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Parliamentary Diplomacy in Supporting Palestinian Independence: Evidence from Indonesia

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Abstract

The literature on parliamentary diplomacy has been dominated by the Western context, with very limited exception discusses Asian or Muslim majority countries. This article aims to fill the gap by examining how the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR), through its Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (BKSAP), maximising parliamentary diplomacy to support Palestinian independence. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, the authors created a dataset consisting of news articles and official reports published between 2017 and 2021. To complement this approach, an elite interview was conducted with the Vice Chairperson of BKSAP. The findings suggest that Indonesia's staunch support for Palestine is mandated by its 1945 Constitution, hence BKSAP acts in accordance with the executive branch in advocating for Palestine's sovereignty rights. However, the decision-making structure in international politics is limiting the success of Indonesia in pursuing this advocacy.

Keywords

Parliamentary Diplomacy, Indonesia, Palestine, Diplomacy and Parliament.

1. Introduction

Parliament is often seen as a political institution that merely deals with domestic affairs. However, this perception is no longer accurate as parliament can also be actively working in international politics, foreign policy (Wagner 2017), and diplomacy. According to Weisglas and Boer (2007), parliamentary diplomacy refers to a variety of international activities undertaken by parliamentarians in order to increase mutual understanding between parliaments, to improve a governance, and to serve as representatives of the people of the country in order to strengthen the institution's democratic legitimacy (Weisglas and Boer 2007). To put it another way, parliament has a responsibility to assist and support the central government in implementing its diplomacy at the international and bilateral levels in order to achieve total diplomacy. Parliamentary diplomacy has the advantage of being more open in political dialogue because it can establish relationships with a variety of political actors who are not always linked to the central government. This approach allows better collaboration among various parties with different cultures and constitutions to seek common interests (Ispas 2011).

In terms of conflict resolution, the executive in the government can play its role as a peace mediator. Likewise, the parliament can assist this effort by providing guidelines or recommendations, acting as a supervisor, monitoring the human rights situation in affected countries, and criticising parties who refuse to cooperate to achieve peace (IPU and IDEA 2005). Thus, parliament can be involved in international conflict resolution although it cannot replace the role of the executive. One prime example of this role has been displayed by the European Parliament (EP) which aims to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through resolutions and maintaining relationships with both parties (Gianniou 2015). A growing body of literature on parliamentary diplomacy has been dominated by the Western context, with very limited exception discusses Asian or Muslim majority countries (Chaltep 2013). In order to fill the gap, this paper examines how the Indonesian House of Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat/DPR*), through its Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (BKSAP), maximising parliamentary diplomacy to support Palestinian independence. As a case study, Indonesia offers critical insights as to how a Muslim majority country is advocating Palestinian independence in international forums. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, the authors created a dataset consisting of news articles and official reports published between 2017 and 2021.

A total 122 articles and reports were collected, and further coded by the types of activities and forums. To complement this approach, an elite interview was conducted with the Vice Chairperson of BKSAP, Hon. Dr Mardani Ali Sera. The findings suggest that Indonesia's staunch support for Palestine is mandated by its 1945 Constitution, hence BKSAP acts in accordance with the executive branch in advocating for Palestine's sovereignty rights. BKSAP has been very actively engaged in numerous parliamentary forums to promote Palestinian independence. However, the decision-making structure in international politics is limiting the success of Indonesia in pursuing this advocacy as strong countries have the right to veto any initiatives that may harm Israeli's interest.

This article is divided into five sections. The first section explores the literature on parliamentary diplomacy. Following that is the data and methods section. The next part of the paper sets the context of how parliaments are responding to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The fourth section elaborates Indonesian parliamentary diplomacy conducted by the BKSAP in various international forums. The first half of the findings will be based on an interview with the Vice Chairperson of BKSAP, and the other half derived from news coverage and official reports on activities or statements regarding efforts in advocating Palestinian independence by Indonesian parliamentarians. The last section provides conclusions and future research avenues.

2. Literature Review

The establishment of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 1889 was deemed as the start of parliamentary diplomacy (Wagner 2017). However, the direct practice of parliamentary diplomacy emerged only after the conclusion of the Cold War, when diplomats' responsibilities became more extensive and complex, resulting in the birth of a new style of diplomacy, one of which is parliamentary diplomacy (Stavridis and Jančić 2016). The study of parliamentary diplomacy is growing, and more studies have been conducted to develop analyses and to identify the characteristics of parliamentary diplomacy (Stavridis 2021). Yet, scholars have different opinions about the definition of parliamentary diplomacy. For example, Weisglas and Boer (2007) elucidates parliamentary diplomacy as diverse international activities by parliamentarians to improve mutual understanding between countries, help each other to improve government control and public representation, and to increase democratic legitimacy of intergovernmental institutions (Weisglas and Boer 2007). On the other hand, Rusk (1955) asserts that parliamentary diplomacy is a concept used to explain multilateral negotiations conducted by parliament and has been characterised with institutionalisation, rules of procedure, public debate, and draft resolution voting (Rusk 1955).

Parliamentary activities, at the international level, can be classified into different international parliamentary institutions (IPIs). The first type is International Parliamentary Organs (IPOs), which refers to international bodies that deal with international issues especially based on membership, sector of interest, or objectivities. One of the examples is the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (PUIC). The second type is International Parliamentary Associations (IPAs), where it constitutes a global scope of parliamentary institutions that are used to recommend the executive branch of a country on domestic matters that has an international dimension e.g., economy (Šabič 2008). A prime example of this type of institution is the IPU (Stavridis 2006). There are also variations of parliamentary activities. Stavridis (2006) classifies a variety of parliamentary activities linked with parliamentary diplomacy, such as assemblies, associations, committees, councils, dialogues, and unions, and bilateral. These activities can be further divided into two categories: formal and informal. Then, there are parliamentary friendship groups, which are groups between parliamentary members of two countries or groups of countries. These groups can be formed because they have commonalities or sharing a cause, or because they are involved in a crisis which they intend to find a solution collaboratively (Stavridis 2006).

Not everything in parliamentary diplomacy is perfect and functioning as expected. Stavridis further criticises the practices of parliamentary diplomacy which often failed to achieve their goals. Firstly, the diplomatic activities by parliament did not generate much debate because each delegation only discussed something that was already known. Secondly, parliamentary diplomacy is not included in general parliamentary activity. Thirdly, the question remains whether parliament is a moral tribunal because in some cases, parliament does not act like an executive government (Stavridis 2006). Apart from using the term 'parliamentary diplomacy', some scholars call parliamentary diplomacy as 'one-and-a-half diplomacy' in multi-track diplomacy, and they conceptualise it as one of the methods in conflict resolution (Rafi 2015). Rafi (2015) stipulates that the one-and-a-half diplomacy is a type of diplomacy carried out by high-level political actors and legislators trying to solve domestic issues, conflicts, and rebellions. Moreover, Parliamentarians for Global Action (2001) amplifies that one-and-a-half diplomacy is peace-making activities that

are carried out not by governments or non-governmental organisations, but by international parliamentarians (PGA 2001).

To show how parliament can contribute to the conflict resolution process, IPU (2005) provides examples of parliamentary diplomacy activities regarding conflict resolution. Firstly, utilisation of bilateral or inter-parliamentary meetings to facilitate dialogue between nations that are affected or involved by the conflict. Secondly, active in international organisations to promote common understanding in times of conflict. Thirdly, individual MPs can become the envoys of the peace process and take part in an ad hoc group of specific conflict (IPU 2005). From the explanation above, it can be seen that the different definitions of one-and-a-half-diplomacy still have the same connotation, that is parliament can contribute to conflict resolution activities in various ways without involving executive government actors and non-governmental actors. In the earlier times of parliamentary diplomacy study, it has focused more on parliamentarians' activities in a multilateral context, such as parliamentarians' participation in the United Nations (Rosenbaum 1967). However, recent study of parliamentary diplomacy focused more on parliamentarian's role in multilateral, bilateral, and state's foreign policy (Stavridis and Jančić 2016). Yet, the study of parliamentary diplomacy tends to explore Western parliament, such as the European Parliament. Stavridis and Jančić (2016), mention that EP serves as a 'benchmark' for global parliamentary diplomacy because of their impact in the international regime. EP as the parliamentary representation of the European Union (EU) has been working under EU foreign policy and has included security defence and human rights to its agenda. It is the reason why EP is also focusing on Palestinian-Israel conflict (Gianniu 2015; Stavridis, Gianniu, and Cofelice 2016). Regarding the activities of EP in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, they mainly use resolution, official declaration, and sending parliamentarians' delegations. But, sometimes, there is dissent in the EP decision-making caused by conflicts between the member state's national interest. This makes EP cannot be fully reflecting EU's interest on the issue of Palestinian-Israel conflict (Gianniu 2015). Additionally, Stavridis, Gianniu, and Cofelice (2016) argue that the role of EP in Palestinian independence is important for disentangling the situation in the region despite numerous limitations with parliamentary diplomacy (Stavridis, Gianniu, and Cofelice 2016).

As for the literature of parliamentary diplomacy by Asian assemblies, studies have found that the variety of government types is affecting how parliaments are conducting diplomacy. Bang's (2017) study suggests that Northeast Asian countries (i.e., Japan and South Korea) tend to use bilateral diplomacy rather than multilateral dialogue. This could be due to the fact that countries in this region have a rather strong executive power over the government, hence lack of emphasis on parliament (Bang 2017). Nonetheless, Wang's (2016) research about Chinese parliamentary diplomacy concludes that China, through National People Congress (NPC), successfully uses different forms of parliamentary diplomacy activities, such as multilateral and bilateral friendship groups, to improve China's impact to the international arenas (Wang 2016).

The study of parliamentary diplomacy in Asia remains in its infancy (Chaltep 2013), especially in exploring parliamentary diplomacy by the world's biggest Muslim majority country and third largest democracy, Indonesia. Muhamad (2014) contends that Indonesia's House of Representatives (DPR) role in the issue of Palestinian independence until 2014 has been focussing on participation in international parliamentary forums, such as IPU, APPF, APA, and PUIC which aims to complement the diplomacy that has been carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. In these international meetings, especially in the IPU assembly, the Indonesian parliament actively shows their resolutions initiative toward the Palestinian issue that intended to put pressure on related parties to stop the conflict and assist Palestinian government (Muhamad 2014). Yet, our knowledge of how these efforts is perceived by Indonesian parliamentarians and how parliamentary diplomacy has been reported in the media remains limited. To sum, parliamentary diplomacy can be used as a tool to achieve conflict resolution. Hence, it is important to maximise the function of parliament to support the executive in ending conflict and in establishing peace. It is also pivotal to apply different measures to parliamentary diplomacy activities, such as bilateral relations and civil society organisations, considering that there are more actors involved in parliamentary diplomacy (Stavridis 2021).

3. Methods

The current article aims to explain the role of parliamentary diplomacy by Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR), through BKSAP, in supporting Palestinian independence between 2017—2021. To answer the question, this article unpacks BKSAP activities in both multilateral and bilateral forums. The authors applied a mixed-method approach which consists of quantitative and qualitative methods. Using an online database, *Factiva*, we have collected all news articles on Palestine and DPR published in Bahasa Indonesia from 2017 to 2021. At first, the

number of articles gathered was 527, and following a thorough examination of the relevance of the research topic, the final dataset includes 80 articles. Meanwhile, from the DPR's official website, we have gathered 30 articles. We also collected all official reports produced by BKSAP which explain activities attended by MPs and their statements during events, such as IPU annual meetings, parliamentary sessions, and comments to the media (n = 12). The purpose of this data collection is to observe the news coverage about Indonesia's parliamentary diplomacy with a particular interest on Palestinian independence. As a complement, we also interviewed a member of BKSAP.

4. Data Collection

The full method to conduct this research is as follows. Firstly, we invited all members of BKSAP to obtain an in-depth explanation on the role of Indonesia's parliamentary diplomacy in supporting Palestinian independence. We managed to interview one respondent via online meeting application *Zoom*, and the session was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia using a semi-structured interview approach (Kumar 2018). Secondly, we conducted media tracking on both news outlets and BKSAP's official website. The news articles published between 2017 and 2021 were gathered using news online database *Factiva* using 'Palestina AND DPR' as the keyword, meanwhile, the search from DPR's website (<https://www.dpr.go.id/berita/index/category/bksap>) was manually collected. We also included into our dataset all BKSAP's official documents relevant to our research topic from the website (<https://ksap.dpr.go.id/dokumen/index/id/16>) and the DPR Information Management and Documentation Office. This brings a total of 122 documents as our final dataset, and we code each article and document based on types of activities and forum.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Parliaments and Palestinian Independence

The question of Palestinian independence has been a source of contention for many years. The Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation process is supported by several countries, which also recognise Palestine as a sovereign state (Tharoor 2014), even though it is possible for some countries to support Israel more than Palestine, or that some countries take an abstentionist stance. Apart from the state government, parliaments are speaking out about this humanitarian crisis in Palestine and expressing their support on bilateral and international levels. A country that is not part of the Muslim world but still supports Palestinian independence is Japan. Japan's position on the Palestinian conflict has not changed and they are supporting a two-State solution as a border conflict resolution, and the executive government has been working to build peace since 1993 by providing aid and taking steps in the fields of economy, refugees, tourism, and more. From a political context, Japanese legislators, ministers, and prime ministers consistently visit Palestine every year, and vice versa (Japan MOFA 2021). Individual members of parliament can lend their support to Palestine by traveling to the country to see the devastation caused by the conflict and to monitor the provision of assistance by the Japanese government, as Keiichi Koshimizu and Toshiaki Abe did as members of the Japan House of Representatives in support of the Palestinian people in Gaza (UNICEF 2016). The Japanese parliament's position on Palestine is consistent with that of the central government, and the Japanese parliament serves as a supporter of the government in declaring support for Palestine through parliamentary channels.

Similar to Japan, the European Union (EU) is also paying attention to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and has included this into their political agenda in the Middle East region since their involvement in the Oslo Agreement as a supporter of Palestine's self-determination (Bertrand-sanz 2010). In line with the EU, the European Parliament, as a form of international parliamentary organs (IPOs) and the EU's consultative body, has long supported the agenda of Palestinian independence. While EP continues to pressure this agenda, it is important to note that each member state may have a different stance on the two-State solution, hence affecting the Members of European Parliaments (MEPs) (Shemer-Kunz 2017) in international forums. As a consultative mechanism, along with efforts like passing resolutions and asking all actors to support Palestine, the EP established a diplomatic project named "Parliamentarians for Peace" with the goal of bringing together MEPs, members of Israel's parliament, and members of the Palestinian parliament (Stavridis, Gianniu, and Cofelice 2016).

The Palestinian-Israeli dispute is often associated with conflicts between Muslims and Jews. Therefore, the issue is often presented as a threat to Muslims as general, and countries with a vast majority of Muslim population will be more likely to take a strong stance against Israel's continuing illegal settlements. Countries in the Middle East, as well as Muslim majority countries, are working closely to promote Palestinian independence. These countries utilise international organisations such as the IPU, PUIC, and the UN to express their concerns and advocacy. For instance, in 2009, the United Nations International Meeting convened to discuss efficient ways for parliament to influence the

Palestinian peace endeavour with Israel. Several things were gained during the conference, including thoughts on the prospects for parliamentary diplomacy, which, as indicated by the Cyprus parliamentary delegation, may be conducted efficiently but is hampered by disparities in the commitments of each legislator (United Nations 2009).

Continuing in the context of Muslim-majority countries, PUIC is one of the IPOs devoted to parliamentary cooperation in Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states. PUIC is actively engaged in the struggle for Palestinian independence, as evidenced by its persistence in bringing the Palestinian issue to each PUIC conference and consistently including Palestine in its resolutions. Additionally, PUIC has a special committee on Palestine to foster closer cooperation among PUIC members in assisting Palestine in achieving its rights. As a result, the Committee will limit its discussion to the Palestinian issue throughout the meeting. Then, to establish best practices for defending Palestinian rights, PUIC member states can collaborate by submitting their issues to the IPU in order to garner support from the global parliament. PUIC member countries may propose ideas at the Islamic Group's Consultative Meeting, which are subsequently coordinated with other countries. A demonstration of this type of work occurred when PUIC members agreed to initiate emergency resolutions about Palestine for the 143rd IPU Conference (PUIC 2021).

The IPU is composed of many geopolitical groups whose purpose is to ensure an equitable distribution of members within the IPU structure and to ensure that worldwide parliamentary representation is fair. There are six geopolitical groups, one of which is the Arab Group, also referred to as the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union or Arab Parliament by some parties. This organisation, which is chaired by the Kingdom of Bahrain, comprises 21 countries from the Maghreb region, the Persian Gulf, and the Middle East (excluding Israel). Same with the other political parties, this group will bring to the IPU forum concerns about its region. The Arab Group can contribute to bringing the Palestine issue to the attention of other countries and aiding countries with similar objectives in doing so. The Arab Group is actively expressing its support for Palestine through constant debates and resolutions at group meetings and conferences. One example is the emergency summit convened by the Arab Group in response to the gun fight between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas; the meeting's objective was to address the two nations' predicament (Escalonilla 2021).

5.2 Indonesia's Parliamentary Diplomacy for Palestine

Indonesia has been consistently advocating the independence for Palestinian people in the name of humanity and justice as mandated in the preamble of Indonesia's 1945 Constitution. As the world's largest Muslim society, Indonesia's support dates all the way back to President Sukarno's administration (1945—1966), when Indonesia refused to acknowledge Israel's sovereignty and did not establish diplomatic relations (Azani and Zuhdi 2016) since Israel does not recognize Palestine as a sovereign state. Indonesia also recognised the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1974, continuing during the reign of President Suharto (1966—1998). Later, Indonesia constantly sided with Palestine in defending their sovereignty (Muttaqien 2013).

Indonesia's parliamentary diplomacy is determined in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the agenda is adjusted every year according to the urgency of the issue. Given this situation, the Indonesian parliament may not always include Palestine on its main agenda. However, since 2004 Palestinian independence has become one of the primary topics for BKSAP in pursuing Indonesia's parliamentary diplomacy. Indonesian foreign policy under the Joko Widodo administration employs multilateral diplomacy to revive the Asian African spirit of anti-colonialism and strengthen global Islamic solidarity of the OIC members, both to be in favour of Palestine, while the oppressive powers were not labelled as the threat to the heartlands of Palestine or the global Muslim community. In his 2014 presidential campaign, President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) promised to support the plight of Muslims around the world, and Palestinian independence was one of the most expressed components in his agenda. In addition to multilateral diplomacy, the Indonesian government undertook unilateral action by opening an Indonesian Honorary Consulate in Ramallah in 2016 (Wicaksana and Wardhana 2021).

In an interview session, the Vice Chair of BKSAP, Hon. Dr Mardani Ali Sera asserts that BKSAP has always assisted Palestine in carrying out its diplomatic mission, however there is a huge issue arising from the disparity in terms of support for Palestine and Israel. While the latter receives substantial endorsement from western countries, Palestine receives very limited support from the major superpowers such as the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK). Another obstacle deals with the ongoing conflict between Hamas and PLO as the two organisations refused to unite for the sake of the Palestinian independence. Hon. Dr Mardani Ali Sera further elaborates that the Indonesian parliamentary diplomacy on Palestinian independence is composed of three major

components, known as “Trisula”; (1) strengthening international opinions and policies on Palestine, (2) involving the parliament in numerous activities, such as Focus Group Discussions, seminars, and joint projects with other parties, and (3) inviting citizens from all over the world to raise the issue of Palestine. To address these three components, as well as the previously mentioned impediments, the Indonesian parliament, through the BKSAP, collaborates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and offers fresh ideas, such as establishing a specific ad-hoc framework for Palestine.

5.3 Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Committee of Indonesian House of Representatives (BKSAP)

Since 1918, the Indonesian parliament has existed as a legislative body under the name *Volksraad* and has undergone numerous changes until today known as *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* or DPR (House of Representatives). Indonesia’s parliamentary diplomacy efforts were initially established by becoming a member of the IPU in 1922. The membership lapsed in 1939 and was reinstated in 1952 (IPU n.d.). Parliamentary diplomacy has increased significantly over the last couple of decades, given that the organisation responsible for inter-parliamentary cooperation in the DPR, *Badan Kerja Sama Antar Parlemen/BKSAP*, was founded only in 1974.

Several examples of the DPR’s commitment in advocating the Palestinian rights to independence can be found in the 2008 Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF) session, where the Indonesian delegation won support from the New Zealand parliament in the proposal for Hamas participation in several APPF sessions. In the following year, Indonesia aggressively voiced its support towards Palestine in the APPF session by asking countries to compel Israel to comply with the current international law (BKSAP 2009). Additionally, Indonesia could express its support more strongly with the election of Indonesia as the President of PUIC between 2012 and 2014.

BKSAP is one of the legislative bodies assigned with fostering good relations between the Indonesian parliament (DPR) and the parliaments of other nations, including international organisations that bring together members of parliaments. BKSAP may confer with certain connected parties and develop links with parliaments of other countries and international organisations in carrying out its functions, with the agreement of the parliament's leader. It has five specialised desks dedicated to parliamentary diplomacy: (1) International Cooperation, (2) Regional Cooperation, (3) Bilateral Cooperation, (4) Member Foreign Administration Activities, and (5) Linguists. Each desk has a distinct duty classification. For instance, the Secretariat for International Organisational Cooperation is one of the work units within the BKSAP assigned with the responsibility of handling technical and substantive issues relating to parliamentary diplomacy and sending delegates to attend the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) Conference and other related conferences, the Conference of the Parliamentary Union of OIC Member States (PUIC) and related conferences, and the general assembly of the OIC.

BKSAP consists of 52 legislators representing all parties in the DPR, and a quarter of them are female MPs. It has one chairperson and 5 deputies. BKSAP represents the DPR for foreign policy issues, yet it cannot represent the government because this function was bestowed upon the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the executive authority for foreign policy. DPR, through BKSAP, can continue to gain support by writing to the IPU president and proposing a resolution on emergency items to the IPU assembly. Additionally, BKSAP may advise parliaments from other countries about the Palestinian independence and Israel's annexation in detail, owing to their lack of interest in the topic.

‘Indonesia has key strengths in parliamentary diplomacy in promoting Palestinian independence including a large population of 270 million people, being the world’s largest Muslim majority, and the third largest democracy after India and USA. These features make Indonesia’s voices in international politics relatively distinct and pivotal. Yet, the challenge with Palestinian cause lies one the decision-making structure where some countries have a veto right which makes them tend to play the stick-and-carrot approach where small countries are more inclined to follow their initiative, such as the Abraham Accords. Put simply, if we want to defend Palestine, they will let us advocate. But, when it comes to an action, and it hurts Israel’s interests, they will make a move to prevent it from happening.’ (Hon. Dr Mardani Ali Sera).

The Vice Chairperson of BKSAP further asserts that Indonesia’s strong commitment in supporting Palestine has been translated into financial aid. The amount of aid for Palestine is around IDR 50—100 billion (or USD 3.5—7 million) per annum. Hon. Dr Mardani Ali Sera claims more funding is needed to improve the impact of Indonesia’s effort in supporting Palestine to gain its independence.

5.4 News Coverage

Indonesia has been a long-standing member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the global organisation of national parliaments. The IPU has 178 Member Parliaments out of the 193 countries in the world, representing more than 6.5 billion of the world's 7 billion population. However, DPR's involvement has only just begun to increase in the last couple of decades, in tandem with a change in the structure of the BKSAP to make it more comprehensive in assisting the Indonesian parliament's diplomatic efforts. BKSAP has been actively participating in the IPU annual assemblies, yet during the 136th session in 2017, Indonesia did not raise the Palestine issue (see Table 1). However, after a meeting with the Asia Pacific Group (APG) and PUIC during the 138th Assembly's series of sessions, the Indonesian delegation recommended that the plan for Jerusalem emergency items might be fulfilled immediately. Additionally, one of Indonesian delegates, Hon. Rofi Munawar, made a remark during the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) meeting to reaffirm the Asian Parliament's opposition to US President Donald Trump's policy regarding the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Additionally, Indonesia's envoy reaffirmed Indonesia's commitment to Palestine and urged disputing parties to engage in peace negotiations at the 139th Assembly. Moreover, at the 140th IPU meeting in Doha, Indonesia proposed an emergency item entitled "Protection of the Rights and Dignity of Muslim Minorities around the World" which aims to unite parliament members of the IPU in fighting injustice against the Muslim community. However, Indonesia does not focus on these emergency items for the Palestinian people. Finally, Indonesia began reaffirming its support for Palestine with the 141st Assembly and continued until the 143rd Assembly, when Indonesia emphasised the need of upholding international law to assist the Palestinian people in their struggle and calls on the IPU and other international parliamentary organizations to ensure recovery following the deterioration of the crisis in the Palestinian territories. Among these, Indonesia's parliament has introduced an emergency resolution on the humanitarian situation in Palestine.

Table 1. Indonesia's parliamentary diplomacy for Palestine in IPU

Assembly Session	Indonesia's Parliamentary Diplomacy Activities
137 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calls on IPU countries to further strengthen the implementation of democracy and the enforcement of human rights in the lives of nations in the world - The desire of various parties in the Gulf region in the Middle East can follow the positive steps of reconciliation achieved by several parties who were formerly warring in Palestine
138 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invites Asian Parliaments to unite and press against US President Donald Trump's controversial policies regarding Jerusalem. - The Indonesian delegation firmly urged that the draft resolution on the status of the city of Jerusalem be adopted without amendments
139 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indonesia's emphasis on the issue of handling victims of war, conflict, and armed violence that occurred in the world, especially the fate of the Palestinian people
141 st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasises the importance of international law to protect a weak state, for example Palestine
142 nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urges the IPU and other international parliamentary organizations to ensure recovery in the aftermath of the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories
143 rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submission of emergency items by Indonesia to the humanitarian situation in Palestine

Indonesia is also a member of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC), which consists of 54 parliaments of the member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Each year, PUIC hosts a conference to which all of its member countries are invited. From 2017 to 2021, the DPR sent delegates to the PUIC conference on an annual basis. PUIC has various related meetings during its annual conference, such as the Standing Committee on Palestine Affairs, which is held in conjunction with the conference. Hon. Rofi Munawar, an Indonesian delegate to the 12th PUIC conference, spoke during a meeting of the Standing Committee on Palestine Affairs, which was held during the conference (see Table 2). Among other things, he stresses the significance of

Palestinian party reconciliation to tackle Israel's aggressions, and he suggests that Muslim countries form a caucus or specialised group to deal with the Palestine-Israel dispute. Furthermore, at the 38th Meeting of the PUIC Executive Committee, Indonesia requests that the Palestine issue be discussed at the next PUIC conference, which will be held in Indonesia. The BKSAP delegation, led by Hon. Nurhayati Ali Assegaf, presented a proposal for a programme for members of the Standing Committee on Palestine to visit Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip to demonstrate their support for Palestinian independence at the following year's conference. Several member states did not instantly support the idea, but most members were in favour of the intended travel to the Palestinian territory. In addition, Indonesia calls on members of the PUIC to step up their cooperation with Palestine in a variety of disciplines. Indonesia also debated again during the 14th PUIC Meeting the suggestion for a PUIC delegation visit to Jerusalem that had been made at the previous conference, but this time without receiving a good response. Continued at the 15th PUIC Conference, Indonesia intervened in reaching five consensus regarding the position of Islam, namely: (1) PUIC is a form of embodiment of Islamic principles, (2) all PUIC members reject all forms of violence and terrorism, (3) PUIC members can find solutions to bring about world justice, (4) PUIC members are serious about upholding human values so as to reject violence against oppressed countries like Palestine, and (5) invite all PUIC members to look at an optimistic future. As part of its opposition to President Donald Trump's proposal to recognise illegal Israeli settlements and relocate the American embassy to Jerusalem, Indonesia has also expressed its dissatisfaction via the proposal. Following that, Indonesia reiterated the position of the Indonesian parliament on Palestine, including support for the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate crimes against humanity committed by Israel and an invitation to PUIC members to increase their responsibility in order to end the global humanitarian crisis.

Table 2. Indonesia's parliamentary diplomacy for Palestine in PUIC

Session	Indonesia's Parliamentary Diplomacy Activities
12 th Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Indonesian parliament calls for the parliaments of Muslim countries to immediately establish a caucus or a special commission on the Palestinian issue
38 th Meeting of the Executive Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Indonesian parliament asked the session to include the discussion of Palestine in the agenda of the PUIC Conference going forward
13 th Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indonesia's urge PUIC members to increase their solidarity to strengthening the PUIC so that there is no difficulty in defending Palestine - Presented a proposal for a programme for members of the Standing Committee on Palestine to visit Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip
14 th Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Returning the proposal of visiting Jerusalem and Gaza
15 th Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indonesia condemns Trump's proposal to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict - involved in the making of five consensus cover the position of Islam towards the global world - Indonesia's parliament urge PUIC MPs to send a delegation to directly check the condition of Muslims in Jerusalem
16 th Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urge to Muslim's parliaments to overcoming the humanitarian crisis

Still within the context of Muslim countries' support for Palestine, some of Indonesian legislators participate in The League of Parliamentarians for Al-Quds (LP4Q), a foundation established in October 2015 at the initiative of parliamentarians who support Palestinian right, and is based in Istanbul, and it consists so far of the membership of about 1,500 parliamentarians, from all over the world. LP4Q executive body includes members from Palestine, Turkey, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Kuwait, Italy, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Argentina. Indonesia- has succeeded in acting as Vice President of LP4Q since its inception. Indonesia's parliamentary diplomacy initiatives in LP4Q include participation in conferences and hosting worldwide online seminars attended by LP4Q representatives to engage the general public in parliamentary diplomacy. A lot of the

discussion that took place during this conference focused on Palestine, and resolutions or stances were often adopted or expressed in relation to the Palestinian situation, much as they were at the 3rd Conference of LP4Q in 2020.

The Indonesian parliament has been very active in the global Muslim parliamentary forum and has been reaffirming its support for Palestine on a regular basis. In 2007, the International Islamic Forum of Parliamentarians (IIFP) organised a meeting of parliamentarians from 28 countries to plan the meeting. In 2020, they had a meeting where they agreed on four things: (1) IIFP will reach out to more non-Muslim countries by actively communicating, (2) promote Islam, (3) work for world peace in places like Palestine, and (4) encourage an agenda to improve the government and public service. The Indonesian government has also taken the initiative to gather the support of Members of Parliament from various nations to oppose and vehemently condemn Israel's annexation of the Palestinian territories, with the goal of releasing a unified declaration in 2020 and 2021. These measures launched by the Indonesian parliament have the potential to demonstrate Indonesia's commitment to assisting Palestine in its quest for independence.

Meanwhile, in the Asian region, Indonesia is vigorously asserting its position on Palestinian independence and urging other countries to assist it in this endeavour. Since the Indonesian parliament is a member of both the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF) and the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), it frequently brings the issue of Palestinian independence to the attention of these two organisations in order to gain sympathy from Asian countries and to actively voice their position. As an example, during the 25th Annual Meeting of the APPF, the Indonesian parliament expressed its concerns about the handling of the humanitarian problem in Palestine and returned to speak at the APPF 26th Annual Meeting about the critical role of parliaments in each region in resolving disputes in a country like Palestine. Still In keeping with Indonesia's attitude at previous meetings, at the 2019 Meeting of the APA Standing Committee on Political Affairs, Indonesia also reaffirms its commitment to bolstering the Palestinian cause.

The Indonesian parliament's diplomatic initiatives on behalf of the Palestinian cause are not limited to speaking out at the yearly meetings of the international parliamentary organisations in which it is a member. Table 3 displays the list of forums in which Indonesia utilised to 'connect' the Palestine problem to other diplomatic operations. As such, the Indonesian parliament expressed hope during the Asia Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP) meeting that the Asian-European parliamentary partnership would be a positive step toward resolving political crises in conflict-ridden countries, including Palestine. Additionally, the Indonesian parliament actively participates in diplomatic initiatives undertaken by other countries, as seen by its participation in Iran's 6th International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada. Indonesia emphasised its unwavering support for Palestine during the meeting, reiterating the importance of parliament as a frontliner in assisting Palestine. To the extend, Indonesia's Parliament also includes the topic of Palestine in other forum such as World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development in 2017 which Indonesia's delegate sending the views on violence and in Women Political Leader (WPL) Conference 2019 when the Indonesian parliament calls for the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to not be achieved without paying attention to the human rights of the Palestinian people. In addition to the diplomatic activities mentioned previously, the Indonesian parliament became a member of the Global Council for Tolerance and Peace (GCTP) in 2018, where it shares the same goal as the Indonesian government in enforcing global orders through active participation in international organisations advocating for tolerance and world peace. Besides that, Indonesia, as a non-aligned country, participated in the Non-Aligned Movement's Parliamentary Network (NAM) and declared its commitment to Palestine independence.

Along with its parliamentary diplomacy, the Indonesian parliament communicates with foreign countries through bilateral connections. The Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Group, a functional desk inside the BKSAP, is responsible for the Indonesian parliament's bilateral contacts. As per 2021, the Indonesian parliament collaborated with 101 international parliaments from all continents, and in this instance, the Indonesian parliament will occasionally discuss the Palestine issue with both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. For instance, at the meeting with the Jordanian Parliament, an agreement was reached that the two countries would continue to work in support of Palestine. Additionally, they encourage the Japanese government and all citizens to join them in denouncing all types of unilateral action regarding Israel's designation of Jerusalem as its capital. This demonstrates how frequently the Indonesian parliament smuggles its interests into other countries not just through multilateral channels, but also through bilateral channels.

Table 3. Parliamentary diplomacy activities in supporting Palestinian independence, 2017-2021

Parliamentary Diplomacy Activities	In Percentage
ASEP Meetings	0.91
The Meeting of APA Standing Committee on Political Affairs 2019	0.91
APPF Annual Meetings	2.73
Bilateral Meetings	11.82
GCTP Meetings	0.91
IIFP Meetings	1.82
The 6th International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada	2.73
IPU Assemblies	15.45
LP4Q Meeting and Online Seminars	9.09
Inauguration of Parliamentary Network of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)	7.27
PUIC Meetings	8.18
Parliament members public statements	31.82
Joint Statement of Parliamentarians of Various Countries Against Israel's Annexation of the Palestinian Territories	3.64
World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development	0.91
Women Political Leaders (WPL)	1.82

Also in Table 3, the data suggest that most parliamentary diplomacy activities reported by the media and official reports published between 2017—2021 were based on legislators' public statements (32%), IPU assemblies (15.5%), and bilateral meetings (12%). This indicates that the narratives on Indonesia's support towards Palestinian independence has been widely circulated in the public and MPs are reaching out to the Indonesian population to provide updates and emphasise as what is expected to happen with this advocacy. Hence, this study lends support to previous study suggesting that Indonesia's foreign policy remains closely associated with the interest of Muslim population in the country (Wicaksana and Wardhana 2021). With the data presented, it is safe to argue that Indonesia's parliamentary diplomacy on Palestinian independence has been consistent throughout the years as it reflects the country's national interest in promoting foreign policy which adheres to universal rights for sovereignty. The Indonesian parliament, through BKSAP, has participated in a variety of assemblies and forums, both in the bilateral and multilateral contexts, with its goal to promote Palestinian independence. The strategies applied consist of expressing views on the Palestinian issue, inviting other countries to support Palestinian cause, disseminating information about the situation in Palestine, and submitting initiatives to global institutions.

6. Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that Indonesia has been among the front runner of advocates in promoting Palestinian independence. Through parliamentary diplomacy, the world's largest Muslim-majority country continues to support other Muslim-dominated society, such as Palestine. This approach complements Indonesia first-track diplomacy conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the diplomacy of the Indonesian parliament will result in Indonesia's total diplomacy (BKSAP 2009). It can be concluded that the Indonesian parliament acts in accordance with the executive branch when it comes to conducting diplomacy through global and bilateral channels. According to the data analysis, Indonesia is an active member of numerous international parliamentary organisations and consistently attends annual meetings of parliamentary organisations in global and regional scope such as the IPU, PUIC, APPF, and APA. Indonesia is also a member of a special parliamentary forum for Palestine-related issues called LP4Q and attends international parliamentary meetings organised by other countries' legislatures, such as the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada organized by the Iranian parliament.

Our study contributes to the literature on parliamentary diplomacy in two-fold. Firstly, using a statistical descriptive analysis, this paper provides the first empirical evidence on how Indonesian parliament is conducting its diplomacy in a selected topic of Palestinian independence. It is evident to argue that Indonesia's foreign policy will continue to drive the issue as one of the key agenda at the parliamentary level. Secondly, it serves as an expansion of observation regarding parliamentary diplomacy in non-Western context, especially in the Muslim majority countries. Some caveats need to be acknowledged in this study. Since we only have the data for the last 5 years, it is

difficult to provide a complete observation on this topic examining different administrations and different domestic political dynamics. It is also limited in terms of gathering in-depth information from legislators across parties and periods. Nevertheless, this paper remains important as it offers critical findings on how Indonesian parliament is maximising its diplomacy in promoting Palestine's sovereignty against the overwhelming imbalance in terms of support towards the Palestinians and Israelis in this ongoing conflict. Future research could explore how and why Indonesia's parliamentary diplomacy has not been considered as successful, despite the significant influence and role that Indonesia poses in international politics based on the size of the population and GDP.

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