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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# CULTURE AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN STRENGTHENING INDONESIA'S SOFT POWER IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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### ABSTRACT

Culture has a significant role in international relations. The cultural identity, values, and social norms of a country's society can influence its foreign policy, perceptions of other countries, and the way that the country interacts with other countries in the international arena. This study aims to further explore how Indonesia, as a country that has cultural diversity, seeks to carry out cultural diplomacy to increase its soft power in international relations. Indonesian cultural diplomacy is pursued through three main instruments, namely the Indonesian Arts and Culture Scholarship (IACS), the empowerment of Indonesian people (diaspora) abroad, and the use of digital media. This study is library research with qualitative methods through document review, interviews, questionnaires, and literature studies. The results of this study show that Indonesia's cultural diplomacy is still having several limitations that will impact the achievement of Indonesian diplomacy results. The weakness of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy is caused by several factors, namely too many soft power assets whose existence has not been managed optimally, limited budget, and the number of Human Resources (HR) in the Public Diplomacy Directorate of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs who carry out Indonesian cultural diplomacy, and the absence of a white paper related to diplomacy Indonesian culture. In addition, the absence of a centrally managed IACS alumni association in Indonesia and the lack of involvement of Indonesian domestic audiences in discussions related to foreign policy and instruments of Indonesian cultural diplomacy are also factors that cause the weakness of Indonesian cultural diplomacy.

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## INTRODUCTION

Post the Cold War, it was marked by a shift in the focus of International Relations studies, namely from traditional issues that focused on issues of war and peace to shifting to non-traditional issues that were dominated by efforts to increase cooperation - both in the economic, environmental, social culture, even religious or cross-religious issues. Since the end of the Cold War, the rapid development of the era of globalization has encouraged changes such as the emergence of transnational environmental threats, global financial pressures, international refugee problems, immigration, and international terrorism (Friedman, 2007). These challenges have forced changes regarding the role of government in the world system and at the same time also forced countries to collaborate actively, which is characterized by the use of soft power (Taylor, 2009). Leonard stated that if the emphasis of the "hard power" era lies on "power projection", then the "soft power" era lies on "partnerships" where a country's government must be able to not only maintain the quality of communication with non-traditional partners but also with activists. global public and wider society in other countries (Leonard, 2002). Therefore, governments around the world are realizing the value and potential of using soft power, which includes the appeal of a country's culture, values, and ideas to influence others without violence or economic pressure. In other words, the positive image of a country in the minds of the international community is becoming

increasingly important. This diplomatic practice of using art, languages, literature, the exchange of artists, performing arts, films, and various other forms of culture as tools to promote understanding and cooperation between countries is often referred to as "cultural diplomacy" (Nye Jr., 2008). Cultural diplomacy is one important way to build strong diplomatic relations between countries. In this regard, cultural diplomacy has become a very important instrument of soft power. These enable countries to promote their culture, build cross-cultural understanding and strengthen international relations (Snow & Taylor, 2009). Realizing the importance of cultural diplomacy, countries in the world then use culture as part of their diplomatic instruments. Several countries that are known to actively use culture as a diplomatic tool include France, China, Spain, Japan, Italy, South Korea, and India (Pajtinka, 2014). France for example has French Institutes (Institut Français) spread throughout the world, which promote the French language, arts, culture, and French education. China uses cultural diplomacy to promote Chinese culture throughout the world. The Confucius Institute, supported by the Chinese government, is a clear example of how China promotes its language and culture. Apart from that, China also holds art exhibitions and cultural festivals. Spain has a Cervantes Institute dedicated to promoting the Spanish language and Spanish culture throughout the world. Spain is also active in holding cultural festivals, art performances, and cultural events abroad. Japan has the Japan Foundation which promotes the Japanese language and Japanese culture throughout the world. Japan is also famous for sending

traditional arts groups such as taiko (large drum) groups and traditional dance groups to perform abroad. Italy has an Italian Cultural Centre (Istituto Italiano di Cultura/IIC) in various countries and is active in holding art exhibitions, theatre performances, music concerts, and Italian culinary festivals abroad to promote Italian culture. South Korea capitalizes on the popularity of K-pop and Korean dramas to promote their culture throughout the world, while also having Korean Cultural Centres in various countries. Likewise, India promotes Indian culture, including dance, Indian classical music, fine arts, and Indian cuisine, through various cultural diplomacy programs and the Jawaharlal Nehru Indian Cultural Centre (JNICC). However, not all countries have made maximum use of their culture to serve as an instrument in efforts to build soft power in international relations. One country that has great potential to use its cultural diversity as a powerful instrument of cultural diplomacy is Indonesia. Indonesia's cultural diversity includes various aspects such as language, art, culture, and religion, as well as rich and unique traditions. By exploiting this potential, Indonesia can strengthen its positive image at the international level and promote understanding between nations. This article attempts to analyze Indonesia's efforts to build a positive influence in international relations and on the global stage by utilizing its cultural diversity as an instrument of its cultural diplomacy. This article also specifically highlights how Indonesia's challenges and weaknesses in embracing its cultural diversity contribute to its ability to strengthen its soft power in international relations.

**Framework theory: culture as soft power in international relations:**

Culture has an important role in international relations. This is based on the argument that culture has the potential to be a source of "soft power" that can influence a country's international relations. In other words, culture can be used to promote a positive image and build more harmonious international relations (Pajtinka, 2014). In this context, Joseph Nye, a theorist who introduced the concept of soft power, emphasized the importance of culture in influencing the international world. According to him, countries can build their cultural appeal through art, language, technology, and values that can influence the views and behavior of people abroad. This is a way to strengthen international influence without the use of military force. Culture as a source of soft power can be achieved through several channels, including (Nye, 2022):

1. **Cultural Promotion:** Countries often use their art, music, literature, and cultural traditions to promote a positive image internationally. For example, Japan promotes pop culture such as anime and manga to present a positive image in the world.
2. **Cultural Diplomacy:** Cultural diplomacy involves the exchange of artists, writers, musicians, and other performers as a way to build closer international relations. This helps strengthen diplomatic relations and cooperation between countries.
3. **Tourism:** Tourism functions as a means of cultural and economic promotion. Tourists come to experience local culture, and this can strengthen the country's economy as well as increase understanding between different cultures.
4. **Language:** Language is an important part of culture, and promoting a country's language can help a country develop better international relations. For example, countries whose languages are widely taught throughout the world have greater influence.

Furthermore, Nye stated that "soft power is more than influence since influence can also rest on the hard power of (military or diplomatic) threats or (economic) payments". From this, it can be explained that soft power is more than just influence because influence can also rely on the hard power that a country has, such as threats (military or diplomatic) or economic. Nye also stated that soft power can be defined as intangible or indirect influences such as culture, values, and ideology. Thus, soft power also refers to the ability to influence what other entities do through direct or indirect influence and encouragement, which usually takes a cultural or ideological form.

Soft power is not always synonymous with cultural power, although in this case the export of cultural goods that attract other countries can also be used to communicate values and influence foreign publics (Nye, 2011).

Meanwhile, Nicholas J. Cull specifically states that cultural diplomacy is an actor's effort to manage their international environment by making their cultural resources and potential known abroad and/or facilitating cultural transmission abroad. Historically, cultural diplomacy has meant a country's policy to facilitate its cultural exports. This role is for example carried out by the British Council or the Italian Cultural Institute (Cull, 2008).

Cull also emphasized the importance of cultural diplomacy which acts as a tool (Cull, 2008):

1. **Intercultural Understanding:** Cultural diplomacy helps in promoting understanding and respect for the culture and values of others. This paves the way for more awareness and understanding of cultural diversity around the world.
2. **Communication:** Film, mass media, art, and culture in general are powerful communication tools. They can reach and influence a wide audience, allowing cultural and diplomatic messages to be conveyed effectively.
3. **Building Relations Between Citizens:** Cultural diplomacy helps in building positive relations between citizens of different countries. This can create emotional bonds and closer relationships that go beyond political and economic aspects.
4. **Tourism Diplomacy Instruments:** Cultural diplomacy also includes tourism diplomacy, where the promotion of a country's tourist destinations through culture and tourism attractions becomes an important diplomatic tool. Tourists who come to a country can have a positive impact on bilateral and economic relations.

Thus, cultural diplomacy helps create strong diplomatic relations and promotes mutual understanding among countries. It also facilitates cooperation in arts, education, and culture, which can strengthen relations between citizens. Cultural diplomacy is an important instrument in building positive and harmonious international relations. On the other hand, the existence of culture plays an important role in the context of nation-building and nationalism because culture is one of the core elements that form the national identity of a country. Culture is an integral part of a country's national identity, where culture includes language, traditions, art, music, food, religion, and the values held by a society. These are factors that help differentiate one country from others and create a sense of national cohesion. Culture also allows citizens to feel related and have a shared identity. Through sharing language, values, and cultural symbols, individuals from diverse backgrounds can feel part of one national community (Wilcox, 2004). In the nation-building process, creating unity among diverse societies is key. In this context, culture has the potential to unite people from various ethnic groups, religions, and social backgrounds in a greater unity. Culture also functions as a legacy that is passed down from generation to generation. In the context of nation-building, understanding, caring for, and promoting cultural heritage is an important part of building a strong national identity. Furthermore, culture is often used as a means to foster the spirit of nationalism. Through art, stories, and cultural symbols, individuals can feel proud and connected to their country, which in turn can strengthen the spirit of nationalism. Culture can also play a role in integrating minority or immigrant groups into national society. By understanding and respecting their culture, countries can create stronger bonds between diverse groups in society (Croissant & Trinn, 2018). At the level of international relations, cultural diplomacy then becomes an important tool in strengthening a country's positive image in the eyes of the world. Countries use arts, culture, and sports to promote themselves at the international level and build strong bilateral and international relationships. Thus, culture plays a key role in building national identity, uniting society, promoting the spirit of nationalism, and strengthening international relations.

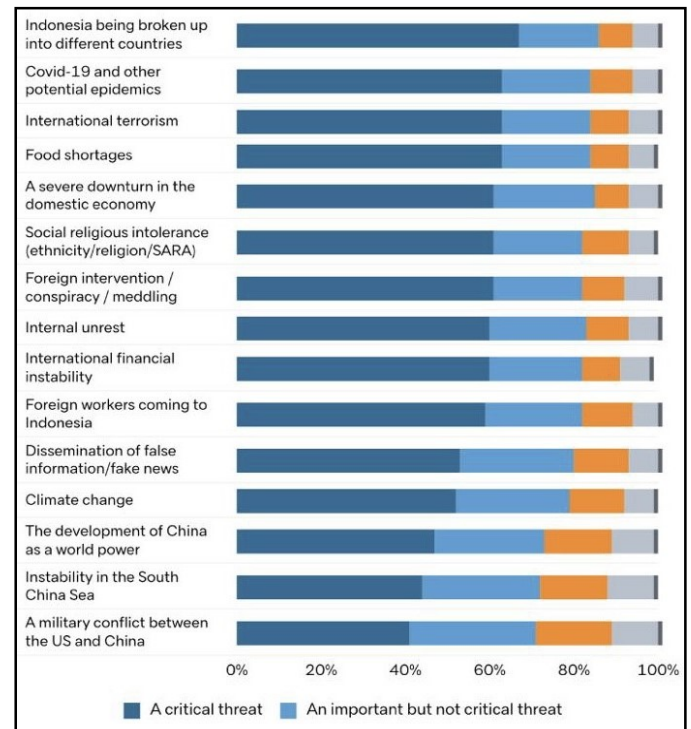
## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *Indonesian Cultural Diversity: Nation-Buildings, Nationalism, and the Instrument of Cultural Diplomacy*

Indonesia is a country that is very rich in terms of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity in Indonesia is influenced by several factors including race, ethnicity, religion, and colonial influences. Based on race and ethnicity, Indonesia has more than 300 different ethnic groups, which have their own languages, traditions, and cultures. Each of these ethnic groups gives its color to Indonesia's cultural diversity. For example, Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Minangkabau, and Batak cultures are some examples of striking ethnic diversity (Azra, 2018). Religion is also an important factor in Indonesian culture. The majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim, but there are also communities of Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and adherents of traditional beliefs. Religion influences traditions, religious celebrations, and the values held by society. Meanwhile, in the context of colonial history, Indonesia has a long history of colonialism, which includes the colonial period by the Dutch, British, Japanese, and Portuguese. Each colonist brought their cultural influences, which manifested in areas such as language, religion, educational systems, architecture, and more (Azra, 2018). For example, Dutch influence can be seen in the Indonesian language which is taken from Dutch, as well as in the architecture of Dutch colonial buildings that still exist in several cities in Indonesia. Indonesia's cultural diversity is a very important aspect in the context of nation-building and nationalism. Indonesia consists of more than 17,000 islands with various ethnic groups and cultures. Efforts to understand, respect, and celebrate this diversity are an important part of forming a strong national identity. Awareness of Indonesia's cultural diversity helps citizens feel part of one larger national community. In this case, Indonesia's national slogan, "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (diverse but still one), reflects the principle that cultural diversity can unite in national unity (Hartanti & Sundrijo, 2022). This is a basic value in efforts to build unity among diverse societies. In addition, the Indonesian Language, which is called the Unifying Language of the Nation, is the official language used throughout Indonesia. The use of this language helps overcome the linguistic diversity that exists in the country and allows for more effective communication between different ethnic groups.

Indonesia is also one of the countries with the largest religious diversity in the world. Various religions such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and traditional religions are adhered to by Indonesian people. Religious tolerance and harmony between religious believers are important values in building the spirit of nationalism. The diversity of art, music, dance, and other cultural traditions is also a potential means of promoting Indonesian culture throughout the world. This helps strengthen Indonesia's positive image at the international level and creates a sense of national pride among the country's citizens. Likewise, local traditions and tribal customs throughout Indonesia are an important aspect of cultural diversity. Efforts to maintain and understand these traditions are part of efforts to build an inclusive national identity. Thus, in managing cultural diversity, it is important to promote inclusivity, equality, and respect for all ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. This can help strengthen the spirit of nationalism and increase unity within the country. Indonesia's diverse culture is a valuable asset in building a strong and harmonious national identity (Widaningsih, 2017). Although Indonesia's cultural diversity is a valuable asset, several challenges need to be overcome in managing cultural diversity in the context of nation-building and nationalism. In this case, ethnic and cultural differences, for example, can trigger conflict if not managed wisely. This is as shown by the 2021 Lowy Institute poll results in Figure 1 below. The poll results shown in Figure 1 state that the top perceived threat for Indonesians is separatism: two-thirds of respondents (67%) say that 'Indonesia being broken up into several different countries' poses a critical threat to Indonesia's vital interests in the next ten years, reflecting longstanding fears about separatism in

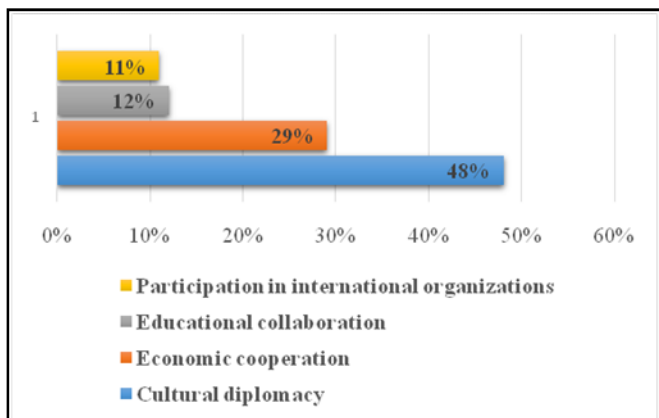
Indonesia. In this case, differences in culture, language, religion, and ethnic identity can trigger separatism.



Source: Ben Bland et al. (2021). Charting Their Course How Indonesians See the World. *Lowy Institute Poll 2021*, p. 20. Sidney: Lowy Institute. <https://interactives.lowyinstitute.org/features/indonesia-poll-2021/topic/security-and-threats/>

**Figure 1. Poll Results on Threats to Indonesia's Vital Interests**

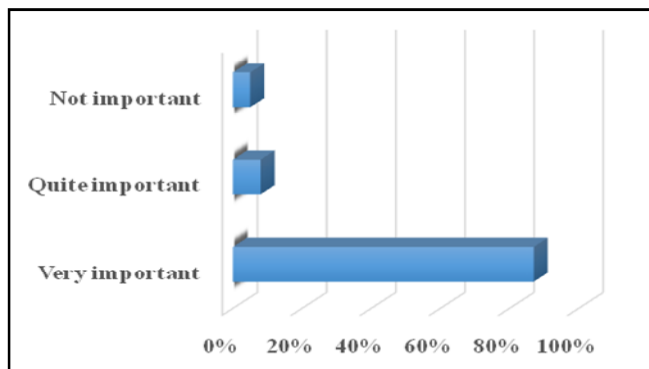
Groups who feel that their culture is ignored, suppressed, or disrespected by the central government or the majority of society often tend to fight for independence or autonomy. This potential for separatism specifically can also emerge in the form of ethnic conflict and inter-religious conflict which can threaten national stability. Cultural diversity also often goes hand in hand with social and economic disparities between different cultural groups. This challenge is to overcome existing inequalities and ensure that all citizens have equal access to resources and opportunities (Nurlaelasari *et al*, 2023). To promote nationalism, it is also important to preserve the culture and cultural heritage of each ethnic group. Preserving languages, customs, and cultural traditions is an important aspect of managing cultural diversity. Therefore, increasing education and cultural awareness among citizens is key to managing cultural diversity. This helps build appreciation for other people's cultures and strengthens a sense of inclusive nationalism. It is also important to be aware of external influences from global media and technology that can influence local culture and create challenges in maintaining cultural identity. In short, managing cultural diversity in the context of nation-building and nationalism requires a wise and sustainable approach (Widaningsih, 2017). It involves education, the promotion of equality, the enforcement of laws, and the promotion of intercultural dialogue to ensure that all citizens feel part of one strong and harmonious national unity. Considering the diversity of local culture and cultural values that Indonesia has, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia then attempted to introduce Indonesian popular culture to build the image of modern Indonesia. Despite this, Indonesia's rich culture, identity, and authentic values have not been packaged carefully to attract global affiliation. Based on the results of interviews and questionnaires with one hundred respondents, shows that cultural diplomacy is an important instrument in promoting Indonesia's image internationally. This is as seen in Figure 2 below. Based on Figure 2 above, the majority of respondents (48%) stated that the most important instrument of Indonesian diplomacy is cultural diplomacy, compared to economic cooperation (29%), educational collaboration (12%), and participation in international organizations (11%).



Source: data processing results.

**Figure 2. The Most Important Instrument of Indonesian Diplomacy**

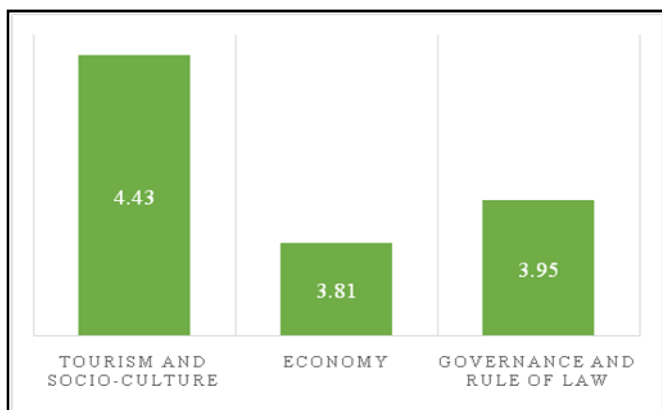
This opinion is also followed by the views of respondents (shown in Figure 3 below) who stated that the involvement of domestic audiences in the process of formulating Indonesian cultural diplomacy instruments is very important (87%). Only 8% and 5% of respondents stated that domestic audience involvement was quite important and not important, respectively.



Source: data processing results.

**Figure 3. Domestic Audience Involvement in Formulating Indonesian Cultural Diplomacy Instruments**

The Indonesian government itself states that Indonesia's cultural diversity is a valuable asset in efforts to achieve a positive image of Indonesia in international relations, which is expressed in the slogan "To win the heart and mind". This is also supported by the "Positive Image Survey of Indonesia in the International World", which was conducted by the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through 127 Indonesian representatives abroad, as shown in Figure 4 below:



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. (2023). Performance Report of the Directorate of Public Diplomacy 2022, p. 15. Jakarta: Directorate of Public Diplomacy, Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy.

**Figure 4. Indonesia's Highest Average Image Index**

Based on Figure 4 above, in 2022, Indonesia's highest average image index will be in the tourism and socio-cultural dimensions with a value of 4.43 and the lowest average image index will be in economic with a value of 3.81. In addition, the average governance and law enforcement index is 3.95. This shows that cultural riches and tourism are one of the greatest assets for Indonesia. The Indonesian government, through the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then stated that three cultural diplomacy instruments were adopted to introduce Indonesia's cultural diversity, namely the introduction of Indonesian arts and culture, empowerment of Indonesian people (diaspora) abroad, and the use of digital media. Introduction to Indonesian arts and culture is realized in the form of the Indonesian Arts and Culture Scholarship (IACS). IACS is the most important cultural diplomacy program run under the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, namely scholarships for overseas students to study Indonesian culture. IACS has been held since 2003 and was initially offered and participated in by South West Pacific Dialogue (SwPD) member countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, and host Indonesia. Considering the importance and benefits obtained from this program, this scholarship was later expanded to include ASEAN+3, Pacific Island Forum (PIF) countries, as well as many countries from all regions of the world. In the period from 2003 to 2019, this scholarship has had 920 alumni from 77 countries (Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). In 2019, Indonesia provided scholarships to 72 students, 6 from Indonesia and 71 students from 39 other foreign countries. Through IACS, students will study dance, music, local culture, and Indonesian for three months in six cities in Indonesia. The six cities are Yogyakarta (Javanese culture), Banyuwangi (cultural practices), Bali (Balinese culture), Padang (Minangkabau culture), Makassar (Mandar and Toraja culture), and Kutai Kertanegara (Dayak and Malay culture). Recipients of this scholarship will live in or around a cultural community, providing the opportunity to interact directly with local traditions and communities. The synergy between theory and practice obtained together, both within and outside the cultural community will be a driving force for shaping international culture and norms, which will ultimately strengthen regional and global understanding and cooperation at the people-to-people level (Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). In addition, to promote Indonesian arts and culture on the international stage, in 2021, the Directorate of Public Diplomacy of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also compiled a book containing inspiring stories from IACS alumni. This book is a follow-up to the Alumni Talk activity: "My Journey Beyond Indonesian Arts and Culture Scholarship (IACS)" which was held in July 2020 (Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

Apart from the IACS program, Indonesian cultural diplomacy is carried out through the Indonesian diaspora abroad, where the Indonesian diaspora is part of the people-to-people relations strategy which is an important factor in implementing Indonesian cultural diplomacy. In this case, the Indonesian diaspora is an element that can be utilized in efforts to strengthen and achieve Indonesia's diplomatic goals, as well as achieving Indonesia's broader national interests. This was stated by President Joko Widodo in a meeting with the Indonesian Diaspora Executive Committee on July 3 2017 that "the Indonesian diaspora can help the government in improving the nation's economy. "In addition to encouraging increased exports, it is hoped that Indonesian citizens abroad will also be able to attract foreign investment" (Basnur, 2017). Previously, to accommodate the spirit of the Indonesian diaspora abroad, as well as bridging the government's interests in improving Indonesia's image internationally, the Indonesian Diaspora Network (IDN) community was formed as a result of discussions from the "The Way Forward" session at the Congress of Indonesian Diaspora (CID) event in Los Angeles 2012 and CID II 2013 in Jakarta. Until now, there has been no specific study regarding the total number of Indonesian diasporas spread throughout the world. However, initial estimates show that the total Indonesian diaspora could reach 6-8 million people. The existence of the Indonesian diaspora abroad in quite large numbers certainly has an important role in encouraging increased cooperation between



Indonesia and foreign countries (Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). One form of cultural diplomacy activity that is consistently carried out is the holding of IndoFest by the Indonesian diaspora in Australia. The implementation of IndoFest packages cultural diplomacy in the form of arts and culture, which is held in two cities, namely Adelaide and Canberra (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia Canberra, 2022). Indofest Adelaide is a collaborative effort by Indonesian community groups in South Australia and is organized by the non-profit organization Australian-Indonesian Association of South Australia (AIASA), which was founded in 1967, and aims to foster engagement with Indonesian culture while promoting community diplomacy in South Australia. Specifically, the main objectives of Indofest Adelaide are (Kelamor, 2018):

1. Introducing Indonesia to the South Australian public by presenting contemporary art, dance, music, traditional Indonesian food, and language.
2. Actively involve members of the South Australian community and stimulate inter-community relations that strengthen Indonesia-South Australia relations.
3. Encourage interest in and promote the study of Indonesian culture and language, build educational links with Indonesia, and foster youth relations between Indonesia and South Australia.
4. Help create and consolidate opportunities related to commercial transactions, business dialogue, and tourism ventures between Indonesia and South Australia.

While the name of the Indofest activity is to promote Indonesian culture in Canberra, it is more familiarly called the Indonesian Festival activity. Through Indofest, the Indonesian Embassy in Canberra is holding a series of activities aimed at promoting Indonesian culture, culinary, and tourist destinations to the Australian public. Indofest Canberra is an integral part of the Indonesian government's policy in supporting Indonesian arts, culture, cuisine, and tourism in Australia (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia Canberra, 2022). Another instrument of Indonesian cultural diplomacy is through digital media. One of Indonesia's media for conducting cultural diplomacy is Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI). In this case, efforts to carry out the function of providing information abroad as well as participating in carrying out cultural diplomacy are carried out by a special RRI station, namely the RRI Foreign Broadcasting Station or RRI World Service-Voice of Indonesia (VOI). Various programs broadcast by VOI contain information about Indonesia aimed at the international community. Informing, Connecting, and Dignifying is the new tagline of RRI World Service-VOI which means that VOI not only informs, and connects, but also glorifies people and nations in the world. This new tagline is in line with RRI's vision, namely to become "the largest network, building national character and world-class radio". Through its extensive network, RRI World Service-VOI provides information about Indonesia or international strategic issues from an Indonesian perspective while trying to connect and raise the dignity of Indonesian people abroad as its main audience, as well as foreign citizens. This effort to connect listeners is carried out through dialogue or entertainment programs (VOI News Letter, 2011).

Starting July 1, 2008, VOI broadcasts 24 hours a day in 10 languages including Indonesian, German, English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Japanese, Mandarin, Malay, and Korean via 9.525 kHz terrestrial transmission and live internet audio streaming on the VOI website [www.voinews.id](http://www.voinews.id). However, after reorienting broadcast programs in 2010, VOI only has 8 language programs, namely Indonesian, English, Arabic, Mandarin, Japanese, French, Spanish, and German. In 2017, VOI reintroduced the Dutch language program, so that currently VOI has 9 language services. Listeners can also listen to all VOI programs via a smartphone application called RRI Play (Fornia & Susanto, 2021). Starting in 2011, once a month, VOI in collaboration with Pro 1 RRI Jakarta broadcasts a new program, namely the Diplomatic Forum (Diplomatic Forum) as an effort to realize the second track diplomacy mission. The Diplomatic Forum,

which is one of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy media, is a program packaged in the form of a talk show that can be listened to by the wider community, both at home and abroad. Through the Diplomatic Forum, foreign listeners are expected to better understand the policies that apply in Indonesia as well as an effort to promote Indonesian culture to foreigners (VOI News Letter, 2011). Another Indonesian government-owned media that is expected to play a cultural diplomacy role is Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI). In contrast to RRI World Service-VOI which has been broadcasting since 2008, the Indonesian government's efforts to make Indonesia better known to the world through public TV are being realized through the presence of the TVRI World channel. Previously, TVRI's broadcasts still focused on local content, and then as time progressed, TVRI began to reform itself. Starting with rebranding, changing the logo, and broadcasting new programs, these changes then began to attract the interest of the Indonesian people in a more modern and informative TVRI. TVRI's newest mission is stated as "World Class Public Broadcasting" (Laras, 2021). With this new mission, TVRI is planning a TV channel that will broadcast internationally, namely as Indonesia's global television on the world stage. It is hoped that the presence of TVRI World will become Indonesia's window into the international world so that it can attract foreign tourists to visit Indonesia directly, as well as inform them about issues occurring in Indonesia on the international stage. It is hoped that this will be useful for the Indonesian diaspora abroad.

In its development, in January 2021 TVRI World was still in the trial broadcast development stage, where the broadcast was still limited to the YouTube platform. However, the presence of TVRI World broadcasts on YouTube and Twitter social media shows the development of TVRI World, which is marked by the start of developing several initial programs, for example, Coffee Break with Ambassador. This program is similar to The Diplomat program broadcast by Arirang World from South Korea and several collaboration programs with VOA Indonesia (Laras, 2021). TVRI World itself is prepared to have government-managed international broadcasts such as British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) from England, Deutsche Welle (DW) from Germany, Aljazeera from Qatar, Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) from Turkey, Russia Today (RT) from Russia, France24 from France, China Global Television Network (CGTN) from China, Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai (NHK) World from Japan, Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) World from South Korea and Channel NewsAsia (CNA) from Singapore. Meanwhile, local broadcasting content is planned to come from existing TVRI programs such as Pesona Indonesia (Indonesian Charm), Inspirasi Indonesia (Indonesian Inspiration), Anak Indonesia (Indonesian Kids), and Culinary Indonesia which will be translated into English, including the English News Service program which will have an increased broadcast duration. TVRI World will be launched using TVRI digital broadcast channel 3, with a 24-hour broadcast pattern which is planned to be a channel for domestic and foreign viewers and will contain promotional programs for tourism, arts, culture, news about Indonesia, current issues (current issues), and news. Another Indonesian television station that also broadcasts internationally apart from TVRI World is Southeast Asia Today (SEA Today) owned by the State-Owned Enterprise Telkom Indonesia which was officially launched on October 28, 2020. SEA Today also has the same vision, namely to be a window to Indonesia in the eyes of the world. Even now, SEA Today can be watched live streaming via YouTube on the SEA Today News channel. Thus, in the future, Indonesia is planning to have two new international broadcasting preferences, namely TVRI World and SEA Today.

### **Challenges and Weaknesses of Indonesian Cultural Diplomacy**

Indonesia's cultural diplomacy, which is packaged through cultural activities such as IACS, empowerment of the Indonesian diaspora abroad, and digital media, is seen as still having several limitations that will impact the achievement of Indonesian diplomacy results. From this condition, the 2021 State of Southeast Asia survey report issued by the think-tank ASEAN Studies Center, can be used as an

argument to answer that the use of soft power and Indonesian cultural diplomacy is still not optimal as can be seen in diagram 5.

| Country     | Brunei | Cambodia | Indonesia | Laos  | Malaysia | Myanmar | Philippines | Singapore | Thailand | Vietnam |
|-------------|--------|----------|-----------|-------|----------|---------|-------------|-----------|----------|---------|
| ASEAN       | 1.3%   | 2.0%     | 12.8%     | 2.3%  | 6.6%     | 3.6%    | 2.5%        | 25.5%     | 26.8%    | 16.6%   |
| Brunei      | 6.1%   | 0.0%     | 9.1%      | 0.0%  | 12.1%    | 0.0%    | 6.1%        | 48.5%     | 9.1%     | 9.1%    |
| Cambodia    | 0.0%   | 7.7%     | 11.5%     | 3.8%  | 7.7%     | 3.8%    | 3.8%        | 38.5%     | 19.2%    | 3.8%    |
| Indonesia   | 0.8%   | 3.9%     | 20.2%     | 9.8%  | 7.8%     | 2.3%    | 0.8%        | 31.0%     | 21.7%    | 10.9%   |
| Laos        | 2.5%   | 0.0%     | 2.5%      | 12.5% | 2.8%     | 0.0%    | 0.0%        | 47.5%     | 22.5%    | 10.0%   |
| Malaysia    | 0.0%   | 2.5%     | 21.4%     | 0.0%  | 7.7%     | 1.7%    | 0.9%        | 10.3%     | 41.9%    | 13.7%   |
| Myanmar     | 1.3%   | 2.5%     | 9.0%      | 2.6%  | 1.9%     | 5.1%    | 3.2%        | 28.8%     | 21.2%    | 24.4%   |
| Philippines | 0.0%   | 1.5%     | 6.0%      | 1.8%  | 1.8%     | 0.0%    | 9.0%        | 35.8%     | 26.9%    | 17.9%   |
| Singapore   | 0.6%   | 1.3%     | 16.5%     | 0.6%  | 13.9%    | 0.6%    | 3.2%        | 5.1%      | 43.0%    | 15.2%   |
| Thailand    | 0.0%   | 0.0%     | 14.5%     | 5.1%  | 6.1%     | 6.1%    | 1.5%        | 28.2%     | 18.3%    | 19.1%   |
| Vietnam     | 3.4%   | 2.3%     | 6.3%      | 1.7%  | 4.6%     | 8.0%    | 1.7%        | 29.7%     | 22.9%    | 19.4%   |

Source: ASEAN Studies Center. (2021). The State of Southeast Asia. *Survey Report 2021*, p. 55, Singapore: ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute. <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-State-of-SEA-2021-v2.pdf>

**Figure 5. Most Preferred Country to Visit in the ASEAN Region**

From Figure 5 above, it can be explained that the countries or regions that are the main preferences of fellow ASEAN citizens as tourist destinations are Thailand (26.8%), Singapore (25.5%), and Vietnam (16.6%). Indonesia was chosen by 12.8% of respondents, and this fact can be used as a starting point to note the implications of Indonesia's limited use of soft power and cultural diplomacy. In this regard, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Directorate of Public Diplomacy identified the main obstacles in implementing Indonesian cultural diplomacy, namely too many soft power assets whose existence has not been managed optimally, limited budget for implementing cultural diplomacy programs, the absence of a white paper related to diplomacy Indonesian culture, and the limited number of Human Resources (HR) in the Public Diplomacy Directorate of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs who carry out Indonesian cultural diplomacy. Regarding the weakness of the ability to manage cultural diversity as a soft power asset, it can be explained that as a country consisting of 714 ethnic groups, Indonesia is a country rich in culture, identity, and traditional values. Unfortunately, the Indonesian government has not fully exploited culture as the main instrument for advocating national interests. In this case, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs places cultural diplomacy only as part of public diplomacy contained in Indonesia's diplomatic strategy. The Strategic Objectives of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 2015-2019, do not even mention cultural diplomacy or public diplomacy as the focus of Indonesian diplomacy, but instead focuses on maritime diplomacy and economic diplomacy (Amiruddin, 2022).

Regarding cultural diversity, in contrast to countries with relatively homogeneous societies such as Japan and South Korea, Indonesia cannot rely solely on one dominant culture or ethnic group in forming what is called national culture and national identity. In this case, Indonesia must take a different approach to presenting its national identity to the global public because prioritizing a particular culture from an ethnic group as a national character will result in marginalizing many other ethnic groups. How Indonesia succeeds in creating a fusion of diverse identities through dialogue, cooperation, tolerance, and mutual respect will become soft power from local traditions and policies that can become a model and attraction for other countries. In this context, Indonesian democracy related to its cultural diplomacy efforts is a potential soft power that Indonesia must develop in international diplomacy (Tiara, 2022). Thus, the promotion of Indonesian culture abroad must reflect unique Indonesian cultural products and contain the cultural spirit, values, and traditions of the Indonesian nation which are rooted in the spirit of Indonesian unity. The weakness of Indonesian cultural diplomacy carried out by the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also due to the lack of a grand design related to strengthening Indonesia's image abroad which provides specific guidance regarding what kind of image to display in each accredited country and what kind of

strategies and programs can be prepared and held. This is closely correlated with the fact that in implementing cultural promotion and diplomacy, inadequate human resources are the main obstacle, where the number of human resources and competencies in information technology still need to be developed (Amiruddin, 2022). The limited budget that the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has in carrying out its cultural diplomacy role also has implications for reduced capabilities in utilizing and optimizing digital media, such as through RRI World Service-VOI and TVRI World. In this case, RRI World Service-VOI and TVRI World's ability to effectively meet expectations and demands in terms of achieving target audiences, and broadcasting programs that are relevant, timely, and credible, face challenges. Due to limited funds available for broadcasting special programs relevant to certain countries and languages, RRI World Service-VOI and TVRI World only have the option to rebroadcast content created for Indonesian audiences or certain countries. This causes the broadcast program to be less relevant to the interests of the main audience, namely the country where the program is broadcast (Amiruddin, 2022). Apart from the main challenges identified by the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the weakness of Indonesian cultural diplomacy also lies in the absence of a centrally managed IACS alumni association in Indonesia. This is a challenge for the Indonesian government, especially in seeking opportunities and information related to IACS alumni who are spread widely in various countries. Almost all alumni expressed interest in collaborating with Indonesia, but most stated the need for concrete goals to support sustainable connectivity. In this case, Indonesia's cultural diplomacy has become less effective because collaboration efforts between IACS alumni have not been optimal, which has the potential to increase the influence of Indonesia's soft power. In other words, adequate allocation of time and funds is needed, so that it can provide better support for the existence and development of the IACS Alumni Forum, help projects run by alumni, organize more activities for alumni, and provide opportunities for alumni. to do more collaboration. All of these things of course require financial support and involvement from the Indonesian government. Finally, the specific challenge and weakness of Indonesian cultural diplomacy are caused by the lack of involvement of Indonesian domestic audiences in discussions related to foreign policy and Indonesian cultural diplomacy instruments. Whereas, foreign policy is an international study that requires domestic awareness and involvement, while also considering the international situation. These intermestic factors will have implications for Indonesian diplomacy, so there is a clear need for broader discussions regarding Indonesia's national interests and domestic diplomatic priorities. In other words, the process of cultural diplomacy requires efforts to involve the domestic public in understanding and informing public perceptions regarding foreign policy, as well as building interest and consolidating support for the practice of cultural diplomacy, as well as clarifying the substance and direction of Indonesia's national interests.

## CONCLUSION

Indonesia's cultural diversity, which is an asset for cultural diplomacy and strengthening Indonesia's soft power, faces major challenges related to the overall lack of coherence regarding the core objectives of Indonesian diplomacy. As a result, many of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy efforts appear reactionary, fragmented, or out of touch and not in line with achieving Indonesia's national interests. This is an important challenge for the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs because without this, Indonesia risks experiencing incoherence in the practice of cultural diplomacy which will also have implications for the widening disconnect between its domestic political goals and foreign policy, which will ultimately have implications for its international reputation, soft power, and Indonesia's diplomatic influence. Another big challenge is related to resources in carrying out Indonesia's cultural diplomacy function, which is seen as having borne the brunt of budget cuts for too long. In this context, sustainable funding and creative steps that support the development of

cultural diplomacy will help in efforts to advance Indonesia's multidimensional interests abroad accurately and effectively.

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