

## Palestine in Indonesian foreign policy: The relevance of Soekarno's speech at the 1955 AAC

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### Abstract:

The Palestinian issue is one of the most complex conflicts in contemporary global politics, reflecting systemic injustice and the failure of international institutions to uphold human rights and national sovereignty. As a country born from the decolonization struggle, Indonesia has consistently voiced support for Palestinian independence, both through diplomatic, humanitarian, and international forums. This article reveals that President Soekarno's speech at the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference (AAC) was not just a symbolic statement, but became the ideological and moral foundation for Indonesia's foreign policy towards Palestine. Through a qualitative approach with a historical-diplomatic method, this article analyzes the content of Soekarno's speech, KAA documents, and the practice of Indonesian diplomacy from the early era of independence to the post-Reformation period. This research demonstrates that the values of anti-colonialism, South-South solidarity, and global justice, as conveyed by Soekarno, remain the foundation of Indonesia's stance towards Palestine to this day. The scientific contribution of this study lies in strengthening the post-colonial perspective in the study of Indonesian diplomacy and affirming the importance of ideological heritage in shaping the direction of value-based foreign policy.

**Keywords:** anti-colonialism; Asian-African Conference; Palestine; Indonesian diplomacy; Soekarno's speech.

### INTRODUCTION

After World War II, the world order underwent a massive transformation with the emergence of two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. The rivalry between the two triggered the Cold War, an ideological conflict that divided the world into two major blocs: the capitalist Western bloc led by the United States, and the communist Eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union (Haba, 2022). New nations emerging from post-war decolonization, particularly in Asia and Africa, were caught in a tug-of-war between these two powers (Eckel, 2023). In this context, the need arose to establish a third axis independent of these two great powers, which later became the basis for the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Non-Aligned Movement did not emerge in a vacuum, but rather as an active response by newly independent nations to global geopolitical pressures. These nations did not want to become pawns in global ideological conflicts, but instead sought to fight for independence, development, and international peace based on the principle of mutual respect for sovereignty (Freedman, 2008). The birth of the Non-Aligned Movement has strong roots in the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference (AAC) in Bandung, initiated by countries such as Indonesia, India, Egypt, and Yugoslavia. In this forum, leaders of the global South began to forge political and economic solidarity as an alternative to Western and Eastern domination.

Indonesia, under Sukarno's leadership, played a key role in shaping the ideological framework of the Non-Aligned Movement. Sukarno's speech at the opening of the 1955 Asian-African Conference (AAC) served as a moral rallying cry for nations to reject colonialism in any form, including modern colonialism through economic or military intervention by major powers (Soekarno, 1955). The conference not only condemned colonialism in Africa and Asia but also voiced concern for the plight of Palestine as an unresolved global issue. Solidarity with Palestine became part of the early narrative of the Non-Aligned Movement's anti-colonial struggle.

The emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement demonstrated that developing countries actively participated in shaping the dynamics of international relations. This movement provided a forum for Southern countries to collectively voice their interests, including supporting the Palestinian cause in various multilateral forums (Dinkel, 2019). In this context, Indonesia's support for Palestine is not merely a bilateral policy, but part of a historical and ideological commitment to a more just and equitable world order. The spirit of Bandung and the principles of Non-Aligned Movement remain an inspiration for Indonesian diplomacy to this day.

Indonesia was one of the first countries in Asia to successfully proclaim its independence after World War II, precisely on August 17, 1945. This independence was not the result of a gift, but through a long struggle against Dutch colonialism and Japanese occupation (Kahin, 1952). Against this background, the spirit of anti-colonialism not only became the basis for the formation of Indonesia's national identity, but also became the moral foundation in the direction of its foreign policy. President Sukarno consistently brought this anti-colonial narrative in various international forums as part of Indonesia's ideological diplomacy in the early days of independence.

In international forums, Indonesia did not take a passive position as a new nation simply accepting the post-war global order. Instead, Indonesia emerged as a leader among Third World nations, prioritizing solidarity with nations still under colonialism (Anwar, 2005). This was reflected in Indonesia's active role in organizing the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung, which marked a milestone in the birth of South-South solidarity. At the conference, Sukarno emphasized that the struggle of Asian and African nations was not over as long as colonialism persisted in new forms, including economic imperialism and military occupation.

Indonesia's position as a new nation with an anti-colonial spirit has led it to consistently support independence for other nations, including Palestine. In his speech at the Asian-African Conference (AAC), Sukarno stated that modern colonialism could take any form and that the world should not be deceived by the illusion of formal independence while the people remain oppressed (Soekarno, 1955). Therefore, Indonesia's support for Palestine from the outset was not merely a political expression, but part of the consistent anti-colonial principles espoused since the nation's inception. Solidarity with Palestine is a concrete manifestation of these principles.

Indonesia also leverages its position as a non-aligned nation to reject all forms of domination by major powers that reinforce new colonial practices. In various UN and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) forums, Indonesia actively advocates for Palestinian independence, and to this day, it has not established diplomatic relations with Israel as a principled political stance (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2020). Thus, Indonesia's position as a new nation championing anti-colonialism is not merely a matter of history, but a foundation for moral continuity in its foreign policy that continues to this day.

The Palestinian issue has long been a symbol of international injustice and the failure of the global community to uphold the principles of international law. Since the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 and the displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians in the Nakba, this issue has not only become a regional issue in the Middle East, but has become a global concern because it concerns land rights, refugees, and colonization (Khalidi, 2020). Although the UN has issued various resolutions regarding the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, the reality on the ground shows that the occupation, illegal settlements, and violence continue without any firm sanctions against violators (United Nations, 1948).

In the context of global politics, Palestine is not simply a bilateral issue between Palestine and Israel, but rather reflects the imbalance of power in the international system. When powerful nations use their veto power to protect their allies, the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people are neglected. Therefore, newly independent nations in Asia and Africa, which share a similar historical experience as colonized nations, feel a moral

attachment to the Palestinian struggle (Prashad, 2007). This solidarity is driven by the values of justice and anti-colonialism that are at the heart of the world order envisioned by Third World nations.

The 1955 Asia-Africa Conference (AAC) in Bandung was a significant turning point in internationalizing the Palestinian issue from a Third World perspective. Attended by 29 Asian and African countries, Palestine was explicitly identified as a region still suffering from colonialism (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Daley, 2018). Conference participants agreed that the Palestinian struggle was part of a global struggle to liberate the world from all forms of foreign domination, both classical and new colonialism (Lloyd, 2012). Thus, the AAC became an important platform for building political consensus in support of Palestinian rights on the world stage.

Indonesia, as the conference host and a pioneer of Asian-African solidarity, played a central role in placing the Palestinian issue on the main agenda of the Asian-African Conference (AAC). President Sukarno's speech firmly rejected colonialism in all its forms and urged Asian-African countries not to be trapped in the euphoria of false independence if other nations were still oppressed (Soekarno, 1955). This call was not merely a rhetorical expression, but also served as a moral foundation for the diplomacy of participating countries in collectively supporting Palestinian independence (Gilboa, 2006). The 1955 Asian-African Conference also marked the beginning of the strengthening of Palestine's political position in the international arena, outside the framework of the Middle East conflict.

The relevance of the Asian-African Conference (AAC) to the Palestinian issue remains palpable today. The principles of solidarity, sovereignty, and justice affirmed at the Bandung Conference remain the moral foundation for many developing countries in addressing injustices against Palestine (Dinkel, 2019). In this context, the AAC holds not only historical value but also normative value that shapes the direction of global solidarity toward Palestine (Hongoh, 2016). Therefore, understanding the history of the AAC and its position on Palestine is crucial for formulating contemporary diplomatic strategies based on the values and history of the struggles of colonized nations.

Although Indonesia's support for Palestine has been ongoing since the beginning of independence, few studies have in-depth explored the historical and ideological roots of this stance, particularly in relation to President Sukarno's speech at the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference (KAA) (Kelman, 1992). The speech is often viewed as a rhetorical symbol of anti-colonialism, but has not been widely studied as a normative foundation that shaped the direction of Indonesia's foreign policy towards Palestine (Mudzakir, 2025). Therefore, studies are needed that not only examine Indonesia's support politically and diplomatically, but also explore the basic values that shape the consistency of Indonesia's position in international forums regarding Palestine.

Based on this research problem, this study attempts to explore in depth how Sukarno's monumental speech at the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference (AAC) significantly influenced the direction and foundation of Indonesian diplomacy regarding the Palestinian issue, both in the early days of independence and in the dynamics of contemporary foreign policy. The main question is to what extent the values of anti-colonialism and solidarity with oppressed nations that Sukarno advocated in Bandung remain a reference for Indonesia in determining its political position on the Palestine-Israel conflict to this day. By formulating focused research questions that cover the substance of the speech, its impact on diplomatic policy, and its continued relevance in the modern era, this study emphasizes the importance of revisiting historical heritage as a foundation for the legitimacy of Indonesian foreign policy.

In literature reviews, Indonesia's support for Palestine is typically analyzed through two main approaches: historical-political and international relations. The historical-political approach, as demonstrated in the work of George McTurnan Kahin, views Indonesia as a nation born out of a long struggle for decolonization, thus possessing a moral commitment to side with nations still experiencing oppression (Abegunrin & Manyeruke, 2020). In this context, Sukarno is positioned as a central figure who successfully instilled the ideology of anti-colonialism and global solidarity into Indonesian foreign policy. Thus, Indonesia's political stance toward Palestine stems not only from geopolitical calculations but also from a historical awareness that has been an integral part of Indonesia's diplomatic identity since the beginning of independence (Setiawati, 2024).

Dewi Fortuna Anwar, in her study, revealed that Indonesian foreign policy emphasizes the importance of continuity of values and principles in Indonesian diplomacy, especially in the post-Suharto era (Anwar, 2005). She demonstrated that support for Palestine is not merely a symbolic policy, but rather part of Indonesia's long-term commitment to a just international order. This study is relevant in bridging the gap between historical values (Sukarno's speech) and contemporary policy practices.

On the other hand, a constructivist approach to international relations studies also provides a strong theoretical basis for understanding Indonesia's diplomatic behavior. Christian Reus-Smit argues that states act not only based on strategic interests but also on identities and values shaped by history and political culture

(Reus-Smit, 1999). This approach is used in this research to understand how Sukarno's speeches shaped Indonesia's diplomatic identity, particularly in responding to global issues such as Palestine.

This research utilizes a variety of sources to ensure analytical depth and accuracy of historical context. Primary sources include primary documents such as President Sukarno's speech at the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference (AAC), the diplomatic archives of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Final Communiqué of the Bandung Conference, the official product of international politics produced by the forum (Dorigné-Thomson, 2023). Secondary sources include academic books, journal articles, and policy reports from national and international institutions relevant to the Palestinian issue and Indonesian foreign policy. This diversity of sources provides a strong foundation for integrating historical analysis and contemporary readings of Indonesia's diplomatic orientation.

## METHOD

Methodologically, this study uses a historical qualitative approach to understand the dynamics of Indonesian foreign policy through the lens of diplomatic history (Santana-Cordero & Szabó, 2019). This approach not only attempts to reconstruct past events and policies based on written sources but also interprets the socio-political context underlying the birth of these policies. The study is descriptive-analytical in nature, focusing on ideological narratives and the continuity of values from Soekarno's speech at the 1955 Asian-African Conference to its application in contemporary foreign policy (Kalaian et al., 2019).

The primary method used is a textual analysis of Sukarno's speech at the opening of the 1955 Asian-African Conference (AAC). This analysis was conducted by identifying rhetorical structures, ideological keywords, and anti-colonial symbolism reflecting support for the Palestinian struggle. The speech is treated as a diplomatic artifact with both symbolic and strategic functions in shaping the framework of Indonesian foreign policy values. Official documents of the AAC and the Bandung Final Communiqué were also analyzed to strengthen the understanding of the historical context of Sukarno's messages (Brydon, 2022).

Next, an interpretation of the diplomatic content and media representations is conducted to assess the extent to which the messages in the speech were adopted and developed in Indonesian diplomatic practice. The sources used include official press releases from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reports from international forums, and archives of national newspapers such as *Harian Rakjat* and *Pedoman*, which covered the Asian-African Conference (AAC) directly. This analysis provides insight into the resonance of Sukarno's speech in the public sphere and the construction of its narrative as part of the national diplomatic identity.

To strengthen the research focus, a case study approach was employed, using Palestine as a representative example of Indonesia's anti-colonial foreign policy (Quintão et al., 2020). This case study allows for an in-depth understanding of how the principles of Sukarno's speech were implemented in the form of diplomatic support for Palestine through various channels such as the UN, the OIC, and bilateral relations. Thus, this research methodology provides a comprehensive framework for exploring the continuity between Indonesia's historical legacy and diplomatic practices in the modern era.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Ideological Foundations of Anti-Colonial Diplomacy and Support for Palestine

President Sukarno's opening speech at the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference (AAC) is one of the most monumental pieces of political rhetoric in the history of Global South international relations, as it marked the starting point for Asian and African nations to articulate collective solidarity against modern colonialism (Shimazu, 2014). From the outset, Sukarno delivered a stark warning that colonialism still lives on in a new guise. His legendary line, "Colonialism is not yet dead," served as a global wake-up call, raising awareness that political independence does not automatically signal the end of oppression (Soekarno, 1955). He rejected Western claims that colonialism had ended and asserted that imperialism had now evolved into a form of neo-colonialism: economic domination, military intervention, and more subtle political control (Nkrumah, 1965).

It was in this context of ongoing global oppression that Sukarno introduced the Palestinian issue as the most visible symbol of a nation deprived of its political rights, territory, and future (Rasyid et al., 2024). According to Suryadinata (1998), Sukarno recognized that the Palestinian plight was the most blatant evidence of contemporary colonialism supported by the world's hegemonic powers (Suryadinata, 2018). The mention of Palestine in his speech aimed to position the issue not merely as a Middle Eastern issue, but as an integral part



of the Asian-African decolonization agenda (Bhattarai & Yousef, 2025). Thus, Indonesia's support for Palestine was built on an ideological foundation: universal solidarity with oppressed nations, not merely religious or geopolitical considerations (Aswar et al., 2025).

Rhetorically, Sukarno structured his speech with a strong balance of ethos, pathos, and logos. From an ethos perspective, he spoke as the leader of a nation that had been colonized for more than three centuries—a strong moral position to call for solidarity (Bayertz, 1999). From a pathos perspective, he outlined the real suffering of oppressed nations, especially the Palestinian people, thereby evoking empathy and political militancy among the other delegates. Meanwhile, from a logos perspective, Sukarno explained the structure of economic imperialism and military domination as a rational framework for collective action (Wicaksana, 2016). His rhetoric emphasized that the independence of one nation is incomplete as long as others continue to suffer—a philosophical argument that would later become the foundation of Indonesia's foreign policy: free and active with a humanitarian orientation (Adiputera & Missbach, 2021).

Sukarno's speech also displayed a powerful emotional style through the diction of struggle such as "rise," "don't be fooled," and the metaphor of colonialism as a monster in a new form. This provocative and inspiring language not only increased the power of persuasion but also strengthened the ideological cohesion between the Asian-African delegations. The success of this rhetoric is evident in how Sukarno's speech was not merely a symbolic discourse, but also influenced the content of the Final Communiqué of the Asian-African Conference, which explicitly affirmed the right to self-determination of Palestine and global condemnation of colonialism and racism (Phillips, 2016). This shows that the speech functioned as an effective diplomatic instrument in forming an international consensus.

Sukarno treated Palestine as the moral axis of the decolonization struggle. He emphasized that recognizing Palestinian independence meant rejecting global injustice. Sayigh believes that the successful inclusion of the Palestinian issue in the final communiqué of the Asian-African Conference (AAC) marked a milestone in the internationalization of the Palestinian issue through a solid global coalition of Southern countries (Sayigh, 2024). Thus, support for Palestine reflects Indonesia's diplomatic identity as a pioneering nation in the struggle for global justice.

The geopolitical context of the Bandung Speech was inseparable from the height of the Cold War. The world was divided into two major blocs: liberal capitalism under the United States and communism under the Soviet Union (Marks, 2012). In this situation, Sukarno introduced a third force, a new axis of world power he called the New Emerging Forces (NEFO), which rejected the dominance of these two blocs (Tarmizi, 2021). Here, Palestine emerged as a representation of a nation caught in the tug-of-war of superpower interests. Sukarno emphasized that true independence should not be under the shadow of interference from any major power, including those claiming global ideology (Argenti & Istiningdias, 2018). This means that Indonesia's support for Palestine arose from an anti-imperialist geopolitical awareness, not from alliance politics or sectarian interests (Husain, 2007).

From an international relations perspective, the Bandung Speech can be seen as an early manifestation of Indonesia's diplomatic identity (Acharya, 2016). Wendt (1999) emphasized that national identity is the foundation for shaping foreign policy preferences (Wendt, 1999). Sukarno's speech became the narrative birth of Indonesia's diplomatic identity as a nation that positioned itself at the forefront of the global struggle against colonialism and injustice (Nessel, 2025). This identity was then inherited across regimes: from Sukarno to the New Order and continued into the Reformation era. This proves that support for Palestine is an ideological constant in Indonesian diplomacy (Anshori & Zakaria, 2016).

On the other hand, Sukarno can also be understood as a norm entrepreneur, an actor who championed moral norms for international acceptance (Teo, 2022). Through the Asian-African Conference (AAC), Sukarno successfully pushed for the transformation of the Palestinian issue from a regional conflict to an international norm concerning the right of nations to independence (Noor Fahmi Pramuji, 2020). He created a collective moral awareness that defending Palestine was tantamount to upholding the principle of universal decolonization. Furthermore, he shifted the Palestinian issue from a mere geopolitical issue to a global ethical realm—a value that has subsequently been continuously advocated by Asian and African countries in various multilateral forums such as the UN and the OIC (Dorigné-Thomson, 2023).

The relevance of Sukarno's speech is also evident in Indonesian diplomatic practices after 1955. The Bandung Speech became the normative foundation for Indonesian foreign policy, consistently supporting the struggles of non-independent nations such as Namibia and Papua New Guinea, rejecting apartheid in South Africa, and playing an active role in the Palestinian independence struggle in various international forums (Wangge & Lawson, 2023). This shows that the speech has been institutionalized in Indonesian diplomatic

values. Nurmila & Rahmatullah even called the speech the moral constitution of Indonesian foreign policy (Nurmila & Rahmatullah, 2022).

Analytical summary shows that Sukarno's speech at the 1955 Asian-African Conference (AAC) had three significant impacts at three levels. First, at the national level, this speech shaped Indonesia's foreign policy identity as an anti-colonial nation and defender of the plight of oppressed peoples (Clark, 2011). Second, at the Asia-Africa regional level, this speech encouraged the consolidation of Southern countries in a united voice supporting Palestinian independence (Balfour et al., 2022). Third, at the global level, this speech marked the beginning of multilateral diplomacy pro-Palestinian independence in international forums (Wajner, 2017). Therefore, this speech is often considered a blueprint for Indonesia's diplomacy of principle, namely diplomacy that favors values, not power.

With a powerful narrative, Sukarno portrayed the world as entering a crucial historical phase, a "transitional period" leading to the birth of a new order: one no longer controlled by colonialism, whether physical or economic (Fajar, 2020). Within this grand vision, Palestinian independence was the moral key that determined whether the decolonization struggle truly achieved its goals. Thus, the Palestinian issue in the Bandung Speech was not a rhetorical ornament, but rather a central pillar in establishing global anti-colonial norms (Pham & Shilliam, 2016).

Ultimately, Sukarno's speech not only stirred the emotions of his audience but also moved the structure of international politics. He combined morality, strategy, and solidarity in a diplomatic formulation that spoke not only of Indonesia but also of universal humanity (Shekhar, 2018). Therefore, Sukarno's speech at the 1955 Asian-African Conference (AAC) was a historical moment that left a lasting impression on the architecture of international relations, while also becoming a permanent foundation for Indonesia's support for Palestine to this day (Dorigné-Thomson, 2023). In the simplest yet most powerful political language, Sukarno wanted to emphasize that the struggle is not over as long as there is still a nation living under colonial rule (Borgias, 2012).

To clarify the structure of the academic argumentation in the previous clarification, the following presents a synthesis in tabular form. The purpose of this table is to map the relationships between the main messages in Sukarno's speech, the rhetorical style used, the geopolitical context, and its immediate and long-term impact on Indonesian diplomacy and the Palestinian struggle. Thus, this table will demonstrate that Sukarno's speech was not merely a monumental oration, but also a normative and strategic framework for Indonesian foreign policy.

Table 2. Core Discussion and Linkages to Indonesia's Pro-Palestine Diplomacy

Dimensions of Analysis	Key Findings	Implications for the Palestinian Issue
Ideological Message of Speech	"Colonialism is not yet dead" → colonialism evolves into neo-colonialism	Palestine is positioned as the most obvious example of modern colonialism so it must be the main agenda of decolonization.
Sukarno's Rhetorical Strategy	A combination of ethos (Indonesia's moral legitimacy), pathos (the suffering of the Palestinian people), logos (analysis of imperialism)	Generating collective empathy and support for moral positions in international diplomacy
Bandung as a Political Arena of the Global South	Formation of a third front: New Emerging Forces	Support for Palestine as a symbol of rejection of the domination of the two major Cold War blocs
Final press release AAC	Recognition of Palestine's right to independence & condemnation of colonialism	Internationalization of the Palestinian issue in the Asia-Africa multilateral forum
Soekarno as a Norm Entrepreneur	Transforming the Palestinian issue from a regional conflict to an international norm	The formation of a collective moral awareness that Palestine is part of the universal decolonization struggle.
Indonesian Diplomatic Identity	Free and active politics based on anti-colonialism and humanity	Consistent support for Palestine across regimes until the Reformation era
Multilevel Impact	National, Asia-Africa Regional, Global	Indonesian diplomacy is a pioneer of diplomacy of principle in defending Palestinian rights.

If we examine Table 1, it is clear that every element in Sukarno's speech directly correlates to strengthening Indonesia's diplomatic position on the Palestinian issue. The speech's ideological message was not only born from the long experience of colonialism in Indonesia, but also became a theoretical framework capable of explaining Palestinian suffering as part of a global system of oppression (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2014). Sukarno's persuasive strategy also helped expand Indonesia's moral legitimacy by presenting itself as a nation that not only fought for itself but also became a voice for other subordinate nations (Ahlstrand & Maniam, 2025).

The Asian-African Conference (AAC) became the first institutional space to officially elevate Palestine from a regional issue to an international one. The Final Communiqué demonstrated how Sukarno's rhetoric and ideology transformed global discourse, thereby gaining Palestine a new political position on the world diplomatic map (Muhammad Irfan Gati & Abd. Hafid, 2024). This was further confirmed in subsequent developments, as Indonesia continued to actively participate in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United Nations in advocating for Palestinian rights. In other words, the speech's impact was not symbolic, but structural and sustainable.

Furthermore, the table shows that Sukarno's speech served as the foundation of Indonesia's diplomatic identity. This identity was shaped by anti-colonial values, solidarity with the Global South, and a commitment to the right to self-determination. The continuity of this identity is evident in the consistency of Indonesia's foreign policy, even after Sukarno left power (Quah, 2025). Thus, support for Palestine was not a short-term political move, but rather an ideological consequence of the Republic's founding principles.

### **The Impact of the Speech on the Direction of Indonesian Diplomacy**

President Sukarno's speech at the opening of the 1955 Asian-African Conference (AAC) had a direct impact on the political climate and the direction of the conference's discussions. The participating countries, most of whom had recently gained independence from colonialism, welcomed the speech enthusiastically and used it as a moral framework for formulating a shared political stance (Soekarno, 1955). In plenary and committee forums, several delegations, including Egypt, India, and Burma, expressed their appreciation for Soekarno's firm stance against colonialism in all its forms. As a result, the Palestinian issue was successfully included in the Final Communiqué, making this conference one of the first international forums to explicitly recognize the Palestinian struggle (Pressman, 2020).

The positive reaction of participating countries to Sukarno's speech also confirmed Indonesia's position as a moral and political leader among Third World countries. The Asian-African Conference (AAC) became the forerunner to the formation of global South solidarity, which later developed into the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (Dinkel, 2019). Within this structure, Indonesia consistently brought the Palestinian issue to international forums as a manifestation of the anti-colonial principles conveyed in the speech (Yeremia, 2020). Indonesia's success in mobilizing cross-regional support also demonstrated the effectiveness of Sukarno's speech as a diplomatic tool with strategic impact, not just symbolic (Setiawan & Tomsa, 2022).

Post-African Conference (KAA), Indonesia's diplomatic direction has consistently demonstrated its support for Palestinian independence. In 1988, Indonesia was one of the first countries to recognize the Palestinian Declaration of Independence announced by Yasser Arafat in Algeria (Hasram & Suryana, 2025). This stance was reaffirmed in various official statements by the Indonesian government, including speeches at the UN General Assembly and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Summit. In these forums, Indonesia frequently served as an informal spokesperson for Asian countries in voicing support for the Palestinian cause (Houston, 2025).

In the UN Security Council and General Assembly, Indonesia actively supports resolutions related to Palestine, including Resolutions 242 and 338, which demand Israel's withdrawal from occupied territory (Muhammad Irfan Gati & Abd. Hafid, 2024). Indonesia not only expresses its strong condemnation of Israeli violations of international law, such as military attacks on Gaza or the expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank (Umar & Azizah, 2025). This stance emphasizes that Indonesia's diplomatic stance toward Palestine is not merely rhetorical but is manifested in concrete actions.

Thus, Sukarno's speech at the 1955 Asian-African Conference (AAC) had a lasting influence on the direction and identity of Indonesian diplomacy. It not only shaped international perceptions of Indonesia's position but also served as a source of internal legitimacy for its long-term support for Palestine (Tahalele, 2020). Indonesian diplomacy, grounded in the values of anti-colonialism, justice, and international solidarity, can be directly traced to the spirit embodied in the 1955 Asian-African Conference (AAC) speech (Thakur, 2019).

In the context of contemporary Indonesian foreign policy, support for Palestine remains a continuation of diplomatic principles inherited from the era of President Sukarno (Pratiwi et al., 2021). However, global dynamics and strategic interests in the post-Reformasi era raise the question: does Indonesia's foreign policy toward Palestine demonstrate consistency or is it experiencing disruption? This research shows that, in general, there is continuity in values in Indonesia's stance, which continues to reject colonialism and support Palestinian independence, although in practice there are variations in diplomatic approaches that are more pragmatic and multilateral (Salim, 2017).

Sukarno's speech at the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference still resonates strongly in Indonesian diplomatic narratives (Li, 2023). The speech has become a symbolic and ideological foundation for formulating foreign policy based on the values of justice, anti-colonialism, and international solidarity (Gruffydd Jones, 2018). This is reflected in official Indonesian government speeches, which frequently reference the "Bandung Spirit" when addressing the Palestinian issue, both at the UN General Assembly and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) forum. Thus, Sukarno's speech serves not only as a historical archive but also as a moral framework and identity for Indonesian diplomacy that persists across regimes (Nartey & Ernanda, 2020).

However, a comparison with Indonesia's foreign policy in the post-Reformasi era reveals a shift in approach. The Indonesian government tends to use more moderate diplomatic language, is cautious in expressing political positions, and prioritizes multilateral mechanisms as channels of support for Palestine (Sukma, 1999). While fundamentally unchanged, Indonesia's diplomatic strategy has become more measured and dialogical, adapting to the complexities of global geopolitics and adopting a more pragmatic orientation toward national development (Solehudin, 2024).

Nevertheless, Indonesia's support for Palestine has never substantially waned. Indonesia remains active in voting in UN resolutions supporting Palestine, rejecting normalization of relations with Israel, and engaging in humanitarian diplomacy, such as sending aid to Gaza and supporting Palestinian refugees (Yunazwardi et al., 2025). This demonstrates that the values embodied in Sukarno's speech remain the moral compass of Indonesian diplomacy, even as the form and channels of expression have adapted to the context of the times (Christawan et al., 2023).

Thus, the relevance of Sukarno's speech for contemporary Indonesian foreign policy cannot be reduced to mere symbols, but rather as an ideological foundation that continues to function in shaping the direction of Indonesian diplomacy (Acharya, 2008). Amidst the challenges of a multipolar world and geopolitical pressures, the speech remains a source of inspiration for Indonesian diplomacy in maintaining its position as a country that upholds global justice, including in defending the rights of the Palestinian people (Makarychev & Wicaksana, 2025).

To see how Sukarno's speech at the opening of the 1955 Asian-African Conference shaped the direction of Indonesian diplomacy, particularly on the Palestinian issue, the following analysis presents a mapping of historical factors, political strategies, and the continuity of Indonesian policy within the framework of values-based diplomacy (Songbatumis, 2021). The table below helps visualize the systemic relationship between the speech's messages and their implementation in Indonesia's cross-regime foreign policy.

Table 3. The Impact of Soekarno's Speech at the 1955 Asian-African Conference on the Direction of Indonesian Pro-Palestinian Diplomacy

Impact Aspects	Historical Implementation	Contemporary Developments	Strategic Significance
<b>Indonesia's Moral and Political Legitimacy as a Leader of the Global South</b>	Widely accepted by the participating countries of the Asian-African Conference; Soekarno became the spokesperson for decolonization.	Indonesia actively leads the Palestinian issue at the UN and OIC	Enhancing Indonesia's position as a moral actor in the international system
<b>Internationalization of the Palestinian Issue</b>	The Palestinian issue was included in the Final Communiqué of the Asian-African Conference	Indonesia's continued support for UN resolutions regarding Palestine	Palestine is officially on the global diplomatic agenda and is no longer ignored as a local issue.



<b>Continuity of Anti-Colonialism Policy</b>	The free and active foreign policy is based on the anti-colonial struggle.	Rejection of normalization with Israel and consistent support for Palestinian independence	Becoming a hallmark of Indonesia's stable diplomatic identity across regimes
<b>Multilateral Diplomacy as a Primary Instrument</b>	The Asian-African Conference gave birth to the embryo of the Non-Aligned Movement	A more dialogical and pragmatic approach through global multilateralism	Supporting effective diplomacy while maintaining ideological principles
<b>Mobilizing International Support</b>	Indonesia builds Asia-Africa consensus on Palestine	Involvement of Asia-Pacific countries in support of Palestinian independence	Strengthening the global anti-colonial coalition and Palestine's international legitimacy
<b>Humanitarian Diplomacy</b>	Symbol of political solidarity with oppressed nations	Aid delivery to Gaza, Palestine refugee program, and economic support	Expanding the meaning of support from rhetoric → concrete action
<b>Symbols of National Ideology and Identity</b>	The "Bandung Spirit" became the foundation of foreign policy	References to Sukarno's speeches are still used in official government speeches.	Anti-colonial ideology remains alive in Indonesia's foreign policy identity.

Table 3 shows that Sukarno's speech at the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference (AAC) not only impacted the direction of Indonesian foreign policy but also resonated within the international political architecture during the Cold War (Saha, 2025). The speech became a historical and ideological foundation that united Indonesia's moral values, political interests, and diplomatic strategy on the Palestinian issue (Zainal Arifin Renaldo, 2024). In the global context at that time, the world was divided into a bipolar power struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, while newly independent nations were still seeking space to assert their political identities (Suporn et al., 2021). It was at this point that Sukarno provided normative legitimacy that emphasized Indonesia's position as a defender of global justice and oppressed nations in an international system rife with domination (Barton et al., 2021).

The influence of Sukarno's speech was also evident through Indonesia's diplomatic contributions in expanding the base of solidarity in the global South, which later gave birth to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (Čavoški, 2021). Within this geopolitical structure, Indonesia systematically brought the Palestinian issue to various international forums, making it a key issue on the multilateral agenda of Third World countries (Samad et al., 2023). Concrete policies were born from the anti-colonial principles articulated in the speech, including the successful inclusion of the Palestinian issue in the Final Communiqué of the 1955 Asian-African Conference (KAA), Indonesia's official recognition of Palestinian independence in 1988, reciprocal support through UN resolutions, and strengthening humanitarian diplomacy for the Palestinian people (Kornioti, 2025).

This continuity of stance demonstrates that the influence of Sukarno's speech transcended the domestic context and regime change (Fogg, 2021). Although Indonesia's diplomatic language in the post-Reformasi era became more moderate and pragmatic—in line with the shifting global environment toward multipolarity and the prioritization of national economic development—its fundamental values remained consistent: Indonesia rejects all forms of colonialism and fully supports the right of self-determination for Palestine (Shalbak, 2023). Even as many countries in the Middle East normalized political relations with Israel, Indonesia maintained a political position aligned with the historical and moral mandate of the Asian-African Conference (AAC).

Thus, Sukarno's speech serves not only as a historical artifact but also lives on as the "spirit" and ideological framework of Indonesian diplomacy. It continues to serve as a moral reference when Indonesia raises the Palestinian issue on the global stage, whether at the UN General Assembly, the OIC, or other international forums (Lewis, 2024). Amid increasingly complex geopolitical dynamics, the speech continues to inspire Indonesia's efforts to maintain its identity as a nation at the forefront of fighting for international justice and the rights of oppressed nations—a political legacy that remains relevant to this day (Sebastian & Othman Alkaff, 2024).

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that President Sukarno's speech at the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference was not merely a symbolic statement, but rather served as the ideological foundation and normative direction for Indonesian diplomacy toward Palestine. The speech explicitly positioned Palestine as part of the global struggle against colonialism and succeeded in building an international consensus among Asian and African countries to support the rights of the Palestinian people. In the long run, the spirit and principles contained in this speech proved to be a consistent reference in Indonesian foreign policy, both in political stance, multilateral diplomacy, and humanitarian aid. This article contributes to the assertion that Sukarno's speech cannot be understood solely in a rhetorical historical context, but rather as the starting point for Indonesia's value-based diplomacy. Through a historical-diplomatic approach, this article demonstrates the continuity between the ideological narrative of Indonesia's early independence and contemporary foreign policy practices that continue to prioritize solidarity, justice, and resistance to colonialism. This research also positions Palestine not merely as a foreign issue, but as a reflection of Indonesia's diplomatic identity, which sides with oppressed nations.

The implications of this study are significant for the development of Indonesian diplomatic studies, particularly in examining how ideological values such as anti-colonialism can guide responses to ongoing global conflicts. Furthermore, this article contributes to post-colonial studies by positioning Third World countries, such as Indonesia, not merely as objects within the international order, but as subjects shaping the global agenda through moral force and transnational solidarity. In an increasingly pragmatic and polarized world, diplomatic legacies such as Sukarno's speeches remain relevant as an ethical and political compass for Indonesian foreign policy that favors justice and humanity.

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