

# Promoting a Better Image through Culture: The Case of Turkey's Cultural Diplomacy towards Indonesia

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## **Abstract**

This study attempts to reveal cultural diplomacy, which Turkey implements towards Indonesia. The 'golden period' of Turkey is from 2007 until 2013. After that, the public diplomacy of Turkey was not effective as before, and it was fallen dramatically. The country's instability caused by the political turmoil within the country also influences the growth of international isolation. With these based on the problem that influences its image, Turkey needs to prove a different and better image to promote itself abroad. Public perceptions can be shaped and controlled by doing cultural diplomacy that acts as soft power. Having one thing in common as a country with a Muslim population as the majority, Turkey has a special place in the hearts of the Indonesian people. Based on the theory of cultural diplomacy by Milton C. Cummings, the authors drew two arguments. First, Turkey's Cultural diplomacy towards Indonesia is done not only by state actors (officially by the government) but also by non-state actors such as individuals and companies. Second, cultural diplomacy carried out by Turkey towards Indonesia is through all aspects of the needs of the Indonesian people, such as films, fashion, news, music, food, and education.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Diplomacy, Indonesia, Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, Turkey*

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini mencoba mengungkap diplomasi budaya yang dilakukan Turki terhadap Indonesia. 'Masa emas' Turki adalah dari tahun 2007 hingga 2013, karena setelah itu diplomasi publik Turki tidak efektif seperti sebelumnya dan merosot drastis. Ketidakstabilan negara yang disebabkan oleh gejolak politik di dalam negeri turut mempengaruhi tumbuhnya isolasi internasional. Berdasarkan permasalahan yang mempengaruhi citra negaranya, Turki perlu membuktikan citra yang berbeda dan lebih baik untuk mempromosikan dirinya di luar negeri. Persepsi masyarakat dapat dibentuk dan dikendalikan dengan melakukan diplomasi budaya yang bersifat *soft power* (kekuasaan lunak). Memiliki satu kesamaan sebagai negara yang mayoritas penduduknya beragama Islam, Turki memiliki tempat tersendiri di hati masyarakat Indonesia. Berdasarkan teori diplomasi budaya oleh Milton C. Cummings, penulis menarik dua argumen. Pertama, diplomasi Kebudayaan Turki terhadap Indonesia tidak hanya dilakukan oleh aktor negara (resmi oleh pemerintah) tetapi juga dilakukan oleh aktor non negara seperti individu dan perusahaan. Kedua, diplomasi budaya yang dilakukan Turki terhadap Indonesia melalui segala aspek kebutuhan masyarakat Indonesia. Yakni film, fashion, berita, musik, makanan, dan pendidikan.

**Kata Kunci:** *Diplomasi Budaya, Diplomasi Publik, Indonesia, Kekuasaan Lunak, Turki*

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## INTRODUCTION

Turkey, for the first time, established diplomatic relations with Indonesia in 1950. However, if seen from its long history, Turkey has been a strategic partner at the center of the world Islamic Empire since the days of the Ottoman Empire long before the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia was formed.

Having one thing in common as a country with a Muslim population as the majority, Turkey has a special place in the hearts of the Indonesian people. Turkey is one of the most popular countries to visit after Saudi Arabia by Muslims in Indonesia. Turkey has a solid historical heritage, special local food, and culture that attracts visitors to Turkey. Turkey and Indonesia are tourist-oriented

countries. In this case, Turkey can share with Indonesia its phenomenal experience in this industry. Turkey carries out its cultural diplomacy well, including with Indonesia. In 2018, based on data from the World Tourism Organization, Turkey became the top 6 most visited countries globally, with a total number of visitors reaching 46 million that year (World Tourism Organization, 2019).

Turkey also has experience regarding health care tourism that can be shared with Indonesia. Based on the data, in 2013, Turkey had about 47 Joint Commission International (JCI) accredited hospitals, and it is known as “one of the highest-ranking countries

in terms of the number of JCI-accredited healthcare facilities” (Precidency of the Republic Turkey Investment Office, 2013).

Turkey and Indonesia can give benefit each other in terms of geography and trade. Given Indonesia’s geostrategic position, Turkey can use Indonesia’s position to reach better relation to the Pacific region. In turn, Indonesia can use Turkey as its gateway to promote its exports to countries in the Middle East and Europe.

Based on the background above, the research problem discussed in this journal is: ‘How does Turkey’s Implementation of its Cultural Diplomacy toward Indonesia?’



Figure 1. Map of Asia (<https://www.mapsofworld.com/asia/>)

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the authors used the descriptive method by explaining how things happen or accurately describing existing data. In this study, the authors will explain the theory of cultural diplomacy and how Turkey implements cultural diplomacy towards Indonesia. The data source used was secondary data. These materials were collected from a literature study obtained from online and printed documents related to the cultural diplomacy of Turkey towards Indonesia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In conducting research based on a literature study, the authors used previous research that discussed the implementation of Turkish public diplomacy in Indonesia because the previous studies could support the authors' data. Therefore, the authors chose three academic journals and theses to discuss the same issue.

The first literature used by the authors was *Turkish Gastro diplomacy by Zahra Turkish Ice Cream in Indonesia, in Indonesian Perspective*, volume 4, number 1, published in 2019, by Anastasia Claudia Sinaga and Rudi Sukandar. They explained how public diplomacy is not only carried out by state actors, but at this time, it can

be carried out by non-state actors. Anastasia and Rudi focus on the case of Zahra Turkish Ice Cream, a Turkish company that promotes Turkish ice cream. Anastasia and Rudi categorized food promotion from one country to another as part of cultural promotion. Gastro diplomacy or culinary diplomacy is one type of cultural diplomacy and a subset of public diplomacy (Anastasia Claudia Sinaga & Rudi Sukandar, 2019).

In a postgraduate thesis entitled *PASIAD as Turkish Soft Power in Indonesia*, published in 2015, Novian Uticha Sally and Dr. Samsu Rizal Panggabean, M.Sc from the Department of International Relations, Gadjah Mada University, explained that PASIAD, as a foreign private school from Turkey, could develop rapidly in Indonesia and its role in Indonesian Turkish relations. Although not an official institution from the Turkish government, PASIAD, as a private organization, can implement its educational curriculum by incorporating many Turkish values and cultures (Novian Uticha Sally & Dr. Samsu Rizal Panggabean, 2015). The role of PASIAD in various dimensions had created a connection and bondage that had made cooperation between Indonesia and Turkey stable, until

before the Turkish government dissolved this organization and designated it as a banned organization in 2016.

In 2016, an undergraduate thesis was written by Tisna Sulegar, from the International Relations study program, Padjajaran University, also examined the same theme, PASIAD Public Diplomacy as a form of Turkish Soft Power in Indonesia. Tisna explained that even though PASIAD is a private organization, as an organization born from Turkish activists with a Turkish cultural background, PASIAD certainly has thick roots (Tisna Sulegar, 2016).

The two theses and a journal above have contributed to explaining Turkish cultural diplomacy's implementation towards Indonesia. Thus, it can be said that the three works of literature of this study discuss education and food as cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, and Turkish soft power. However, the authors found that cultural diplomacy is not only through education and food in this study. Also through the Turkish series, radio and music, online media, and fashion. Therefore, this research is expected to provide new perspectives and broader insights by analyzing the implementation

of Turkish cultural diplomacy in Indonesia.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Cultural Diplomacy Theory

According to Milton C. Cummings, an American political scientist and author, cultural diplomacy is exchanging ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their people to foster mutual understanding (Cummings, 2009).

Cultural diplomacy generally can be seen from its concept and practice as the action of a country when its culture supports its foreign policy goals. In recent years, foreign policy development by using a country's culture has become an interesting trend. It is considered an effective way to increase mutual understanding between countries, combat stereotypes, and improve reputation and relationships (Mark, 2009). Rather than the political level, performing arts and visuals have more power to engage the citizens personally (Grincheva, U.S. Arts and Cultural Diplomacy: Post-Cold War Decline and the Twenty-First Century Debate, 2010).

The term of cultural diplomacy often confused with public diplomacy and soft power. According to Joseph S. Nye, an American

Political Scientist, the three main resources of a country's soft power can be explained: first, culture (where the culture in the places can attract other people's interest). Second, political values (the values should be widely accepted and implemented by people). Third, foreign policies (the policies should be seen as legitimate and having moral authority) (Nye, 2008).

Among many of the emerging powers, Turkey is one of the countries that use public diplomacy. The 'golden period' of Turkey is from 2007 until 2013. After that, the public diplomacy of Turkey was not effective as before, and it was fallen dramatically. The domestic problem affects the global image that Turkey has. The country's instability caused by the political turmoil within the country also influences the growth of international isolation. With these based on the problem that influences its image, Turkey needs to prove a different and better image to promote itself abroad. Turkey's old image as a model of democracy in a Muslim state should be shifted more to focus on the Turkish lifestyle, cultural appeal, and worldview. The cultural diplomacy that accentuates popular culture and focuses on entertaining, Turkey uses the television broadcast to project and promote its movies to

foreign publics. These are not only to entertain, but with the movie itself, Turkey can promote its language, food, culture, music, fashion and build the image of the citizens and the country (SETA Foundation, 2019).

## DISCUSSION

- *Turkey's Cultural Diplomacy toward Indonesia through Turkish Series*

Based on the data in 2014, Turkish TV was taking over the world. The United States was the first highest-ranking, following Turkey as the second-highest ranking of television drama in 2014. The export revenue of Turkish television drama in 2014 was estimated at \$200 million. In the same year, the viewers of the Turkish series worldwide combined approximately reached 400 million viewers. The viewers are in the Middle East and across North Africa, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Scandinavia, and Latin America as new markets of the Turkish series (SETA Foundation, 2019).

In 2014, the Turkish series also already reached Indonesia and became one of people's favorite series. There are many reasons why Turkish dramas were in great demand in Indonesia. First, from a visual point of view, actors and actresses from

Turkey seem to have a combination of European, Asian and Middle Eastern faces. Second, Turkey also has several traditions that are similar to Indonesia. Perhaps one reason is that Indonesia and Turkey also have a majority Muslim population, so the element of closeness in Turkish drama can be a special attraction for Indonesian people. Third, even though it has hundreds to thousands of episodes, Turkish dramas are still not boring to watch. Each episode presents a sense of curiosity about the continuation of the episode. Fourth, Turkish dramas have many unpredictable storylines (brilio.net, 2019).

One Turkish series that aired in Indonesia in 2015 was *Shehrazat 1001 Malam* (English: 1001 Nights - Turkish: Binbir Gece). Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM) head, Mehmet Büyükekşi, said that Turkey plans to reach \$2 billion from exporting cultural products by 2023 (hurriyetdailynews.com, 2014).



**Figure 2.** Poster of *Shehrazat 1001 Malam*, Turkish series that aired in Indonesia (<https://www.fimela.com/news-entertainment/read/2616767/5-serial-turki-paling-fenomenal-di-indonesia>)

According to Dr. Arzu Ozturkmen, who teaches oral history at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkish people are very much against their series called soap operas. Turkey series are not soap operas, telenovelas, or period dramas. Turkey series are *Dizi*. *Dizi* means “genre in progress” with a unique storyline, supporting music and space (theguardian.com, 2019).

Table 1. List of Turkish series broadcasted on television stations in Indonesia from 2015 – 2017

No	Title in English	Title in Turkish	Television Channel	Year
1	Resurrection: Ertuğrul	Diriliş: Ertuğrul	Trans7	2015
2	Elif	Elif	SCTV	2015
3	Magnificent Century	Muhtesem Yüzyil	ANTV	2015
4	1001 Nights	Binbir Gece	ANTV	2015

No	Title in English	Title in Turkish	Television Channel	Year
5	Cherry Season	Kiraz Mevsimi	Trans TV	2015
6	Playing Nanny	Hayatimin Rolu	RCTI	2015
7	Black Money Love	Kara Para Aşk	ANTV	2015
8	Peace Street	Huzur Sokağı	RCTI	2015
9	Child Bride	Küçük Gelin	SCTV	2015
10	What is the Fatmagul's Fault?	Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?	ANTV	2016
11	Relationship Status: Complicated	İlişki Durumu: Karışık	SCTV	2016
12	Never Let Go	Asla Vazgeçme	ANTV	2016
13	Broken Pieces	Paramparça	ANTV	2016
14	That is My Life	O Hayat Benim	ANTV	2016
15	A Part of Me	Kaderimin Yazıldığı Gün	ANTV	2016
16	Orphan Flowers	Kırgın Çiçekler	ANTV	2016
17	Magnificent Century	Muhteşem Yüzyıl	SCTV	2016
18	Never Let Go (Season 2)	Asla Vazgeçme (Season 2)	TV ONE	2017
19	That is My Life (Season 2)	O Hayat Benim (Season 2)	TV ONE	2017
20	Orphan Flowers (Season 2)	Kırgın Çiçekler (Season 2)	TV ONE	2017
21	Torn Apart	Eve Donus	TV ONE	2017
22	Winter Sun	Kis Gunesi	TV ONE	2017
23	Queen of The Night	Gecenin Kralicesi	TV ONE	2017
24	Endless Love	Kara Sevda	TV ONE	2017
25	North South	Kuzey Guney	Fmn	2017
26	Lady Dila	Dila Hanim	Fmn	2017
27	Secrets	Kayip	Fmn	2017

(source: Indonesian Turkish Friends, 2017)



In 2020, because the global pandemic COVID-19 forces people to stay indoors, online platforms have become one way to kill boredom at home. As reported by Anadolu Agency, Indonesians were hooking for Turkish movies as their preference to accompany their stay at home. *Fetih 1453* and *Sultan Abdul Hamid II* are examples of Turkish movies and TV series that people watch (Idrus, 2020).

- **Turkey's Cultural Diplomacy toward Indonesia through Radio and Music**

One of the biggest radio corporations in Turkey is The Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT). It plays a central role in cultural diplomacy, with its international broadcasting as an effective tool to deliver messages. TRT world launched in 2015 to reach broader scope by using the English language for its news platform. Providing this platform helps Turkey promote its image to the world without a language barrier (SETA Foundation, 2019). In addition, domestic and global citizens can access the website of a National Voice Radio in Turkey that shares Turkish music. The ease of enjoying Turkish music is also a great strategy for promoting

the country's language and culture (Köselerli, 2017).

According to the former Turkish Ambassador to the Republic of Indonesia, Zekeriya Akçam said that the first performance of Turkish musicians in Indonesia was in 2013. The groups are the best of the best in Turkey and perform high-quality Turkish music in Jakarta. *Allegra*, which represents modern Turkish music, and *Gul Isigi*, which represents traditional Turkish music (Aira, 2013).

- **Turkey's Cultural Diplomacy toward Indonesia through Online Media**

To follow the development of the modern era, Turkey has a big news agency that has an office in more than 45 countries worldwide and publishes news in many languages. One of them is the Indonesian language.

The Turkish news agency, Anadolu Agency, is expanding its international wing by inaugurating an Indonesian-language news service in Jakarta in 2017. Since its establishment in 1920, the Anadolu Agency has been present in various languages. Anadolu Agency is the only international news agency broadcast in Indonesia.

Deputy Director-General Mustafa Ozkaya said journalism has the power to build public opinion and bring about change. Indonesia is Anadolu Agency's priority country. With more than 260 million, Indonesia has an important position in the Asia Pacific (Nupus, 2017).

In 2007, the Turkish government established a worldwide non-profit organization to promote the Turkish language and culture worldwide named the Yunus Emre Institute (YEE). Yunus Emre Institute (YEE) promotes Turkey through its history and arts, creates informational documents on cultural issues, and builds bridges between Turkey and other countries through intercultural exchange. The information can be found in its entire social media platform (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube channel, Google) (Köselerli, 2017).

- **Turkey's Cultural Diplomacy toward Indonesia through Education**

The next strategic step taken by the Turkish government was in 2012 to combine all higher education scholarships from various state institutions into one scholarship mechanism under the name Türkiye Scholarship (Turkish: Türkiye Bursları, [www.turkiyeburslari.gov](http://www.turkiyeburslari.gov).

tr). YTB , through the Türkiye Scholarship, seeks to attract international students to continue their studies in Turkey and introduce Turkish culture and language to them (Abhimanyu, 2020).

On March 31, 2020, the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Turkey, Lalu Muhammad Iqbal, shared a post on his Instagram account. He made a Skype Call with Abdullah Eren, President of YTB. Lalu Muhammad Iqbal explained his concern about the fate of the 2700 Indonesian students during the pandemic in Turkey. Abdullah Eren said that he would treat students from Indonesia who have received YTB like his own compatriots.

The Turkish government said it would increase the scholarship quota for Indonesian students in 2021. Türkiye Bursları Scholarship Advisor, Enes Efendioglu, said that 1000 Indonesian students had received YTB scholarships. Meanwhile, at this time, around 243 students are still actively studying. Efendioglu said that in 2021 the plan is to open a scholarship quota for 300 Indonesian students (Pızaro Gozalı Idrus, 2020).

- **Turkey's Cultural Diplomacy toward Indonesia through Food**

Besides Turkish ice cream, Turkish culinary that are famous throughout the world are kebabs and baklava. Kebab is a typical Turkish food containing thin slices of beef and several vegetables wrapped in tortilla skin (Alinda Putri, 2019). Baklava is a snack in the Turkish region and areas where the former Ottoman Empire was ruled. This snack consists of walnuts or pistachios chopped and sweetened (sugar or honey) wrapped in thin bread dough (Mardin Baklava, 2019).

Cultural diplomacy can be implemented officially by the government and a private company in this current era. Istanbul Kebab Turki, a kebab shop in Jakarta owned by Muhammad Mustafa, a Turkish, presents an authentic Turkish kebab with native Turkish spices. 19.9 thousand followers followed this shop on Instagram with username @istanbulkebabturki, and the video uploaded by Indonesian food vlogger Kubiler about this kebab, watched by 7.3 million people on YouTube. In addition to kebab shops established by Turkish in Indonesia, many kebab shop branches are established by Indonesian citizens

themselves. Such as Kebab Turki Baba Rafi. By relying on a kebab with a distinctive taste, Kebab Turki Baba Rafi is the largest franchise business in the world with 1300 outlets in 10 countries within 15 years of development (PT BABA RAFI ENTERPRISE, 2019). The founders of this franchise are Hendy Setiono and Nilam Sari, and they are Indonesian businesspeople.

The baklava's store with authentic Turkish flavors also can be found in Jakarta. Mardin Baklava, who claims to be the first baklava patisserie in Indonesia, followed by around 47.8 thousand followers on their Instagram account with username @mardinbaklava until January 2021. The Indonesian public's interest in Turkish culinary seems quite high. Even though the owner is not Turkish, Abdulrahman Suud, an Arab, confirms that a person should have special skills and a certificate to make baklava, so the baklava chefs in Mardin Baklava are Turkish.

Turkish culinary has become a business idea in Indonesia even though the company owner may not be Turkish. It proves that Turkish culinary has great value and opportunity for business people because Turkish cuisine can be accepted in the Indonesian tongue.

- **Turkey's Cultural Diplomacy toward Indonesia through Fashion**

Turkish fashion is slowly entering Indonesia, promoted by one of the biggest fashion companies in Turkey, called LC Waikiki. Currently, LC Waikiki already has four branches in Indonesia. The locations are Gandaria City and Lippo Mall Puri, Jakarta. As well as at Pakuwon Mall and Tunjungan Plaza, Surabaya. Even though it was founded in France, after becoming a Turkish-owned company, LC Waikiki certainly also represents the materials and clothing styles favored by the Turkish people (rintek, 2019).

Turkey is also famous for its carpets, rugs, and hijabs. One of Indonesia's most complete Turkish hijab shops is JAKIST (from Jakarta-Istanbul) in Jakarta, with followers of around 17.5 thousand people with username @hijabturki.jakist on Instagram. Turkish hijab has its special characteristics on the fabric and the motives which have attracted Indonesians to buy it. Around 400 Turkish people live in Indonesia for study, business, and mixed marriage. JAKIST is a Turkish fashion store owned by a Turkish-Indonesian couple.

Fashion consultant Franka Soeria said that Indonesian designers in modest clothes need to reflect on the best countries at selling hijab or modest clothes. The country she refers to is Turkey. Franka explained that Turkey has good sales in exporting modest clothes to various countries (Arina Yulistara, 2018).

## CONCLUSION

Indonesia and Turkey are far from a geographical point of view. However, in the sense of unity, both countries have extraordinary closeness. Several Turkish cultures have entered Indonesia through cultural diplomacy, one of which is the screening of Turkish films that have won the hearts of Indonesians. By touching viewers' hearts through Turkey's culture, cultural developments in Indonesia can receive and provide audiovisual education. The public also understands that there are many similarities in terms of humanity, ways of thinking, and getting an education in dress and manners outside of local culture. Economic conditions also determine and assist the course of cultural diplomacy. Indonesia and Turkey have similarities in culture and religion and do not forget the side of social

status, which in fact, not all levels of society can travel to experience and learn about the cultural differences of each country. Student exchange can also be interpreted as a state-sponsored trip to strengthen relations and provide opportunities for all levels of society from two countries with the potential and adequate knowledge.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The practice that Turkey has carried out in carrying out its cultural diplomacy to Indonesia has been good. Through films and visual cultural broadcasts, Turkey has introduced its ethnic groups that the Turks are Turks. Not Arabs or Europeans. Besides, the Turkish Ambassador's introduction of Turkish music in Indonesia effectively made the Indonesian people more familiar with Turkish music, both traditional and modern. However, the Turkish embassy in Indonesia as an important bridge to connect Turkey and Indonesia still not maximum to carry out its duty. Therefore, the recommendation of this research are:
2. The Turkish embassy's practice of cultural diplomacy in

Indonesia should be further enhanced by conducting an annual event.

A Visa-free is needed for Indonesian tourists to visit Turkey.

The bilateral relations between Turkey and Indonesia, strengthened by cultural diplomacy, are expected to attract Indonesian citizens to come to Turkey to study, travel, or work. Furthermore, it is hoped that visa-free Indonesian tourists who want to come to Turkey can exist long-term. Like the Turkish citizens who have a 30-day visa-free when visiting Indonesia. However, a visa is one of the important requirements and can also be an obstacle for a tourist. With the closer relationship between Turkey and Indonesia, it is hoped that there will be more convenience and openness of facilities and access for the two countries.

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