

Indonesia's Engagement in Cultural Diplomacy Shaping its International Image

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ABSTRACT: As an archipelago nation, Indonesia is renowned for its beautiful tourism sectors, especially on Bali Island. However, Indonesia is analysed as using culture as a major means of diplomacy more strongly than other sectors. Indonesia's involvement as the host of the G20 eventually made many countries observe its image in the international sphere in terms of culture. This study aims to discuss how Indonesia's engagement in cultural diplomacy shapes its international image. This study employs an explorative qualitative research method where primary data is obtained by interviews and observation while secondary data is obtained from literature reviews. This study highlights the cultural diplomacy conducted by Indonesia to build its international image by engaging in international events and cultural performances to foreigners both in Indonesia and abroad.

KEYWORDS: Archipelago Nation, Cultural Diplomacy, Engagement, Indonesia, International Image.

INTRODUCTION

Besides the presence of hard power, the majority of countries in the world prefer to utilise soft power they have to strengthen their country as well as to achieve the national interest they have. This is caused by soft power which tends to avoid the risk of conflict and is closer to peace so that closeness between countries in international relations can be obtained much more easily (Nygard & Gates, 2013). Cultural diplomacy is one way to achieve the national interest of a country where culture is the main tool in practice. Furthermore, each country has its own characteristics or what is commonly known as a national identity which also makes it easier to establish cooperation in the international world because we can obtain to know one another. In this case, there are several things that are categorised as culture including language, food, traditions, and performing arts such as dance, musical instruments, and certain beliefs.

Joseph Nye stated that Soft power is the capacity to influence people to want others' desired outcomes, more specifically, the capacity to accomplish goals by seduction rather than coercion. Additionally, in international politics, soft power is even more crucial than hard power. In fact, soft power uses attractiveness and persuasion to influence others' behaviour without rivalry or confrontation (Gomichon, 2013). As UNESCO states, countries utilise cultural diplomacy to further their cultural individuality, promoting global cultural variety and fostering cooperation and communication (UNESCO, 2023). Thus, basically cultural diplomacy in international relations is carried out as a tool to strengthen communication and close cooperation so that it can benefit both parties while at the same time achieving the national interests of each country. As for cultural diplomacy, it is often carried out in the form of performances both on a large and small scale in several places at several international events or in the form of education such as providing scholarships to international students to study the country's culture. In this case, the introduction of culture through education often has a considerable impact due to the fact that in addition to studying the culture of the destination country, scholarship recipients will often become cultural ambassadors to introduce that country to the people of their country of origin. In the end, the cultural introduction can also be done from one person to another. In other words, cultural diplomacy is not only carried out by state actors but also by non-state actors such as certain organisations or even individuals.

Cultural diplomacy is referred to as a free instrument in the context of soft power since it does not demand a plethora of resources and has few negative outcomes in the event of failure (Nye, 2011). In terms of communication, diplomats in general must know the culture of other countries well to avoid offence from the destination country if the treatment is inappropriate for that country's culture. This occurs because ambassadors in destination countries are essentially in charge of determining domestic policy, therefore understanding local cultures is a requirement (Ryan, 2015). Since cultural diplomacy missions between nations have the same primary objective, the targeted diplomat in this situation refers to both state actors and non-state actors. Additionally, understanding the local language is a necessary skill to have in order to communicate effectively, act as a bridge for cooperative agreements and cultural diplomacy, and successfully advance desirable national interests.

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In essence, improving the status of the national economy is the most crucial objective of international relations cooperation, which is accomplished in a variety of ways and with a variety of methods. Similar to cultural diplomacy, which is solely used as a tool to improve relations between nations, collaboration and other possibilities are carried out appropriately in order to advance each nation's national interests. Therefore, each nation with its unique national identity has its own traits and traditions that perhaps used as a tool in the practice of cultural diplomacy to portray to the world. Without exception, Indonesia is an archipelagic nation with hundreds of local languages and tribes due to the fact that each area of Indonesia has its own distinct customs and culture it has been referred to as one of the nations with a highly wealthy and diverse cultural heritage (Scheffold, 1998). Apart from the aspect of language, other traditional cultures such as art, dance, traditions, to traditional martial arts are owned by Indonesia and continue to be a tool in carrying out diplomatic missions in cultural diplomacy between countries. Until presently, there are 12 types of Indonesian culture that have been recognised by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage and a total of 289 in 28 Indonesian provinces have been designated as intangible cultural heritage by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (Ministry of Communication and Informatics, 2021).

The diversity of cultures owned by Indonesia is unique and differentiates it from other countries. This can be one of the tools to create a positive image for Indonesia in international circles as a tool to introduce Indonesia to other countries so that they can obtain to know Indonesia further, such as in terms of tourism, politics, and in terms of the economy to invest in which these introductions are made through the practice of diplomacy. The statistical data on foreign tourist arrivals to Indonesia can be a calculation of Indonesia's recognition among foreigners. When entering COVID-19, the number of annual foreign tourists to Indonesia in 2020 reached 4,052,923 tourists and continued to increase, which was proven in 2023 the number of annual foreign tourists to Indonesia reached 11,677,825 tourists (BPS, 2023). In practice, Indonesia is increasingly strengthening diplomacy through its soft power especially in the field of culture in almost all countries with which it has diplomatic relations in addition to cultural diplomacy within the country towards tourists (Minardi, 2023). This study aims to explore How Indonesia's engagement in cultural diplomacy shapes its international image which that thing has not been discussed by any other researcher previously.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The other previous researcher also found that a non-governmental actor called Zheng He who did cultural diplomacy to strengthen the relationship between China and other Asian countries with a peace approach (Effendi, 2019). As a case study, the previous researcher found that the cultural diplomacy between Vietnam and India has produced their foreign policy which strengthens both bilateral relationships (HA, 2022). There was also the role of cultural diplomacy conducted between Malaysia and Indonesia could decrease the tendentious among society due to societal conflict in the past which can be proven by the increasing number of people who study in both countries as well as art and cultural performance between each other's countries (Azzahara Ulyana & Salleh, 2018). The article described that Indonesia uses Batik as a tool to strengthen its relations in the ASEAN countries to gain its national interest in the economic context while introducing Batik as one of the Indonesian cultures namely by UNESCO as an intangible heritage (Zahidi, 2017).

Furthermore, there was also a study found that given the diversity of cultures found throughout the Indonesian archipelago, the best way to encourage a positive attitude towards this diversity is to actively contribute to the nation's cultural preservation through practising, studying, and empowering local culture as well as by presenting, creating, and maximising the role that libraries play in positive activities by disseminating cultural knowledge (Fatmawati, 2021). Another study found that Using cultural diplomacy as a soft power strategy in each nation can benefit Malaysian-Indonesian ties, particularly in easing public tensions over a number of historical topics (Azzahara Ulyana & Salleh, 2018). However each state case might be different to other states. A study also found that Indonesian cultures which recognised by UNESCO as intangible heritages served as domestic or even worldwide declaration of Indonesia's national identity (Alunaza & Putri, 2016). Furthermore, a study found that culture is standing as a tool to solve disliked nations' obstacles due to its peace value, especially through the G20 agenda that gathers nations in the world (Nurisnaeny et al., 2024). In addition, from cultural diplomacy, a nation can create nation branding and identity as well as widen it to new opportunities in numerous fields including education, politics, and economics or business and increase income (Simorangkir, 2023).

According to the literature reviews conducted by the author mentioned above, this research will be discussed and explore widely about Indonesia's engagement in cultural diplomacy shapes its international image. In this regard, the literature reviews also stand as evidence that the topic that will be discussed by the author has its novelty.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method applied by the author when conducting this research is qualitative research with non-numerical data obtained through observation and literature review as the secondary data while interviews with some experts as the primary data. Furthermore, triangulation is employed to verify the data validity.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia's Engagement in international cultural events

In terms of culture, Indonesia is known for its multicultural diversity with a plethora of traditions and cultures which make people around the world willing to visit and experience it personally. In this case, people around the world will not know about Indonesia except there were some introductions and promotions about it to them which happened in other countries especially those who have diplomatic relations with Indonesia. Therefore, to achieve its goal which is to be known by all countries around the world and could achieve its national interest, Indonesia used its plethora of cultures as a tool to do diplomacy while as an effort to achieve its national interest. There are some ways that Indonesia does and still going on to do cultural diplomacy as well as to engage in the international relations communities which have been done by both state and non-state actors such as its engagement in international cultural events, cultural performances, and its participation in culinary bazaar.

In total, there are 132 Indonesian representative offices and 64 honorary representatives spread throughout the world in 2023. Through these representative offices, Indonesia makes them a means of communication and a bridge for conducting cultural diplomacy to strengthen relations between countries and make Indonesia's image in front of the world community always look good. In this case, introduction, teaching, and involving the local community in promoting Indonesian culture are several methods to achieve this goal. As for this, it is not only carried out by Indonesia however is carried out by the majority of countries in the world so that in each representative country international events are often held in various fields including politics, economics, and socio-culture where the representative countries in the country can obtain the opportunity to present their country in front of other countries. At these events as well, Indonesia seeks to always be involved as part of diplomatic activities which are carried out either only as a representative presence or by presenting Indonesian cultures directly in accordance with the opportunities and invitations listed at the event.

In terms of state actors, Indonesia through its representatives always fulfils invitations to international meetings, especially those related to the social and cultural fields. In this case, several countries often initiate international meetings in the social field through international organisations of which Indonesia is a member, such as ASEAN, OIC, UN, and so on. These organisations hold regular meetings attended by member countries with the aim of discussing missions that have been carried out and plans that will be carried out in the future. Additional meetings will be held if there are unpredictable events and international follow-up is needed, such as efforts to prevent and control international virus outbreaks as happened during COVID-19. Thus, the image of Indonesia in its involvement in these international meetings can also be seen directly.

Cultural Engagement through Performances

At every international event in other countries, Indonesia through its embassies provides special stands to demonstrate and introduce to the international community about Indonesia both in terms of locations that are of interest to tourists, especially in terms of beautiful nature, local tribes and culture to the business opportunities that exist in Indonesia for export and import business people. In this case, local culture such as traditional Indonesian items also decorate the location as a visual introduction to international visitors such as Wayang, Angklung, and Batik clothes which are often used as part of traditional formal clothing. Souvenirs depicting Indonesian culture are also provided to visitors as a form of diplomacy. Through embassies, consultations regarding visits to Indonesia for foreign citizens are often also carried out at international exhibitions so that they can attract the interest of foreigners and increase their curiosity about Indonesia. Through these services, the image of Indonesia with the character of a society that helps each other's as well as friendly and kind can be directly introduced. In this case, based on 2022 report Indonesia has been listed as the most generous country in the world for the fifth year in a row (CAF, 2022), one of which could be due to indications through meetings with foreign citizens at international events.

Annually, representatives of Indonesia throughout the world always endeavour to initiate or be involved in international cultural exhibitions and take part in showing Indonesian culture, such as through musical instruments, dances, and even pencak silat, which has been named an intangible heritage by UNESCO. For traditional musical instruments, those commonly used in Indonesian cultural performances abroad consist of Angklung, Talempong, Sape, Gamelan, Flute, Gendang, and the like. The dances that are usually performed consist of the Saman Dance, Balinese Dance, Kecak Dance, Piring Dance, and Reog Ponorogo, which is known for its difficulty and uniqueness, which often becomes superior performances at international cultural events abroad. Basically, Indonesia often takes independent initiatives to promote culture abroad through its embassies which are held in several cities in the country with representative offices. At these special events, Indonesian cultural performances abroad can be carried out on a large scale and without limitation and include artistic and cultural performances, traditional food, and extensive promotions in the fields of education and tourism. This special event, often known as Indonesian Day, is part of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy abroad. These cultural performances are not only carried out by the embassy but also involve Indonesian citizens abroad, the majority of whom consist of students who have special abilities in the fields of arts and culture.

Indonesia's cultural diplomacy abroad is part of public diplomacy where non-state actors also participate and present cultural performances to society. In this case, Indonesian citizens abroad, the majority of whom consist of students and workers, have the Indonesian Student Association in the world which is also divided into Indonesian Student Associations in each country in the world and regionally which is also a student organisation which aims to unite the vision and mission to introduce Indonesia

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abroad, to become a forum for discussion between countries, to become a forum for unity and expression of opinion so that when they have completed their studies and returned to Indonesia they can make a beneficial contribution to the homeland, nation and state as an entirety (PPID, 2023). Meanwhile, Indonesian embassies abroad often work together with Indonesian student associations in local countries in promoting Indonesia to local communities in the form of arts and cultural performances, learning Indonesian, as well as providing typical Indonesian food so that it can attract and increase visitors to attend the event while enjoying performances and traditional Indonesian dishes (KEMLU, n.d.). This is also part of gastro diplomacy where Indonesia introduces Indonesian culture through its typical food which is renowned for its strong and unique taste because basically Indonesia is wealthy in spices that are easy to obtain and cheap. Therefore, numerous Indonesian foods are wealthy in taste and quite difficult to recreate in other countries with the same taste due to its difficulty to find these typical Indonesian spices.

Indonesian cultural diplomacy abroad is carried out differently and with different concepts depending on the representatives of each country. As with representatives of Indonesia on the Asian continent, countries such as Malaysia tend to have very large exhibitions of Indonesian art and culture because numerous Indonesian citizens also reside in the country so that displays and distribution of souvenirs or traditional food can be carried out in full convenience. However, the audience's responses were analysed as very impressive and well received because basically, the very close relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia can facilitate interaction between the two countries, especially in terms of their arts and culture. In addition, there are six Indonesian representatives office in Malaysia including Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia to Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Penang, Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Johor Baru, Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Kinabalu, Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Kuching, and Consulate of the Republic of Indonesia in Tawau (KBRI KL, 2018). As for other Asian countries that have a limited number of Indonesian citizens, Indonesian traditional arts performances are highly anticipated because they have their own uniqueness and excitement that is very memorable when Indonesian arts and cultural performances are performed. Furthermore, both countries closeness can also be seen through the amount of tourist from Malaysia to Indonesia that increase annually (BPS, 2023).

In contrast to Indonesian cultural diplomacy on the Asian continent, Indonesian cultural diplomacy in Australia is more emphasised and much more developed in terms of teaching Indonesian which is also part of introducing the culture itself. This can be analysed from the existence of mandatory Indonesian language lessons for students in several Australian schools, such as what happened at the Coffs Harbour Christian Community School (Coffs HCC, 2023). There is a special programme called Bali Buddies which is carried out through cultural exchange activities, especially with schools in Bali. Apart from that, training on traditional Indonesian musical instruments called Gamelan is also generally open to the Australian community and other cultural performances are carried out with the involvement of the Australia Indonesia Youth Association and the Indonesian embassy in Australia itself. In this case, the number of Indonesian visitors, especially to the island of Bali, who come from Australia is increasing annually (BPS, 2023), which can be analysed as a result of Indonesian social and cultural diplomacy which is working well in Australia.

Furthermore, Indonesia's cultural diplomacy on the American continent is analysed very popular through the Shadow Wayang performance (Audrey et al., 2023) which is one of Indonesia's traditional cultures and has been designated by UNESCO as The Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Shadow puppetry itself is a traditional Javanese art that involves playing with the shadows of wooden puppets and then telling stories on the theme of manners in life. The narrator in the Shadow Puppet show is prioritized to be someone who is considered to have high knowledge and positive ethics and character in society (Asia Society, 2012). In its efforts, Indonesia through its representative office in America carries out arts and cultural performances in front of American people who come from various educational backgrounds and positions, including government workers, business people, and local people in general who attend and watch the Indonesian cultural festival with great enthusiasm. The Gamelan musical instrument is also a means of Indonesian cultural diplomacy in America which was also displayed at the Indonesian Night 2023 event which was followed by several traditional dances (Congen SF, 2023).

Furthermore, on the African continent, especially Egypt, Indonesian cultural diplomacy in Egypt is analysed very strong through Pencak Silat, which is one of Indonesian traditional martial arts cultures that has gone global. There is pencak silat which has also succeeded in attracting the attention of the Egyptian people and has an active role in strengthening cultural diplomacy between the two countries (Khairunnisa, 2022). This is further strengthened by UNESCO's decision to make pencak silat an intangible world heritage since the end of 2019 due to the fact that it has several distinctive elements such as distinctiveness in traditional performances, distinctiveness in oral speech, traditional crafts, distinctive rituals, and the presence of social elements and local wisdom. In its confession, UNESCO also stated that pencak silat in its identity can unite the nation because of the values of friendship and mutual respect for others contained in it. Indonesian pencak silat has characteristics that are different from pencak silat from other countries, namely that apart from being a martial sport it also contains spiritual values in the form of teachings to obtain closer to God, so that Indonesian pencak silat has become a way of life for martial artists in daily life.

On the European continent, Indonesian cultural diplomacy is held in different forms, either through the Europalia festival which is held in rotation between countries, or through separate initiatives carried out by Indonesian embassies in European countries (EFA, 2018). Traditional dances and musical instruments such as Gamelan and Sape are performances that are eagerly awaited by visitors because of the uniqueness produced by these arts and culture. In this case, the Netherlands and Germany are the most

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prominent countries in terms of Indonesian cultural diplomacy because there are quite a plethora of Indonesian people living there and there is a cultural connection because the Netherlands is one of the countries that colonised Indonesia for quite a long time. Thus, in the Netherlands, cultural diplomacy in the form of teaching and learning Indonesian is one of the strongest cultural diplomacy tools among other cultures. Meanwhile in Germany, Indonesia initiates a cultural event every two years called Indonesia Festival Frankfurt 2022 which runs for three consecutive days and is filled with various things related to Indonesia including arts and cultural performances, tourism forums, culinary festivals, and business forums. as an effort to strengthen diplomatic relations between Indonesia and abroad, especially with Germany itself (KEMLU, 2022). Meanwhile, in the arts and cultural performances at the event, extensive dances such as Reog Ponorogo, a lion masked dance full of life philosophy were also performed in addition to performances of Gamelan and Sape musical instruments which were played beautifully. It is analysed that Indonesia's cultural diplomacy in the European region has become a special attraction for the European community, which at the same time makes Indonesia's image wealthy in arts and culture and friendly people in front of the world better. On the other hand, Indonesia's image in Germany is very well known, especially among academics because of Indonesia's third president, BJ Habibie, who is a Germany alumnus and has succeeded in being the first person to solve problems in the world of airplanes so that airplanes as today can be created (Chairil, n.d.). In that country, BJ Habibie is known as Mr Crack due to his prowess in solving problems related to airplanes that have existed for a long time however have not yet found the answer until he came to Germany and solved it.

In the world of international relations, which is a multidisciplinary study, we learn about various fields of knowledge concerning relations between countries. Especially in this era of globalisation, all aspects of life ranging from culture, science, goods and services, and communication have crossed the boundaries of a country's territory. In international relations, interaction between countries is a crucial element due to the fact that majority of the policies issued by a country are based on the interaction between these actors. However, interactions between actors in international relations are not always between one country and another. International relations also discuss interactions involving non-state actors such as individuals, international organisations, multinational companies, and so on.

These days, the discussion of international organisations is a popular issue in international studies. As a result of globalisation, both individuals and countries will find it difficult to survive alone; almost all countries in the world reside on the principle of interdependence. This is due to limitations, both in natural resources and human resources, so this requires that they will require the help of other countries to complement their interests. A more in-depth element of the discussion on international organisations is regional cooperation. Various forms of cooperation began to be built throughout the world this resulted in more and more countries in one region or region that have the same interests. Therefore, there is cooperation that is built to harmonise the goals and interests of several countries in one region or region. The main driving factor for the establishment of various kinds of regional cooperation is none other than globalisation. However, in addition to this main factor, there are also numerous other supporting factors involved, such as the motivation to create economic integration to improve the welfare of the member countries which basically the main point of diplomacy is about economy,

CONCLUSION

In light of those evidence and analysis in this research, there are several Indonesian involvements in cultural diplomacy which shape its international image with its participation in every International event as well as cultural performances. Indonesia has thousands of intangible cultural heritages which are divided into its islands, making it the main tool in conducting diplomacy in various countries in the world and creating its own image in international circles. This participation was carried out either by ambassadors of the Republic of Indonesia abroad, diplomats, or from the main Indonesian government such as the president and the ministries themselves. Since Indonesia's image in the worldwide world has been that it is culturally rich, cultural performances have been the focal focus of activities carried out by Indonesia both nationally and globally, with the assistance of Indonesian representatives abroad. Thus, Indonesian cultural performances abroad become one of Indonesia's involvements in forming an international image, which is then published on social media and reaches more and more people globally. In addition, future research related to the Indonesia's cultural diplomacy is required especially about its impact on Indonesia's economy and identity.

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