bela Palestina," *Tempo*, 24 January 2026, <https://www.tempo.co/politik/muhammadiyah-khawatir-indonesia-melunak-bela-palestina-2109586>.

²⁴ "Prabowo Diskusi Board of Peace dengan Eks Menlu dan Akademisi, Apa Isinya?" *CNN Indonesia*, 5 February 2026, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/internasional/20260205080852-106-1324775/prabowo-diskusi-board-of-peace-dengan-eks-menlu-akademisi-apa-isinya>.

²⁵ "Prabowo Undang Tokoh Oposisi ke Kertanegara, Tidak Ada dari Parpol," *Kompas.com*, February 2, 2026, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2026/02/02/10535141/prabowo-undang-tokoh-oposisi-ke-kertanegara-tidak-ada-dari-parpol>.

²⁶ Putri Yuliani "Prabowo Reaffirms Willingness to Withdraw from BoP Gaza If Palestinian Independence Is Not Realised", *Media Indonesia*, 6 March 2026, <https://jawawa.id/newsitem/prabowo->

Prabowo then engaged in a charm offensive with the Islamic grassroots, attending rallies commemorating the Nahdlatul Ulama’s centenary celebrations and the inauguration ceremony of the newly elected board of the Indonesia Ulama Council (MUI). At the latter event, he also committed to constructing a 40-storey building for the MUI in central Jakarta.²⁷

Investigating the Public Response

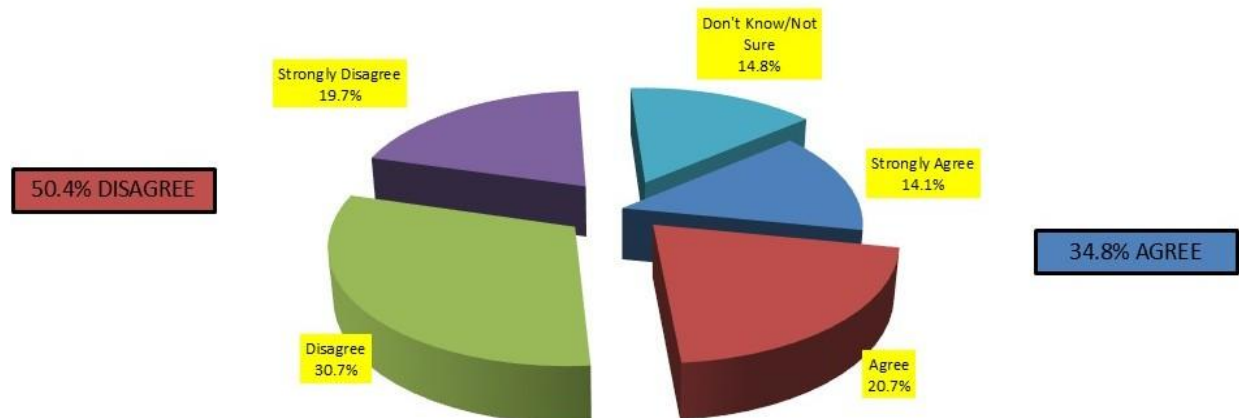
With elite opposition largely contained, the next question is how public perception can be assessed. To examine this, MEDIAN, a Jakarta based survey and research company, conducted a nationwide public opinion survey from 10 to 14 February 2026²⁸ using social media targeting and reaching 1,200 respondents. Given that Indonesia has at least 143 million social media users, a social media-based survey provides a relevant snapshot of public sentiment regarding Indonesia’s participation in the BoP.

Low Approval Ratings

Despite intensive political and communication maneuvers, approval ratings for joining the BoP were low. The survey indicated 50.4% disagreed with the decision, 34.8% supported it, and 14.8% were unsure (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Public Opinion on Indonesia’s Decision to Join the BoP

Do you agree or disagree with Indonesia’s decision to join the BoP?



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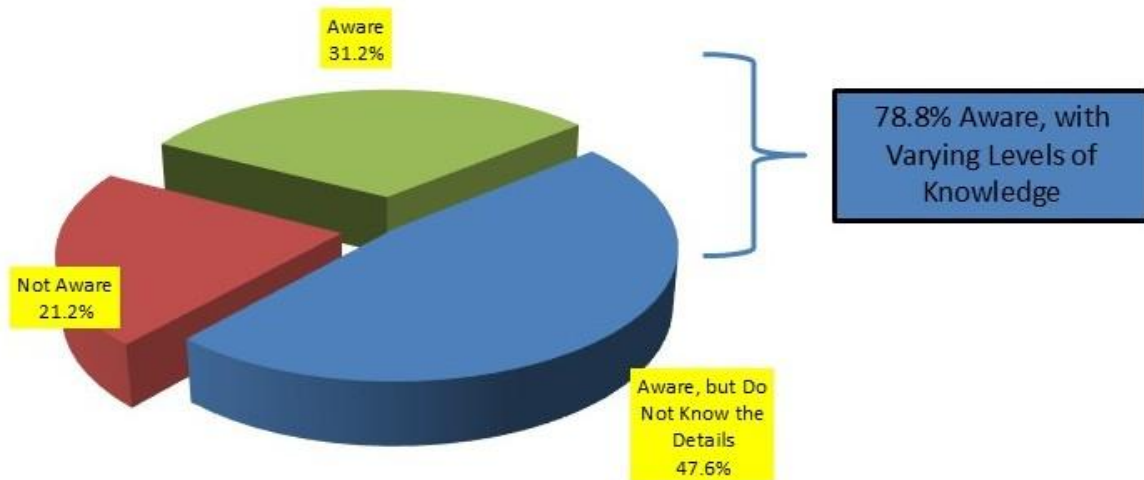
²⁷ JawaPos.com, “Presiden Prabowo Janji Bangun Gedung 40 Lantai untuk Kantor MUI di Bundaran HI,” *JawaPos.com*, February 7, 2026, <https://www.jawapos.com/nasional/017165026/presiden-prabowo-janji-bangun-gedung-40-lantai-untuk-kantor-mui-lembaga-islam-di-bundaran-hi-jakpus>.

²⁸ “Survei MEDIAN: 55,7% Publik Percaya Pemerintah Tetap Bela Palestina di BoP,” *Kumparan*, 23 February 2026, <https://kumparan.com/kumparannews/survei-median-55-7-publik-percaya-pemerintah-tetap-bela-palestina-di-bop-26t1XYy9oVb>.

What contributed to public resistance? A key driver was uneven public awareness. While 78.8% of respondents reported awareness of the BoP, only 31.2% indicated that they understood the concept well (Figure 2). A larger proportion, 47.6%, had heard of the initiative but lacked details, while 21.2% were entirely unaware. This low engagement, high visibility scenario significantly increases the fragility of public perception. Yet, this finding presents an opportunity for the Prabowo administration to better socialise the rationale for joining the BoP and raise awareness regarding the underlying conflict.

Figure 2. Public Awareness Levels of the BoP

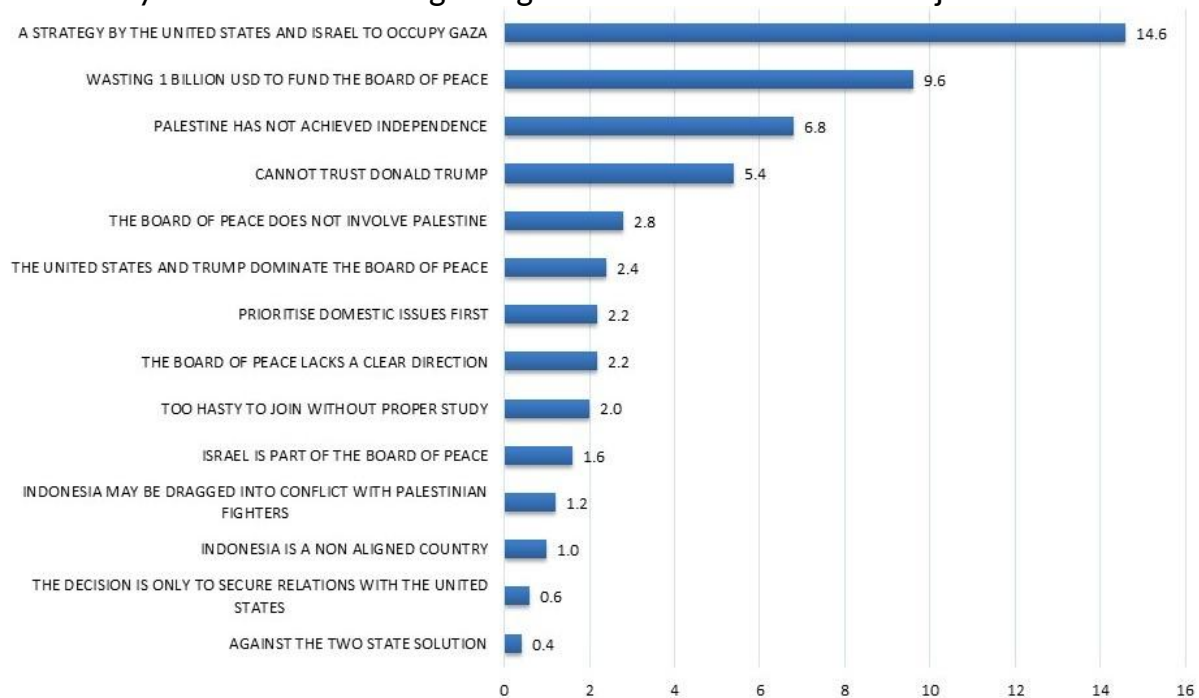
Were you aware that the BoP initiative is related to the Gaza conflict?



Public trust has yet to be attained, with many doubtful over the real motives behind the establishment of the BoP. Respondents viewed it as America's and Israel's strategy to occupy Gaza (14.6%); a waste of the US\$1 billion fee (9.6%); the possibility of no realisation of Palestinian independence (6.8%); wariness of Donald Trump's motives (5.4%); and the lack of genuine Palestinian involvement in the BoP (2.8%). If we add the sixth reason, namely, Trump's domination of the BoP (2.4%) with concerns related to US and Israeli occupation of Gaza (14.6%), and President Trump's untrustworthiness (5.4%), the numbers go up to 22.4% (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Reasons for Disagreeing with Indonesia’s Decision to Join the BoP

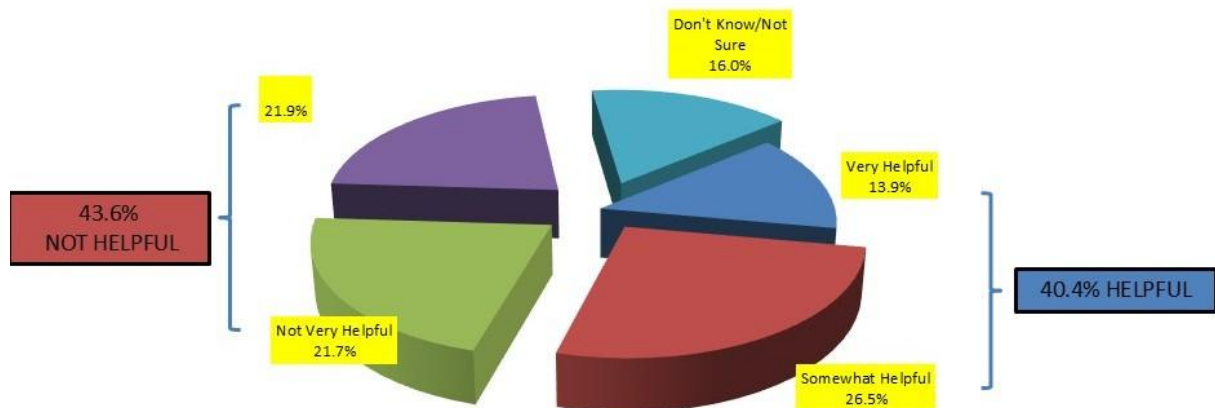
What are your reasons for disagreeing with Indonesia’s decision to join the BoP?



This negative public perception was reinforced by two further findings. The survey sought public reaction to three statements: (i) Is Indonesia’s participation helpful for the Palestinian cause? (ii) Does joining the BoP inadvertently weaken Indonesia’s support for Palestine? And (iii) Would the BoP only benefit America and Israel? Data collected revealed that 40.4% felt that Indonesian participation will help the Palestinian cause, while 43.6% saw no benefit and 16% were unsure (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Public Views on Whether Indonesia’s Participation in the BoP will Advance the Palestinian Cause

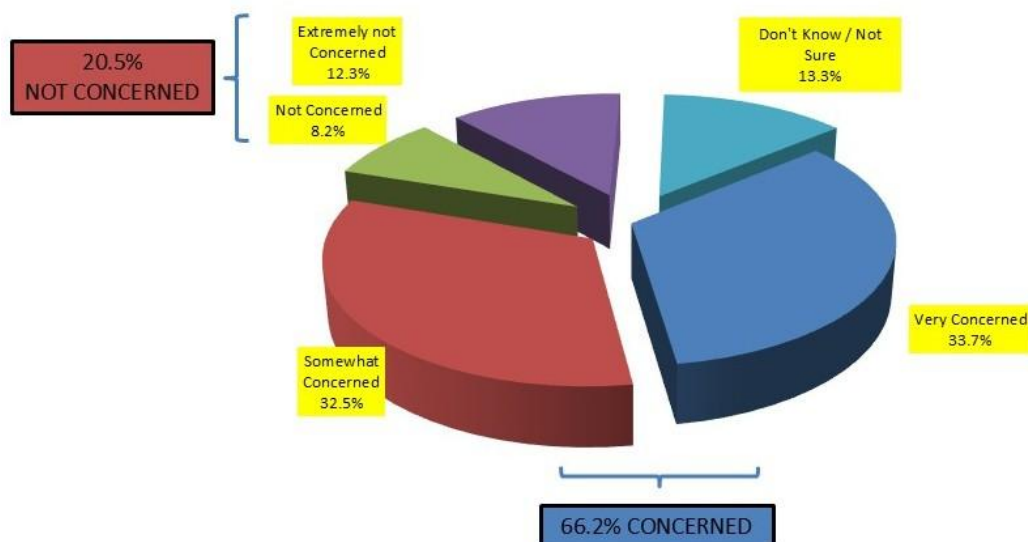
In your view, will Indonesia’s participation in the BoP advance the Palestinian cause?



A majority (66.2%) expressed concern that joining the BoP could adversely affect and weaken Indonesian support for Palestine. In contrast, 20.5% were unconcerned while 13.3% were unsure (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Public Concern that Indonesia’s Participation in the BoP could Weaken Its Support for Palestine

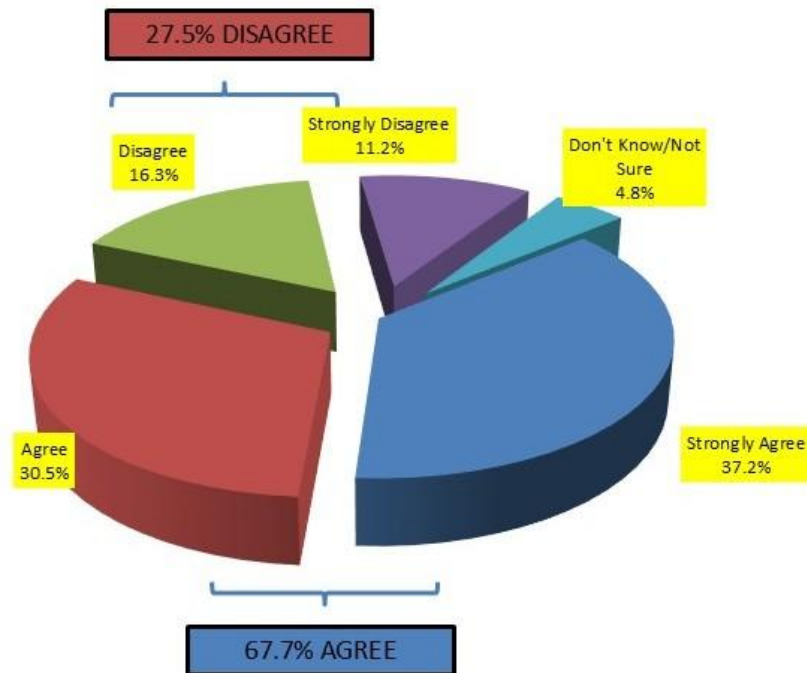
Are you concerned that Indonesia’s participation in the BoP could weaken its support for Palestine?



And in line with the two previous findings, majority believed that the BoP will only benefit America and Israel (67.7%) while 27.5% disagreed (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Public Agreement with the View that the BoP Will Ultimately Benefit Only the US and Israel

Do you agree with the statement that the BoP will ultimately benefit only the US and Israel?

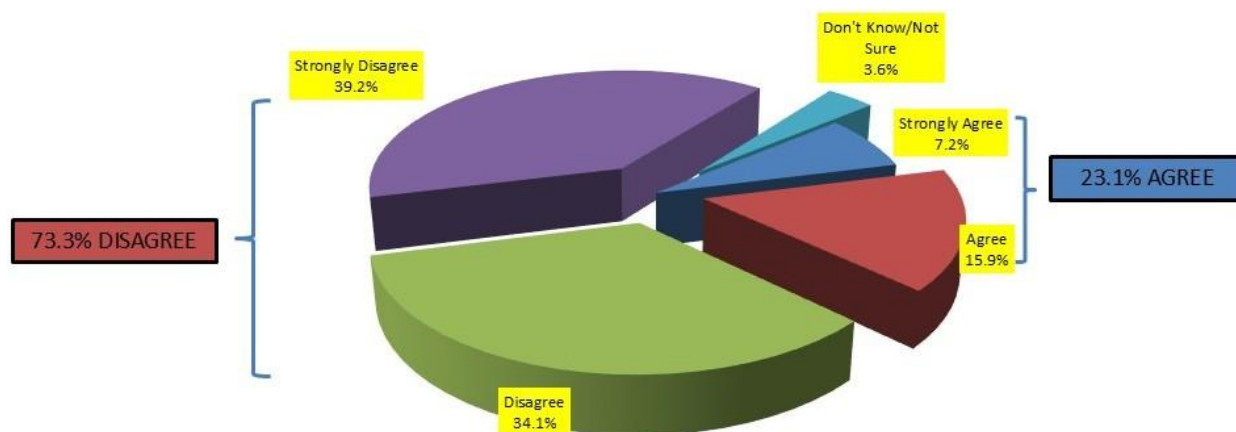


Based on research by the Charities Aid Foundation from 2018 to 2024,²⁹ Indonesia is recognised as the most generous country in the world. While Indonesians consistently donate to the Palestine cause, public opposition has emerged over the government's decision to contribute US\$1 billion (17 trillion rupiahs) for permanent BoP membership when there are other national priorities. The recent Sumatran flood disaster still in the recovery and reconstruction phase clearly requires a large government budgetary outlay. Hence, a majority (73.3%) opposed the BoP membership fee, with only 23.1% in agreement and 3.6% unsure (Figure 7).

²⁹ Adi Fakhri Nugrotomo and Reza Felix Citra, "Waktu yang Tepat untuk Bercermin: Indonesia Negara Paling Dermawan di Dunia," *Kompas.id*, 12 April 2025, <https://www.kompas.id/artikel/en-waktu-yang-tepat-untuk-bercermin-indonesia-negara-paling-dermawan-di-dunia>.

Figure 7. Public Support for Allocating 17 trillion Rupiah for Indonesia’s Participation in the BoP

Do you support the Indonesian government allocating 17 trillion rupiah for Indonesia’s participation in the BoP?



Elite Consent Does Not Automatically Translate into Public Consent

While Prabowo’s decisiveness to placate the concerns of the elite was beneficial, it has not yet led to a significant measurable shift in public opinion. Likewise, although leaders from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and MUI have agreed to conditionally support the government’s decision, the survey found that not all their members and sympathisers agree with their respective leaders’ positions.

Of the respondents claiming an association with NU, 53.2% supported the leadership’s decision to support the government. Yet, 36.3% disagreed with the decision and 10.5% were undecided. Among Muhammadiyah followers (the second largest Islamic organisation after NU), only 13.9% supported the government’s position, while the majority (71.8%) disagreed and 14.3% remained undecided (Figure 8). Many modernists still disagree with Prabowo’s decision to join BoP. Consequently, he may face increased difficulties securing support from the modernist and reformist Muslim community if the overall Middle East situation deteriorates significantly in the aftermath of the 28 February 2026 US-Israel attack on Iran.³⁰

³⁰ “Discussions with Board of Peace 'on hold' due to Iran war, Indonesia says”, CNA, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/indonesia-board-peace-iran-war-middle-east-prabowo-5970381>

Figure 8. Level of Support for Joining the BoP among Mass Organisation Members and Sympathisers

| | AGREE TO JOIN | DISAGREE TO JOIN | DON'T KNOW/NOT SURE |
|---|---------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) | 53.2% | 36.3% | 10.5% |
| Muhammadiyah | 13.9% | 71.8% | 14.3% |
| FPI (Front Pembela Islam/ Front Persatuan Islam) | 35.5% | 54.5% | 10.0% |
| Persatuan Islam (PERSIS) | 56.7% | 33.3% | 10.0% |
| Nahdlatul Wathan (NW) | 23.3% | 33.3% | 43.3% |
| Al-Washliyah | | 100.0% | |
| Alumni 212 | 23.3% | 33.3% | 43.3% |
| PGI (Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia) | 44.5% | 45.5% | 10.0% |
| WALUBI (PERWAKILAN Budha Indonesia) | 20.5% | 30.5% | 50.0% |
| WALHI (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia) | 32.1% | 52.6% | 15.3% |
| Karang Taruna | 28.9% | 50.0% | 21.1% |
| IDI (Ikatan Dokter Indonesia) | 18.6% | 71.4% | 10.0% |
| KNPI (Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia) | 47.1% | 42.9% | 10.0% |
| PGRI (Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia) | 56.7% | 33.3% | 10.0% |
| Pemuda Pancasila (PP) | 65.0% | 25.0% | 10.0% |
| FKPPI (Forum Komunikasi Putra Putri Purnawirawan) | | 50.0% | 50.0% |
| FBR (Forum Betawi Rempug) | | 50.0% | 50.0% |

Winning the Information War

In an era of social media defined by high-speed, 24/7 connectivity, mere elite capture is not enough. Observing the data, we find that most people get their information from various social media and conventional media outlets instead of their respective organisational leaders. 53.4% draw their information from social media, 19.1% get it from online news media, and 10.3% from television, while leaders' statements only account for 2.8% (Figure 9). Respondents also felt that government explanations lack clarity (62.5%) compared to those who believed the government has provided adequate explanations (24.5%) (Figure 10).

Figure 9. Primary Sources of Information on the BoP

What were your primary sources of information regarding the BoP?

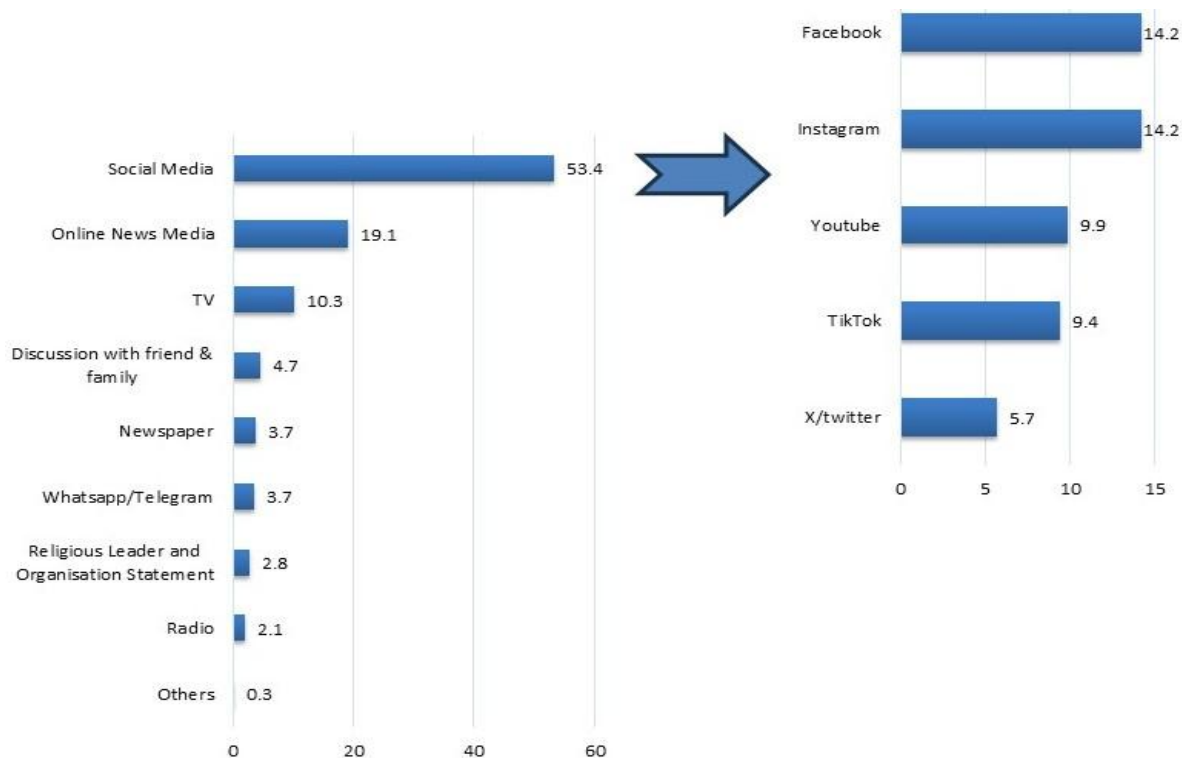
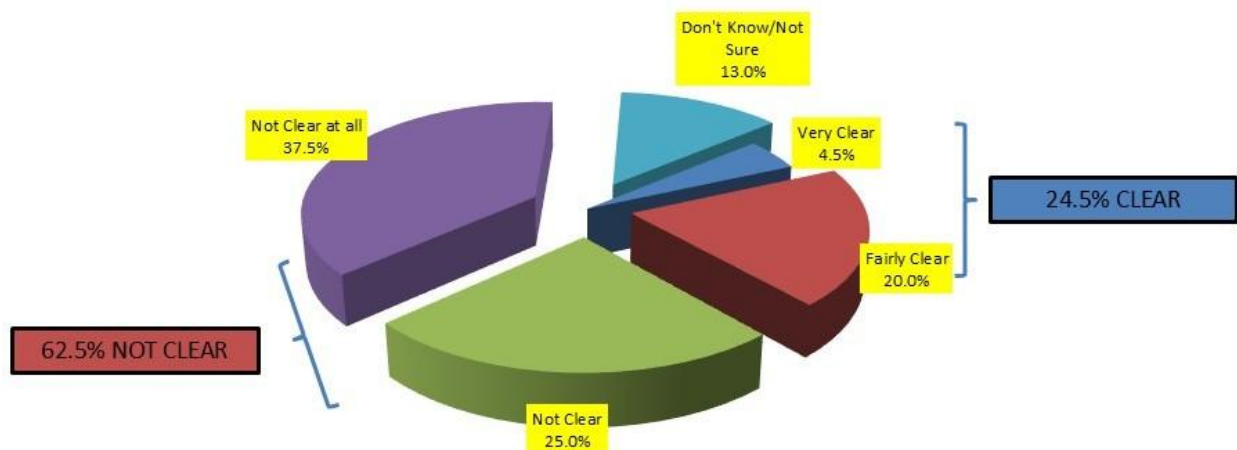


Figure 10. Public Perceptions of Government Communication on the Decision to Join the BoP

Do you believe the government has clearly explained its decision to join the BoP to the public?



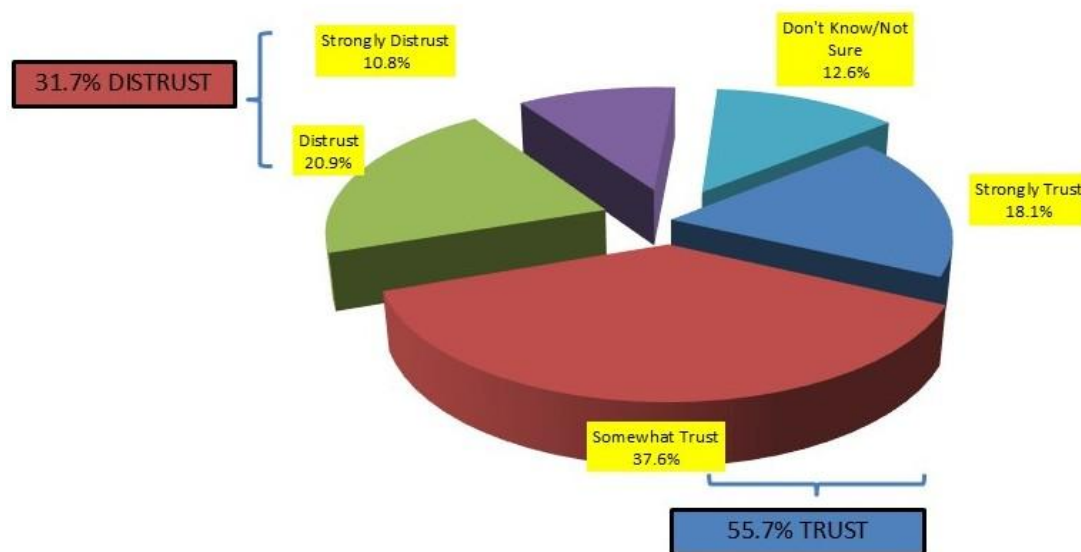
Key Messages and Strategic Narrative

Ultimately, Palestinian independence remains the major consideration for public support. Perceived US domination of the BoP and Israel's inability to support Palestinian statehood bolsters existing negative perceptions. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether the BoP is the pathway to a viable Palestinian state. Prabowo needs to convey clear details demonstrating that this pragmatic approach provides an opening to resolve the conflict and offers closure for the Palestinian independence narrative.

Fortunately, even though public trust in the BoP is low, trust in government is still arguably sufficient. Around 55.7% still trusted the Indonesian government's commitment to support Palestinian statehood even after joining the BoP, compared to 31.7% who expressed distrust (Figure 11). This is significant social capital. Combining public trust with the right narrative may increase public support and legitimacy for the personalised diplomacy approach adopted by Prabowo.

Figure 11. Public Trust in Government Consistency on Palestine after Joining the BoP

To what extent do you trust the Indonesian government to remain consistent in defending Palestine after joining the BoP?



Conclusion and Policy Insights

As of 2 March 2026, the strategic environment surrounding Indonesia's participation in the BoP has become more contested. The MUI, led by Chairman KH Anwar Iskandar and Secretary General Buya Amirsyah Tambunan, has openly questioned whether the BoP still retains any meaningful relevance following the latest US and Israeli strikes on Iran. From their standpoint, the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East casts significant doubt on the BoP's credibility as a vehicle for global peace and for Palestinian statehood.³¹

These developments reshape the political calculus of Indonesia's engagement. Legitimacy and strategic clarity now become decisive. Four policy insights follow:

1. Prabowo's decision to join the BoP does more than recalibrate Indonesia's diplomatic posture. It marks a deliberate move away from institutional orthodoxy toward leader-driven engagement in a fluid global order. At the elite level, resistance was managed through consultation, reassurance, and conditional acquiescence. Former ministers, diplomats, and leaders of major Islamic organisations signaled guarded acceptance. Yet elite accommodation has not translated into societal endorsement.
2. Proximity to Washington carries compounding risks when reciprocity remains unproven. Indonesia's participation in the BoP was partly driven by a calculation that engagement would help manage tariff pressures while securing a seat in US-led diplomatic frameworks.³² That calculus unraveled rapidly once American and Israeli strikes on Iran shifted the initiative's trajectory from stabilisation to escalation. Within days, what had been framed as a pragmatic diplomatic channel became a source of renewed domestic backlash. This pattern exposes a structural vulnerability in Prabowo's approach: strategic engagement with a partner whose foreign policy priority can shift abruptly requires built-in exit mechanisms and continuous reassessment to avoid diplomatic entrapment.
3. The survey findings reveal a layered reality. Public opinion is not uniformly hostile, but it is unsettled. Awareness is widespread but shallow. Trust in the government's long-term commitment to Palestinian statehood remains relatively intact, while confidence in the BoP as an effective vehicle is weak. This divergence is telling. The public is not withdrawing moral support for Palestine. It is questioning the strategic pathway chosen by the leadership, meaning that Prabowo needs to improve his administration's communication strategy to better explain the importance of his policies to the public.

³¹ "MUI Desak RI Keluar dari Board of Peace Buntut Serangan AS-Israel ke Iran," *Detik.com*, 2 March 2026, <https://www.detik.com/hikmah/khazanah/d-8379283/mui-desak-ri-keluar-dari-board-of-peace-buntut-serangan-as-israel-ke-iran>.

³² Muhammad Haziq Jani, Adhi Priamarizki, and Muhammad Garda Ramadhito, "Indonesia's Proximity to Washington Tests Limits as Middle East Tensions Rise," *TwentyTwo13*, 16 March 2026, <https://twentytwo13.my/indonesias-proximity-to-washington-tests-limits-as-middle-east-tensions-rise/>.

4. The gap between elite adjustment and public scepticism carries implications. In a media environment where narratives travel faster than formal briefings, elite consensus no longer anchors legitimacy. If personalised diplomacy is to endure, it must be supported by sustained narrative clarity. The government must demonstrate how participation enhances leverage rather than dilutes principle, justify the scale of financial commitment with concrete strategic returns, and visibly safeguard Palestinian agency within the process. Without such recalibration, scepticism may harden into durable distrust, constraining Indonesia's diplomatic flexibility and raising the domestic political cost of external engagement.

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