

## **DIPLOMACY IN AZERBAIJAN: THE UTILISATION OF CULTURE IN INDONESIA'S DIPLOMACY PRACTICE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The utilisation of culture as a dominant tool in Indonesia's diplomacy creates an identity that Indonesia as an archipelago country has diverse cultures within its nation. The cultural performances are also conducted dominantly by Indonesia worldwide instead of other tools of diplomacy including in Azerbaijan which is conducted about 6-10 times a year. This study aims to explain the reason behind Indonesia utilising culture dominantly in diplomacy practice in Azerbaijan. This paper begins by examining the reason why and ends by comparing and exploring culture, tourism and peace values as dominant tools in Indonesian diplomacy practices. This study employs a mixed-method exploratory sequential where content analysis focusing on 'Indonesia's cultural diplomacy' especially through cultural performances worldwide conducted. It concludes that Indonesia has been utilise culture as a tool of diplomacy practice dominated to other tools due to some reasons Indonesia is the biggest archipelago country with thousands of cultures on every island; Indonesia wants to maintain cultural diversity as its identity worldwide; Indonesia holds an "independent and active" foreign policy which stands as a non-align country. Therefore, using cultural diplomacy as part of soft power is the best means to expand its relations with other countries and shape its international image; as a culturally diverse country, Indonesia believes that the value of its culture has strong relations to the tourism sector, peace, and even economic value as part of its national pillar. On the other hand, Indonesia's embassy in Azerbaijan is counted as young; therefore, building a trust rooted in cultural diplomacy is an essential thing to develop both countries' relations.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, Culture, Diplomacy Practice, Indonesia, Utilisation

### **INTRODUCTION**

Despite the fact that Indonesia and Azerbaijan have diplomatic ties dating back to 1992, the Azerbaijani embassy in Indonesia opened its doors in 2005, while the Indonesian embassy in Azerbaijan opened its doors in 2010. However, the appointment of Mr. Prayono Aliyanto as the designated official was the first time the Indonesian ambassador to Azerbaijan took office, on December 21, 2011. One of the causes of the lack of awareness between the people of Indonesia and Azerbaijan regarding their respective cultures, existence, and even their physical locations, is their almost 8000-kilometer distance from one another and the lack of direct flights. In this case, culture is

known as the easiest tool in diplomacy to introduce one country to another country so that trust can be built between countries (Kessler, 2020).

The lack of acknowledgement of Indonesia among Azerbaijanis eventually became the driving factor behind the establishment of Indonesian diplomatic activity in Azerbaijan through the use of culture, which was far more dominating than other diplomatic weapons such as politics or economics. This is based on the significant movement of Indonesia's second ambassador to Azerbaijan since 2017, who engaged in cultural diplomacy by giving lectures on Indonesian culture in Azerbaijani educational institutions, performing Indonesian cultural performances in several regions of Azerbaijan, and holding large exhibitions. Annual mixed with economic promotion in Baku. However, the Indonesian cultural diplomacy movement in Azerbaijan only lasted for three years due to the Covid-19 pandemic which limited the diplomatic movement that had been built. Ultimately, as COVID-19 subsided, Indonesia, through its representatives in Baku, resumed the introduction of Indonesian culture in Azerbaijan, with the movement beginning in 2022. This was accomplished through Indonesian arts and culture performances, which were held 6-10 times per year, far outnumbering economic diplomacy through the annual Business Forum, which is held only 1-2 times per year.

In this case, Indonesia, known as an archipelago country with hundreds of cultures ranging from Sabang to Merauke, has finally established its own distinct identity, which has become the primary instrument in the process of promoting this culture. The bulk of Indonesian cultures represented in diplomacy are those with peace ideals, such as Pencak Silat, Saman Dance, and the Angklung musical instrument. In contrast, cultural events in Azerbaijan are frequently followed by unique booth displays featuring intriguing tourist destinations and actual commercial prospects. This research aims to explore the reasons behind culture being the dominant tool in Indonesia's diplomatic actions in Azerbaijan by comparing it with other fields as a diplomatic tool including tourism, economics and existing peace values. This research was carried out due to the fact that no similar research had been found, and the lack of previous research related to Indonesian cultural diplomacy in Azerbaijan became the main novelty in this research.

## **METHOD**

The research method applied by the author when conducting this research is a mixed research design that combines qualitative and quantitative data in an exploratory sequential type in a mixed-method research design which is a model that can be characterised involves gathering qualitative data first and then reinforcing it with quantitative data in order to address research questions or research objectives that have been defined before the research process takes place. In order to answer the research question specified for a specific research study, the researcher gather or analyse both narrative and numerical data, which is typical for qualitative research and common for quantitative research. For instance, in order to obtain a variety of data, researcher will utilise open-ended interview questions to gather narrative, or qualitative, data, and closed-ended survey questions to gather quantitative, or numerical, data (Williams, 2017). The purpose of this research model is to strengthen the results of qualitative data analysis that have been obtained with quantitative data in answering research questions until the existing research objectives are achieved.

Applying this method, the author will obtain descriptive data in the form of verbal or written sentences as well as visual behaviour, both images or videos and numerical data simultaneously. This data can be obtained from primary and secondary data, where primary data was carried out through interview techniques which the author conducted directly with trusted sources to obtain qualitative data, as well as by using a questionnaire to obtain quantitative data. The secondary data in this research was obtained from official documents, personal documentation, field notes, videos, photos, and even interview scripts due to the fact that basically, the data in this research will refer to data that is numerical and non-numerical at the same time. On the other hand, the qualitative research approach will draw conclusions from an inductive mind-set that can be obtained from existing problems, while quantitative research will draw conclusions using a rational deductive mind-set so that in this research more mature conclusions can be produced by combining the two methods.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

### **Cultural Diplomacy and Tourist**

Culture is a part of identity so that it can distinguish one country from another, which is also a convenience for interacting and getting acquainted (McIntosh et al., 2002). Through collaboration with other nations and non-governmental organisations on a regional and global scale, Indonesia may leverage cultural tourism as a diplomatic weapon to promote Indonesian travel (Prabhawati, 2018). In this instance, Indonesia as a nation wealthy in cultural diversity consistently emphasises the distinctiveness of its identity in all of its diplomatic endeavours to bolster that identity. In practice, the Indonesian government has begun to incorporate cultural values into the world of tourism because of the interrelated goals and values in it. This is shown by the existence of the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism which has expanded its field to become the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy which includes the cultural field since 2019 (Kemenparekraf, 2019). Thus, tourism diplomacy carried out by Indonesia including tourism spots for foreign tourists is always associated with Indonesian culture such as the existence of Indonesian cultural performances in the local area as well as through the provision and sale of goods or food typical of the region. Furthermore, the introduction of Indonesia to foreign communities is carried out in the fields of tourism and culture at the same time and has a balanced portion.

The more familiar people are with a country's culture, the stronger the trust they have to visit the country or meet its citizens in person (Hunter, 2010). This sense of trust can ultimately convince people to recommend their closest family or relatives to visit the country. In this case, the more widespread the introduction of Indonesian culture, the more the number of foreign tourists visiting Indonesia will increase, which is also proof of the high trust of foreigners in Indonesia from all aspects including its natural beauty and the uniqueness of its culture. On the one hand, cultural values in Indonesia have become a basic symbol in each region because of the diversity that exists where it is also caused by Indonesian people who are very diverse in terms of race, skin colour, language, or beliefs from one region to another even though in the same country, Indonesia (Sulistiyowati, 2021). On the other hand, these diverse cultural values are the key to attracting foreign tourists to visit the regions of Indonesia. The following table

demonstrates the annual increase in international visitors to Indonesia particularly since COVID-19 (BPS, 2023).

#### **Tourist Visit Indonesia in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023**

<b>Continent</b>	<b>2020 (Pra-Covid-19)</b>	<b>2021 (Covid-19)</b>	<b>2022 (Post Covid-19)</b>	<b>2023 (Post Covid-19)</b>
<b>ASEAN</b>	1,521,447	528,226	2,408,098	4,248,750
<b>Other Asian</b>	1,592,037	904,841	1,426,388	2,982,663
<b>Middle East</b>	49,781	5,639	81,834	181,558
<b>Europe</b>	441,179	55,906	960,410	2,000,559
<b>USA</b>	134,072	25,073	260,095	566,883
<b>Australia</b>	256,291	3,196	655,370	1,431,177
<b>New Zealand</b>	19,947	482	44,125	116,603
<b>Oceania</b>	297,786	35,504	722,524	1,625,760
<b>Africa</b>	16,621	2,341	29,682	71,652
<b>Grand Total</b>	4,052,923	1,557,530	5,889,031	11,677,825

Table 1: Tourist Visit Indonesia

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023

According to the table above, it can be seen that tourists from abroad continue to increase every year in Indonesia except during COVID-19 due to social and flight restrictions. At the beginning of COVID-19, the total number of foreign tourists in Indonesia was 4,052,923, much different from when COVID-19 was widespread and there were social restrictions which were only 1,557,530. As for COVID-19, the total number of foreign tourists in Indonesia in 2022 was 5,889,031 then doubled in 2023, which were 11,677,825. This proves that Indonesia is increasingly recognised by the foreign community as well as the interest of the community which is also increasingly widespread where this happens because of the interest they have in visiting Indonesia directly. On the other hand, the majority of foreign tourists after COVID-19 in 2023 in Indonesia come from the ASEAN region with a total of 4,248,750 and the minority of tourists are citizens of the African region with a total of 71,652 tourists.

Ecotourism activities that attract numerous tourists have contributed foreign exchange to the country and have also opened up employment opportunities for the

surrounding community. The community not only gets an occupation and increases income, however can also create a new occupation that supports the standard of living and improves the welfare of the community (Utami & Mardiana, 2017). In this case, Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy of Indonesia, Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno said in his speech during UN General Assembly that Indonesia being a world reference in handling the COVID-19 pandemic and the success in reviving the tourism sector after two years of being hit by the pandemic which is very much related to the values of Indonesian tradition and culture which continue to be shown in every tourism sector (Kemenparekraf, 2022). This is in line with what happens on one of the most renowned islands for foreign tourists, Bali Island, where Balinese culture is thick and continues to be empowered until presently continues to be shown to foreign tourists to attract their attention (Picard, 2012). This is also one of the proofs that foreign tourists select Bali Island as their main destination not only because of its beaches however also because of the Balinese culture that is inherent and still maintained to this day. Due to the fact that basically, there are far more beautiful islands or tourist spots in Indonesia than in Bali (Kemenparekraf, 2021) such as Lombok, Papua, Sumatra and numerous more however there are no performances and freedom for foreign tourists as in Bali.

### **Cultural Diplomacy and Peace**

Through the five pillars of the Republic of Indonesia, it can be clearly seen that Indonesians are required to practice religion as part of the implementation of the first principle of "Belief in One God". In this case, there are six religions officially recognised by the Indonesian people through state regulations including Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism, all of which teach their adherents to reside in peace and harmony and uphold other good values. The value of peace as an Indonesian culture is strengthened by the third Precept which states "Indonesian Unity" where the cultural diversity of Indonesian society is not a barrier to harmony among them. There is also the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia which condemns colonialism in the world because it is not in accordance with humanity and justice. Through the basis of the Indonesian state, Indonesian cultures are ultimately based on the principle of peace with the main goal of uniting Indonesian people who different identities in each province have so that they can be united with one state identity called Indonesia.

Johan Galtung offers two definitions of peace, one is the absence or minimization of all forms of violence, and the other is peaceful disagreement that doesn't include violence (Webel & Galtung, 2007). In this case, culture as part of soft diplomacy that is light, fun, and easy to attract people without violence is in line with Indonesia's pillar value which is peace. The positive structural peace programme, which aims to remove racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice based on socioeconomic factors and replace it with a sense of security and economic fairness, is another way that Indonesia actively contributes to global peace (Jondar et al., 2022). In addition, there is a correlation between cultural peace and social values however, to objective sociocultural elements values are the foundation for building a culture of peace (Basabe & Valencia, 2007). On the other hand, cultures that are not accustomed to coexisting with other cultural differences can also lead to conflicts that contradict the value of peace itself. Thus, the existence of Indonesia as a country that has hundreds of cultures, ethnicities and languages as well as numerous mixed marriages is the cause of the emergence of harmony between communities despite different cultures.

Apart from the Indonesian people themselves, there is also a relationship between civilians and the military in Indonesia which also has a great influence on Indonesian social as well as cultural values. Indonesia's social and cultural values, which are well known for their hospitality to foreigners from abroad, could be tarnished if there is news or events that contrast with those on the ground. This can happen if civil-military relations again experience misalignment in contemplating, leading to violence. The existence of such disputes can threaten Indonesia's cultural security, which can hamper the relationships that Indonesia will or has established with foreign countries. A country will consider numerous things, especially in terms of security if it is going to cooperate with other countries. This happens to avoid any losses that can be obtained by the country if it cooperates with other countries that do not have a high level of security whether in terms of traditional security, or non-traditional security.

The differences that exist also have an attachment to a country's foreign policy, where countries that have achieved a democratic system and have been free from the crisis stage will focus their country's discussion on controlling existing democracy. Meanwhile, countries that have not reached this point will focus on things that can achieve state democracy, one of which is the existence of civil-military relations

(Setiawan et al., 2013). In other words, the military in countries with high levels of democracy will have power under civil society. However, for countries that are still in crisis, civil society will assume that the dominance of the military in politics is a threat to a democratic state as happened in Indonesia during the New Order era.

It has correlation when countries utilise cultural diplomacy as a recognition tool, they may find commonalities or differences that they can reside with one another, which can foster collaboration. There won't be any disagreements as long as nations cooperate since maintaining peace is an unavoidable goal. In order to improve cultural links and foster peace between the two nations, Indonesia conducted cultural diplomacy in the Philippines, where it discovered historical parallels between the two nations' characters (Kemlu, 2023). This is ultimately one of the reasons why Indonesia uses culture as the main tool in the practice of diplomacy because apart from being far from violence, Indonesian culture is closely related to the value of peace, which is the main paramount point in realising a positive image in the international world so as to strengthen cooperation between countries.

### **Cultural Diplomacy and Economy**

Classical economists utilised culture to assess a country's economy because it embodies local community values as well as due to the fact that culture is essentially something that people are born with since it is hard to alter and depreciates slowly (Guiso et al., 2006). By no means does a concern for the financial elements of cultural policy indicate that art and culture must only be conceptualised from an economic perspective; rather, it implies that cultural value must be created in society in tandem with the production of economic value in the economy in all its forms (Throsby, 2009). Each nation's culture, which is distinctive in its own right, may pique the attention of visitors, encouraging them to learn more about the country and study it. This, in turn, has an extensive influence on the nation's economy because as more outsiders obtain interested in the country's culture, they will begin to visit the country, generating an increasing amount of revenue for the country's economy, particularly in tourism and other creative sectors. On the other hand, the Government of Ireland also mention that creative industries increase rivalry, efficiency, sustainable growth, labour, and prospects for export (Government of Ireland, 2024). It has a correlation with what is happening in South

Korea which is Korean popular culture can have ramifications in numerous areas, including politics and the pursuit of significant financial gains from a variety of industries that are successfully marketed abroad. It is one of the cultural diplomacy strategies employed by South Korea to further national interests (Azzahra, 2022).

In addition to the connection to the tourism sector and peace symbols, cultural diplomacy also has a connection to the economic field. In this case, the discussion about culture and economy means that it will also be closely related to the world of social media, especially in the era of globalisation where technology is getting more sophisticated every time (Fuchs, 2015). Social media in terms of cultural diplomacy in this case becomes one of the tools to promote a country's culture easily and with a very wide range where promotion and introduction of culture no longer require to always be done directly. Nevertheless, live cultural performances are still being carried out because of the satisfaction of culture lovers to witness and experience the arts and culture directly. Furthermore, cultural promotion through social media can be a bridge to obtain additional income through social media platforms such as through YouTube, Instagram, and Webpage and so on which can indirectly increase the economic income of a country. On the other hand, the promotion of culture through social media also makes the creative industry wider and more widely spread around the world (Romdonny & Maulany, 2019). In addition, the IFC mentions that the creative industry considered as one of the fastest-growing industries globally and it has the potential to contribute 10% of the world GDP by 2030 (IFC, 2024).

At economically and statistically relevant levels, cultural centres have a considerable favourable impact on both the export and import of goods as well as commodities. Furthermore, cultural institutions have a more significant role in creating connections and enhancing knowledge about the countries of destination, which facilitates increased investment patterns in that area (Demir & Im, 2020). In this case, the government can cooperate directly with cultural institutions to further strengthen the foundation in conducting cultural diplomacy. Thus, cultural diplomacy can be carried out optimally and can attract a wider foreign community so that the country's economic improvement can also be well obtained annually. Indonesia is no exception, as it sends Indonesian cultural actors to cooperate with Indonesian embassies abroad in order to strengthen cultural diplomacy in other countries. This is done in various forms such as

opening Indonesian cultural learning classes abroad, teaching Indonesian citizens so that they can be displayed simultaneously, or providing regular work contracts every time there are social and cultural events abroad to display and introduce Indonesian culture abroad directly.

In Indonesia itself, culture, tourism and the creative economy has basically become a unified field that is interconnected because it has the same main goal. The fundamental thing about this is that the ministry responsible for these three things is the same ministry. Efforts to improve the creative economy and culture have been made, one of which is the initiation of the Friends of Creative Economy (FCE) every year since 2018 (KEMLU, 2023). In this case, the dissemination and introduction of Indonesian culture through social media is mostly carried out by Indonesian people who are teenagers or commonly referred to as Gen Z due to the rise of social media which began during Gen Z's youth. On the other hand, according to analysis (IDN Research Institute, 2024), social, cultural, and economic issues are Gen Z's favourites in Indonesia in particular, which means that those who utilise social media to engage in cultural diplomacy for profit are typically found among them.

There are two ways to observe the link between culture and development, either as the primary driver of change or as the object of change. Culture serves as the primary catalyst for alter because it creates the material conditions through the production of symbols and behaviours and due to the fact that it can inspire people to rebuild their material environments and institutional structures which in this case, the individual will demonstrate their creative response (Hennida et al., 2017). In this case, Indonesia through its symbolic cultures has been exporting its culture in the form of objects to other countries where it adds income to the country's foreign exchange. The cultural goods exported abroad consist of items that are commonly used daily or for hobbies and performances such as Indonesian musical instruments and traditional clothing. Indonesian traditional musical instruments that have been recognised by UNESCO as cultural heritage in the field of humanity have been successfully exported to South Korea consisting of 14 instruments (Herry, 2023). In addition, Indonesia exported musical instruments as much as 23 thousand USD in 2022 with a total export destination to 94 countries where the USA, Japan, China, Germany and the Netherlands are the 5 largest export destination countries for Indonesian musical instruments (Darmawan, 2023).

Furthermore, Batik as a traditional Indonesian clothing that reflects culture which has also been recognised as a world cultural heritage by UNESCO, is the most superior cultural export item in terms of traditional clothing. The export value of Indonesian batik in 2023 reached USD 25.31 million or around IDR 392.74 billion with a volume of 987.71 thousand kilograms while the United States is the largest Batik export destination country compared to other countries (Mutiara, 2023). In its diplomacy to increase exports and Batik enthusiasts as a traditional culture in Japan, Indonesia made several efforts including holding a cultural activity called Batik Nusantara, always wearing Batik clothes at every formal and informal event between countries, and holding the Future Leader Camp Batik Festival event in Kyoto in collaboration between the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Japan (Wulan Destriyani & Andriyani, 2020).

Based on the data above, it can be analysed that cultural diplomacy has a relationship with the economic field where cultural values can increase Indonesia's income both in terms of the creative economy or in the form of cultural goods such as traditional musical instruments and traditional clothing such as Batik, which the export value is classified as non-oil and gas products. According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Trade (BKPerdag, 2023), Indonesia's largest export value is in non-oil and gas products, which also includes goods with cultural value. By utilising the power of culture as a diplomatic tool, Indonesia can create a strong image, improve and balance economic, political and social relations with other countries, and strengthen its national resilience in the face of global dynamics (Saebani, 2023).

Thus, the formation of a positive image of the country in the international world through the introduction of cultural diplomacy that continues to strengthen and expand its reach can have a considerable effect on the country's economy. This happens because the trust that has been gained from other countries can open a much easier way to obtain other great opportunities, especially in terms of cooperation. The introduction of Indonesian culture abroad basically acts as a root to build trust between countries, however if trust and cooperation have been established, cultural diplomacy will be carried out even stronger so that the trust and positive image of the country will also be stronger. As for the end, strong cultural diplomacy can extend to other fields including the field of education where countries that have a tight knit relation can establish cooperation in the

form of providing scholarships for schools or colleges for the Indonesian people in particular. This is the case between Indonesia and Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt, Morocco and Sudan, where the proximity between these countries ultimately provides an opportunity for Indonesia to cooperate in the field of education until the local government provides special scholarships for hundreds of Indonesian students to study in their country.

On the other hand, in countries that are still relatively new to opening diplomatic relations with Indonesia, cultural diplomacy will be prioritised over diplomacy in other fields to build a positive image and trust of Indonesia in the country. This is done as an effort to strengthen the roots of trust so that diplomacy in other fields such as economic and social can be carried out much more easily over time. The diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Azerbaijan have been established for 31 years in 2023, however the embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Baku was only opened in 2011, so the diplomacy between the two countries has not been carried out as much as possible before that. In other words, cultural diplomacy conducted directly by Indonesia in Azerbaijan has only commenced in 2011 or for the past 12 years. Thus, Indonesia's cultural diplomacy in Azerbaijan must be strengthened more in order to fulfil its national interests, particularly in Azerbaijan. On the other hand, Indonesia won The Best Destination Promotion award at the Azerbaijan International Travel and Tourism Fair 2016, which can be the beginning of Indonesia's image building in Azerbaijan.

## **CONCLUSION**

In light of the evidence mentioned above, this article pointed a crystal results that Indonesia has been using culture as a tool of diplomacy practice dominant in Azerbaijan due to some reasons:

- 1) Indonesia is the biggest archipelago country with thousands of cultures in every island
- 2) Indonesia wants to maintain cultural diversity as its identity worldwide
- 3) Indonesia hold an “independent and active” foreign policy which stands as a non-align country. Therefore, using cultural diplomacy as part of soft power is the best means to expand its relations to other countries and shape its international image.
- 4) As a culturally diverse country, Indonesia believes that the value of its culture has strong relations to the tourism sector, peace, and even economic value as part of its national pillar.

- 5) Indonesia's embassy in Azerbaijan counted as a young, therefore, building a trust rooted in cultural diplomacy is an essential thing to developing both countries' relations.

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