

Bandung Conference Revisited: Comparative Analysis of Soekarno's and Retno Marsudi's Diplomatic Approaches to Palestine

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Abstract

The Asia-Africa Conference of 1955, or the Bandung Conference, was a historic meeting that aimed to articulate and support independence movements across Asia and Africa. During the conference, Soekarno placed Palestine as a top priority, extending Indonesia's support based on national interest and the broader struggle against prolonged colonialism. The Bandung Conference became a milestone in Indonesia's foreign diplomacy, a legacy later reaffirmed by Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi in her 2023 United Nations General Assembly address. This paper explores the underlying philosophy of the Bandung Conference by analyzing Soekarno's political stance on Palestine from the early twentieth century onwards. Using primary sources including Indonesian historical records and Dutch newspapers, the study maps out the principles of the Bandung Conference and examines how these principles appear in Marsudi's diplomatic advocacy. The paper questions whether Marsudi merely invoked the Bandung Spirit rhetorically or translated it into concrete action. The findings show that the values of the Bandung Conference were deeply rooted in a critical understanding of colonialism and accompanied by intellectual debate and transnational advocacy. The study demonstrates how these foundational ideas have extended into tangible aspects of Indonesian foreign policy. Ultimately, the article concludes that Retno Marsudi's advocacy efforts align with the legacy and values of the Bandung Conference.

1. Introduction

On 18 April 1955, President Soekarno opened the Asian-African Conference by declaring that colonialism remained alive despite formal decolonization across Asia and Africa [1]. His opening address framed the conference as a collective assertion of sovereignty by newly independent nations. Among the conference's most significant outcomes was its explicit recognition of Palestinian rights in the Final Communiqué adopted six days later [17]. This moment crystallized Indonesia's constitutional commitment to eradicate colonialism into concrete diplomatic action.

Nearly seven decades later, Foreign Minister Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi invoked this legacy before the 78th United Nations General Assembly on 23 September 2023 [2]. She announced that Indonesia would bring the Bandung Spirit wherever it goes, directly connecting contemporary diplomacy to 1955 principles. Five months later, on 23 February 2024, she appeared before the International Court of Justice to argue that Israel's occupation violated fundamental norms of international law [3]. Indonesia joined South Africa's genocide case, marking the first time an Indonesian foreign minister personally delivered arguments at the ICJ.

These two moments, separated by 69 years, raise critical questions about continuity and adaptation in Indonesian foreign policy. How have Bandung principles evolved from ideological resistance articulated by Soekarno to the institutional advocacy practiced by Marsudi? What specific mechanisms enable this transformation while preserving core anti-colonial commitments?

Indonesia's stated commitment to Palestine has proved remarkably consistent across leadership transitions and changing international contexts since 1955. Yet the vocabulary, institutions, and methods

through which this commitment is expressed have shifted substantially. Soekarno operated in a moment when newly independent nations could appeal to moral authority and collective conscience as legitimate forms of international influence; his speeches aimed to awaken what he called the "Asian-African consciousness" against colonialism. Marsudi, by contrast, works within a legalistic multilateral order where such moral exhortation alone carries limited weight; her interventions invoke international humanitarian law, genocide conventions, and the language of obligations rather than appeals to historical solidarity [1][3]. This paper addresses three interconnected questions that emerge from this puzzle.

These diplomatic moments, separated by nearly seven decades, invite questions about how principles established in moments of founding power can endure within very different institutional and historical contexts. How have anti-colonial commitments articulated at the Bandung Conference when Indonesia was newly independent and Soekarno wielded considerable influence in shaping international norms been adapted and operationalized in the contemporary multilateral order? What possibilities and constraints do Marsudi's position as foreign minister (rather than as head of state) create for carrying forward these historical principles? And what does it signify when a middle power translates moral and political commitment into legal argumentation, as Indonesia did at the ICJ?

Existing scholarship has examined either Soekarno's approach or Marsudi's contemporary practice separately, but systematic comparative analysis of their connection remains limited. Literature on the Bandung Conference often treats it as historical artifact rather than ongoing influence on policy formation [6]. Conversely, studies of Indonesia's current Middle East diplomacy rarely trace its ideological genealogy to mid-twentieth century anti-colonial movements.

Recent scholarship has begun addressing these gaps. Bhardwaj [7] examined divergent interpretations of colonialism among Third World leaders, including Soekarno's neo-colonial perspective. Nugraha and Setiawan [4] analyzed Soekarno's anti-imperial ideology but focused on the 1955–1963 period without extending analysis to contemporary diplomacy. Wulandari et al. [5] assessed Marsudi's diplomatic competencies but did not connect her practice to historical foundations.

This research fills that gap by systematically comparing Soekarno's and Marsudi's approaches through five analytical dimensions: ideological foundations, coalition-building strategies, rhetorical practices, institutional engagement patterns, and policy outcomes. The study contributes to understanding how historical diplomatic principles adapt to changing international contexts while maintaining normative coherence. These findings illuminate broader patterns relevant to middle power diplomacy and the persistence of anti-colonial consciousness in global governance.

This research therefore examines how Bandung-era anti-colonial principles are articulated and translated across distinct institutional positions and historical moments. Rather than treating these as sequential events in a single narrative, the study compares Soekarno's foundational formulation of anti-colonial principles at Bandung (when he served as founding president and chief architect of the conference) with their contemporary operationalization by the Jokowi administration through Foreign Minister Marsudi's diplomatic and legal interventions. The comparison operates across five analytical dimensions: ideological foundations, coalition-building strategies, rhetorical practices, institutional engagement patterns, and policy outcomes. This framework enables analysis of both normative continuity and structural transformation in how Indonesia's constitutional commitment to eradicating colonialism has been operationalized across these distinct contexts [1][4][5].

First, what intellectual and institutional foundations shaped Soekarno's positioning of Palestine within the broader anti-colonial struggle at Bandung? Second, how does the Jokowi administration through Marsudi's diplomatic interventions navigate the tension between invoking historical principles and adapting them to contemporary legal and institutional frameworks? Third, what can this case reveal about how middle powers maintain normative commitments across radically different international contexts, and what does it suggest about the relationship between founding moments and their institutional afterlives?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Neo-Colonialism in Third World Debates

The concept of neo-colonialism emerged during debates among newly independent nations about the nature of post-independence domination. Bhardwaj [7] identifies three interpretations that shaped Third World politics from 1956 to 1961. The first perspective, termed new colonialism, argued that formal colonization had ended and states should prioritize navigating Cold War polarization. The second interpretation emphasized that colonial domination persisted through transformed social, economic, and political structures perpetuating former colonies' dependence on former colonial powers.

Soekarno consistently advocated the second interpretation [4]. His concept of Nekolim—neo-colonialism, imperialism, and colonialism—provided an analytical framework for understanding how imperial power operated beyond formal political control. In his Bandung speech, Soekarno explained that modern colonialism manifests through economic control, intellectual domination, and actual physical control by a small but alien community within a nation [1]. This description directly applied to Palestine, where European Jewish settlement displaced indigenous Arab population through mechanisms combining military force with institutional power.

Critics contend that neo-colonial frameworks occasionally oversimplify complex international relations. However, as Bhardwaj [7] notes, persistent economic disparities and institutional power imbalances between former colonizers and colonized territories support this analytical lens's continuing relevance, particularly for cases like Palestine where settler colonialism remains materially present through ongoing occupation and territorial expansion.

2.2. Soekarno's Anti-Imperial Ideology

Nugraha and Setiawan [4] trace how Soekarno's anti-imperialism informed Indonesian foreign policy from 1955 to 1963. Their conference paper underscores how his worldview shaped both Indonesia's independence trajectory and its proactive international stance. Regarding Palestine, Soekarno did not ground Indonesia's support exclusively in religious solidarity but positioned Palestinian liberation as part of universal struggle for self-determination.

This framing enabled coalition building across diverse political systems and religious orientations. Bandung's success in uniting 29 nations with varying ideologies demonstrated the power of anti-colonial solidarity as an organizing principle. Participants included secular states like India and Egypt alongside Islamic nations like Pakistan and Indonesia, as well as Buddhist-majority states like Burma and Ceylon [8].

However, Soekarno's intellectual formation extended beyond the immediate post-independence period. Formichi [9] documents how Indonesian Islamic movements engaged with pan-Islamic solidarity during the 1920s and 1930s. Najib [10] analyzes how Nahdlatul Ulama, Sarekat Islam, and Muhammadiyah formed the al-Islam Committee to reject Britain's plan to divide Palestinian territories. These movements created infrastructure for transnational solidarity that Soekarno later incorporated into broader anti-colonial nationalism, demonstrating that Indonesia's Palestine commitment predated the Bandung Conference itself.

2.3. Middle Power Diplomacy and Norm Entrepreneurship

States without hegemonic capabilities exercise international influence through moral authority and coalition-building rather than coercive power [11]. Middle powers typically operate through niche diplomacy, focusing on specific issue areas where they possess expertise or normative legitimacy. Indonesia's consistent advocacy for Palestine represents sustained middle power diplomacy grounded in historical experience and constitutional mandate.

The Bandung Conference exemplified how middle powers can shape international norms through collective action. Conference participants articulated principles that later influenced the Non-Aligned Movement and shaped developing nations' approach to international law. Dinkel [12] traces how

Bandung principles evolved into the organizational structures of the Non-Aligned Movement established in Belgrade in 1961. The Final Communiqué's emphasis on sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and self-determination became foundational norms for subsequent South-South cooperation.

Middle powers promote normative change by utilizing organizational platforms to persuade a critical mass of states to embrace new norms. Indonesia's behavior at Bandung exemplified this process through three mechanisms: moral framing that appealed to shared colonial experience, institutional entrepreneurship in organizing the conference itself, and coalition management that bridged diverse ideological positions.

Indonesia's diplomacy toward Palestine under Soekarno and Retno Marsudi demonstrates a strong intersection between postcolonial economic-digital influence and middle-power norm entrepreneurship. Rooted in Indonesia's anti-colonial identity articulated since Soekarno's Bandung Conference (1955), its foreign policy frames Palestine's struggle as a continuation of global decolonization [11].

2.4. Understanding Jokowi-Era Foreign Policy: Presidential Doctrine and Ministerial Agency

Recent scholarship on Indonesia's post-Reformasi foreign policy has emphasized that doctrinal continuity and change are primarily anchored at the presidential level, with foreign ministers functioning as crucial translators and implementers of presidential visions rather than as independent architects of policy [21]. Under President Joko Widodo (2014–present), Indonesia's foundational "free and active" doctrine was explicitly reframed through what policymakers termed a "pro-people" orientation, emphasizing maritime expansion, ASEAN centrality, and strategic South–South partnerships over the high ideological confrontationalism that characterized earlier periods [18].

Within this specific administrative context, Retno Marsudi's interventions on Palestine must be understood not as Marsudi's individual policy initiative but rather as an implementation of presidential commitments constrained and enabled by specific institutional moments when multilateral forums offered opportunities to activate constitutional obligations to anti-colonialism that broader administration priorities could accommodate. The UNGA platform provided space for rearticulating historical principles; the ICJ proceeding offered a venue to translate these principles into justiciable claims. This framing does not diminish Marsudi's analytical importance; rather, it clarifies her role as a strategic diplomatic performer who articulates and enacts presidential doctrine within multilateral forums.

Understanding this relationship between presidential administration, ministerial agency, and structural opportunity is essential for analyzing why and how Bandung principles endure: not as the unconstrained vision of any individual leader, but as institutional commitments that foreign ministers and senior diplomats mobilize at specific junctures when international venues and political moments align. Thus, comparing Soekarno's foundational articulation of anti-colonial principles with their contemporary operationalization through Marsudi requires attention to how presidential doctrine, ministerial performance, and structural opportunity interact to shape diplomatic action.

2.5. Postcolonial Perspectives in Contemporary Diplomacy

Postcolonial analysis reveals how colonial histories continue shaping contemporary global structures. This perspective illuminates power asymmetries embedded in international institutions and highlights ongoing struggles for recognition and justice. Indonesia's engagement with international law regarding Palestine demonstrates how universal legal principles can be invoked through specifically anti-colonial perspectives.

Marsudi's critique of double standards in international law reflects awareness of how legal frameworks can reproduce colonial hierarchies despite formally neutral language [13]. Her diplomatic practice involves what can be termed norm localization—the process whereby global norms are internalized and reinterpreted according to local moral traditions and historical experiences. This involves selective appropriation of international norms while maintaining distinct cultural and ideological foundations rooted in Indonesia's anti-colonial struggle.

Salya [14] analyzes Marsudi's rhetorical strategies at the United Nations, identifying consistent use of politeness strategies that balance diplomatic courtesy with substantive critique. Marsudi deploys positive politeness to foster solidarity with Global South states while employing negative politeness when addressing Western powers. These discursive strategies serve as important tools for navigating power asymmetries in multilateral forums.

2.6. Analytical Framework for Examining Anti-Colonial Principle Transmission

The analysis examines how Bandung-era anti-colonial principles are articulated across five dimensions, comparing their initial formulation under Soekarno's founding leadership with their subsequent institutional expression through contemporary diplomatic and legal performance. First, ideological foundations encompass the core concepts, intellectual influences, and normative commitments articulated in speeches, policy documents, and formal statements. For Soekarno, this includes his intellectual engagement with early twentieth-century anti-imperial thought, Islamic modernism, and Pan-Asian movements; for Marsudi, this involves her articulation of Indonesia's constitutional commitment to eradicate colonialism through contemporary multilateral institutions.

Second, coalition-building strategies examine how anti-colonial solidarity is mobilized across different institutional contexts. Soekarno unified 29 nations with diverse ideologies at Bandung; Marsudi builds alliances through the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and ASEAN initiatives. Third, rhetorical practices involve the linguistic strategies, framing devices, and argumentative structures through which anti-colonial claims are articulated and legitimized. This includes vocabulary choices, appeals to different audiences, and the selective invocation of historical precedents.

Fourth, institutional engagement patterns map the forums that each figure and administration prioritized the Bandung Conference as founding moment, the UNGA as space for multilateral consensus-building, the ICJ as venue for legal contestation. Fifth, policy outcomes assess observable diplomatic achievements and institutional consequences, including formal resolutions, legal filings, strategic statements, and coalition-building effects. Rather than focusing on speculative assessments of influence, this dimension emphasizes documented institutional actions and their measurable consequences.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This research employs a historical-comparative design combined with qualitative rhetorical and discourse-oriented textual analysis of key diplomatic speeches and documents. The design traces how anti-colonial principles articulated in 1955 have been preserved, adapted, or transformed through contemporary multilateral diplomacy, focusing on institutional mechanisms rather than individual decision-making authority.

An important clarification regarding level of analysis: this article does not position Foreign Minister Marsudi as a directly equivalent institutional actor to founding president Soekarno. Rather, the comparative design examines how anti-colonial diplomatic principles are performed and translated across two distinct institutional contexts separated by nearly seven decades of democratic transformation and international structural change. Soekarno functioned as founding head of state during a moment when newly independent nations were establishing the ground rules of international governance; Marsudi operates as foreign minister within an institutionalized multilateral order where legal procedures and formal institutions structure the available space for advocacy. The comparison thus concerns how principles persist and adapt institutionally not an equivalence between the individuals themselves, but rather an analysis of how diplomatic principles travel across different historical moments and institutional venues.

Primary data consist of key speeches and documents: Soekarno's opening address at the Bandung Conference (18 April 1955) [22] and the Final Communiqué (24 April 1955) [23], both archived by Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and publicly accessible through official government sources.

For contemporary materials, complete transcripts of Marsudi's 23 September 2023 UNGA address [19] and her 23 February 2024 ICJ statement [20] provide the textual basis for analysis. Supplementary sources include academic analyses of both periods' diplomatic practice, official Ministry of Foreign Affairs policy statements, and recent scholarship on Indonesian foreign policy under different administrations.

The analytical framework operates across the five dimensions noted above. Ideological foundations are examined through close reading of primary texts, identifying core concepts and their evolution. Coalition-building strategies are assessed through documentation of multilateral initiatives and alliance patterns across different institutional contexts. Rhetorical practices are analysed through examination of linguistic strategies and argumentative structures specifically, the vocabulary choices that signal ideological positioning, the argumentative structures through which anti-colonial claims are sustained, and the intertextual references that link contemporary statements to Bandung-era discourse.

Rather than applying a formal linguistic methodology, the approach to textual analysis examines three interconnected elements: (1) vocabulary choices that reveal ideological commitments and shifting priorities for instance, Soekarno's emphasis on "economic domination" and "intellectual control" versus Marsudi's recourse to legal terminology such as "obligations erga omnes" and "genocide convention"; (2) argumentative structures through which anti-colonial claims are legitimized, including appeals to constitutionalism, international law, historical precedent, and collective security interests; and (3) intertextual references that link contemporary statements to Bandung-era discourse, revealing how historical principles are selectively invoked, reframed, or reinterpreted within new contexts [1][3].

Institutional engagement patterns are examined through documentation of which forums each figure and administration prioritized, and how these venues structured available diplomatic options and constraints. Policy outcomes are evaluated through observable achievements including diplomatic statements, legal filings, coalition-building efforts, institutional positioning, and formal recognition by international bodies rather than through speculative claims about influence or impact. This grounding in documented institutional action provides a more rigorous basis for evaluating continuity and transformation in Indonesian foreign policy.

The comparative methodology assesses whether observed similarities between Soekarno's and Marsudi's diplomatic approaches represent genuine normative continuity rooted in shared anti-colonial commitments, or whether they constitute strategic invocation of historical symbolism without substantive institutional consequences. This distinction is crucial for understanding whether the Bandung Spirit functions as a living diplomatic tradition or primarily as a rhetorical resource [1][2][3].

4. Results and discussions

4.1. Soekarno's Intellectual Formation and Bandung Principles

This Tracing Soekarno's position at Bandung requires understanding his intellectual formation during the early twentieth century. Between 1900 and 1920, Indonesian intellectuals engaged with Islamic Renaissance and the revival of Asia-Africa consciousness [9]. Soekarno read Lothrop Stoddard's works on the rise of colored nations, including *The New World of Islam* and *The Rising Tide of Color*, reflecting broader engagement with anti-colonial movements before World War II [16].

Soekarno's perspective evolved over time. In his early years, he espoused pan-Islamic solidarity, especially as the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate emerged as a central issue in Indonesian political debates. The 1931 World Islamic Congress in Jerusalem focused on global Muslim issues and drew attention to Palestine. As Najib [10] documented, Haji Omar Said Tjokroaminoto, Soekarno's teacher, established the al-Islam Committee including Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Sarekat Islam. This Committee rejected Britain's plan to divide Palestinian territories, creating institutional precedent for Soekarno's later advocacy.

However, Soekarno's Pan-Islamic solidarity shifted to Pan-Asianism following Sarekat Islam's fracture in the 1920s [9]. By the 1930s, his outlook transformed again from pan-Asianism to Indonesian

nationalism. This evolution reflected pragmatic recognition that effective anti-colonial struggle required mobilizing diverse constituencies under an inclusive framework. The 1928 Youth Congress issued the Sumpah Pemuda establishing Indonesian national unity, occurring after the 1927 Brussels Conference, recognized as the embryonic formation of the non-alignment movement [12].

At Bandung, Soekarno occupied a strategic position drawing support from both the Indonesian National Party and Masyumi Party. Despite differing ideologies, both converged on Palestine. As Nugraha and Setiawan [4] argued, Soekarno synthesized these positions by framing Palestine as both constitutional obligation and moral imperative transcending religious boundaries. In his opening address, Soekarno emphasized that modern colonialism appears "in modern dress" through economic control, intellectual domination, and settler colonialism [1]. This articulation directly applied to Palestine, where European Jewish settlement displaced indigenous Arab population.

The Final Communiqué declared support for Palestinian rights in conformity with the United Nations Charter, strategically invoking international law while asserting moral position grounded in anti-colonial principles. This approach established precedent for subsequent Indonesian diplomatic practice, embedding constitutional commitment within international legal frameworks [13].

4.2. Marsudi's Diplomatic Formation and Institutional Context

Retno Marsudi's diplomatic philosophy reflects Indonesia's constitutional commitment to eradicate colonialism, though this commitment operates within the specific constraints and possibilities of the Jokowi administration's foreign policy framework. Her career trajectory including postings as Indonesian Ambassador to Iceland and Norway (2005–2008), later to the Netherlands (2012–2014), and her pursuit of a Master's degree in International European Law and Policy while posted in The Hague provided expertise in European diplomatic mechanisms and post-colonial power structures [5]. Her negotiations on the Comprehensive Partnership between Indonesia and the Netherlands exposed her to the persistence of colonial-era hierarchies in bilateral relations, informing her later critiques of double standards in international law [5].

However, Marsudi's agency must be understood within the Jokowi administration's broader foreign policy doctrine. Under President Jokowi, Indonesian foreign policy adopted what officials termed a "pro-people" orientation, prioritizing maritime expansion, ASEAN leadership, and selective South–South cooperation over high-profile ideological confrontation [18]. Within this framework, Marsudi's Palestine advocacy represents a deliberate choice to activate specific constitutional commitments at particular institutional moments the 2023 UNGA address provided opportunity to reaffirm historical solidarity with decolonization struggles; the 2024 ICJ filing allowed translation of these principles into justiciable legal claims [2][3].

Central to both Soekarno's and Marsudi's positions is Indonesia's 1945 Constitution, which mandates eradication of colonialism as a foundational principle. Marsudi consistently frames Indonesia's support for Palestine as an obligation founded upon constitutional mandate rather than political discretion. At the 78th UNGA on 23 September 2023, she declared that Indonesia brings "the Bandung Spirit wherever it goes," explicitly invoking Soekarno's legacy while positioning this legacy as binding constitutional obligation [2]. Five months later, before the ICJ, Marsudi presented Indonesia's arguments regarding Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law, articulating the legal consequences of what she termed ongoing occupation and territorial expansion [3].

Marsudi's approach can be characterized as juridical translation the conversion of political and moral commitments into legal argumentation capable of generating institutional consequences. By invoking genocide convention provisions, humanitarian law principles, and self-determination doctrine, she transformed Bandung's foundational moral opposition to colonialism into justiciable claims cognizable within international courts [3][5]. This represents a fundamental adaptation of Soekarno's ideological resistance to contemporary institutional constraints: where Soekarno could appeal to collective conscience and emerging international opinion, Marsudi must work within legal frameworks and formal procedures, utilizing doctrinal arguments rather than moral exhortation.

4.3. Comparative Analysis: Continuity and Transformation

Comparing Soekarno and Marsudi reveals both continuity in normative commitments and transformation in diplomatic instruments. Three patterns characterize this relationship. First, both leaders frame colonialism as an evolving phenomenon rather than a historical artifact [7]. Soekarno distinguished between formal colonialism and neo-colonial domination at Bandung, emphasizing that imperial power adapts its mechanisms while maintaining fundamental character [4]. Marsudi extends this analysis through her critique of double standards in international relations, tracing persistent colonial-era power structures in global governance [13]. Both recognize that effective anti-colonial advocacy requires understanding how domination transforms across historical periods.

Second, coalition-building strategies reveal continuity in approach despite different organizational contexts. As Dinkel [11] documented, Soekarno unified 29 nations with diverse ideologies under an anti-colonial framework at Bandung. Marsudi builds coalitions through organizations like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement, and ASEAN [13]. While institutional platforms differ, the underlying principle remains: solidarity requires transcending differences to pursue common objectives. Both leaders navigate tension between ideological conviction and diplomatic pragmatism by balancing moral authority with strategic flexibility.

Third, significant transformation occurs in diplomatic instruments employed [5]. Soekarno operated primarily through moral leadership and ideological persuasion. His speeches aimed to awaken collective conscience among newly independent nations [1]. The Bandung Final Communiqué functioned as a political declaration rather than a binding legal instrument. Marsudi operates within institutionalized multilateral order, utilizing international legal mechanisms, formal negotiations, and judicial proceedings [3]. Marsudi's ICJ intervention represents a qualitatively different form of advocacy, a legal argumentation before a judicial institution with authority to issue binding opinions.

This transformation constitutes juridical translation, the conversion of normative principles into legal claims [5]. Where Soekarno declared that colonialism contradicts humanity and justice, Marsudi argues that occupation violates specific provisions of international humanitarian law. Where Soekarno invoked moral solidarity, Marsudi cites genocide convention and self-determination principles. This translation maintains moral foundation while adapting to contemporary institutional context requiring legal precision and procedural expertise.

However, continuity persists in rhetorical strategies. Marsudi frequently references the Bandung Conference in her speeches, characterizing Palestine as the last colony of the modern era [13]. These historical allusions reinforce Indonesia's foreign policy identity and repurpose Bandung's legacy as foundation for coalition-building. As Salya [14] demonstrated, Marsudi's use of modal verbs conveying urgency while maintaining diplomatic politeness mirrors Soekarno's rhetorical balance between passionate conviction and diplomatic courtesy.

The comparison illuminates how middle powers maintain normative influence across changing international structures. Soekarno established Indonesia's moral authority through Bandung, creating a foundation that subsequent leaders can invoke [11]. Marsudi leverages this historical legitimacy while adapting advocacy methods to contemporary multilateral order. This pattern suggests that effective middle power diplomacy combines principled consistency with instrumental flexibility [4].

4.4. Policy Implications: From Moral Authority to Legal Advocacy

Indonesia's evolution from Soekarno's moral leadership to Marsudi's legal advocacy operating within the Jokowi administration's policy framework carries implications for understanding middle power diplomacy in contemporary international relations. Three implications emerge from this analysis.

First, constitutional commitments provide stable foundations for policy continuity across changing political contexts and leadership transitions [2]. Indonesia's 1945 Constitution mandates eradication of colonialism as an enduring obligation that transcends individual leadership preferences or short-term political calculations. This constitutional grounding enables consistent advocacy despite shifts in

domestic politics or international pressure, as demonstrated by both Soekarno's and Marsudi's explicit framing of Palestine support as constitutional duty rather than discretionary policy choice [1][2].

Second, historical legitimacy functions as a diplomatic resource that middle powers can mobilize in multilateral forums to strengthen their moral authority when challenging powerful states [3]. Marsudi's explicit invocation of Bandung Spirit reminds the international community of Indonesia's long-standing principled position, grounding contemporary advocacy in decades of consistent commitment. This historical narrative compensates, at least partially, for the limited material capabilities that constrain middle power influence [5].

Third, juridical translation represents an effective adaptation strategy for middle powers navigating institutionalized international legal orders. Converting moral commitments into legal arguments enables participation in formal dispute resolution mechanisms otherwise structured to advantage powerful states with greater legal resources. Marsudi's ICJ intervention demonstrates how middle powers can leverage international legal institutions to challenge hegemonic practices, though such intervention requires substantial legal expertise and diplomatic capacity [3].

5. Conclusion

This study highlights the continuity between Soekarno's foundational articulation of Bandung principles and Retno Marsudi's contemporary diplomacy on Palestine. Soekarno's solidarity with Palestine emerged from a broad anti-colonial worldview shaped by transnational intellectual networks across the Islamic world, Pan-Asian movements, and anti-imperial currents. These intellectual foundations—rooted in organizations such as Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Sarekat Islam—framed Palestine as part of a universal struggle for self-determination rather than a narrow religious cause.

Bandung principles offered a lasting analytic lens by understanding colonialism as an adaptive system that includes both formal rule and neo-colonial domination. Soekarno's focus on economic subordination, intellectual hegemony, and settler colonialism remains relevant for interpreting contemporary occupation and global power asymmetries. Retno Marsudi extends this tradition by strategically deploying legal and institutional tools—critiquing double standards, mobilizing judicial mechanisms, and framing Palestine as an unresolved colonial question.

The concept of juridical translation captures how Marsudi transforms Bandung's moral and ideological commitments into formal legal advocacy. Her historic presentation before the ICJ exemplifies the elevation of Bandung principles from rhetorical affirmation to institutional action. This case shows that the Bandung Spirit endures as an adaptable institutional commitment, sustained when anti-colonial principles are updated through contemporary legal and multilateral instruments.

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