Discovering the Untapped Potential of Soft Power through Cultural Diplomacy

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Abstract

Many countries have used cultural diplomacy to approach foreign societies and achieve their government's goals. However, cultural diplomacy is often underestimated and ignored by academia, resulting in less progress in its examination than other international political phenomena in the same era. Thus, there are still opportunities to contribute to cultural diplomacy today. This study examines testimonials from alumni of the Indonesian Arts and Culture Scholarship program - student mobility initiative- to explore the goals of cultural diplomacy and its soft power potential. Testimonials from IACS alumni in a book published by the Indonesian government were coded for analysis. The analysis identified at least ten goals related to cultural diplomacy, four of which were not previously included in the arguments of the experts we studied; those are emotional closeness, reciprocal altruism, appreciation for the program, and never forgetting Indonesia. We focus on these four outcomes and explore their potential for generating soft power. The government should consider the four findings' potential as soft power to ensure long-term results.

Keywords

Introduction

Cultural diplomacy has been a valuable tool in fostering positive international relations throughout history. For example, Japan embarked on a cultural diplomacy campaign to ameliorate negative memories of the Japanese imperial era before World War II (Nakano and Zhu 2020, 873). Similarly, China conducts cultural diplomacy by establishing Confucius Institutes in various parts of the world. The Confucius Institute model involves the host universities, surrounding areas, and beyond. Hanban hosts an annual conference in Beijing, where hundreds of university presidents and vice-chancellors from all over the world convene. Additionally, they plan cultural events for nearby schools and communities. Government representatives, academics, members of the media, and corporate executives, as well as senior counsellors and consultants from various cultural organizations, such as the British Council, Goethe Institute, and Cervantes Institute, attend the conference as honorable delegates (Liu 2019, 264).

South Korea provides scholarships to foreign students through its Korean Global Scholarship program. This program allows foreigners to study in South Korea and enables them to work there after completing their studies (see further Ayhan and Snow 2021). In addition, the spread of Korean culture overseas, known as Hallyu or Korean waves, has become a significant cultural phenomenon helping promote Korean art, music, and entertainment globally (Trisni, Nasir, and Halim 2019; see also Putri and Trisni 2021). India also uses cultural diplomacy by leveraging its Bollywood film industry to showcase its rich culture, arts, and lifestyle to audiences worldwide. Bollywood films have gained immense popularity in countries like Thailand and the Philippines, making them a powerful tool for cultural diplomacy (see further Athique 2019).

Many countries, including the United States, have engaged in cultural diplomacy through exchange programs. There has been a significant focus on expanding cultural exchange programs, as they are seen as a way to promote cross-cultural understanding through personal interactions (Mills 2020, 2). The Fulbright scholarship program has been top-rated and sought after by individuals from various parts of the world. The United States offers a variety of popular programs related to cultural diplomacy.

Many countries have utilized cultural diplomacy, but it has only recently been acknowledged as an academic discipline (Grincheva 2023, 1). Cultural diplomacy remains undervalued and overlooked as a scientific subject despite its importance (Pajtinka 2014; Chandra 2016; Smith, Levitt, and Selch in Isar and Triandafyllidou 2021, 400; Kim 2017, 293; see also Kiel 2020, 1). Even with the recent proliferation of various schools of thought in international relations theory, cultural diplomacy has remained ignored (Mark 2008; see also Canales 2021; Boutabssil 2021, 209; Academy for Cultural Diplomacy 2017; see also Kolokytha 2022, 3). However, this neglect of cultural diplomacy provides an opportunity to

gain new insights into the concept and its importance (for example, Johanson et al. 2019, 397).

In international relations, it is widely recognized that cultural diplomacy has many benefits. However, the Indonesian government's arts and culture scholarship program emphasizes that cultural diplomacy can achieve additional goals that contribute significantly to a country's soft power. Soft power is now considered an essential element for a country's success, however that might be defined, in the international arena (J. S. Nye 2021; J. Nye 2019; Gallarotti 2011; Brand Finance 2020; Hayden 2017; Bunthorn 2023; Huang and Ding 2006). At the same time, cultural diplomacy can be utilized as an instrument to generate soft power.

This research focuses on the Indonesian Arts and Culture Scholarship (IACS), a program the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs offers. This research explores the different potentials of soft power that can be generated through this cultural diplomacy program. After conducting extensive research, we have identified four crucial goals of cultural diplomacy that, if fully realized, can be utilized as soft power potential for a country. Countries should take cultural diplomacy seriously, as it can serve as a crucial instrument of soft power. Therefore, they must diligently prioritize and implement cultural diplomacy to reap the benefits.

This paper begins by defining cultural diplomacy, its objectives, and soft power. It also provides an overview of the IACS program. The study findings and discussions will be presented in the following two sections. Finally, based on the study's findings, the paper provides suggestions and recommendations.

Literature Review

This section discusses the definition of cultural diplomacy, its objectives, and soft power, providing a conceptual basis for analyzing research findings.

Various Definitions of Cultural Diplomacy

No widely recognized and precise definition accurately characterizes cultural diplomacy (Grincheva 2023, 1), making the meaning of cultural diplomacy vary according to context (Kim 2017). Some scholars define cultural diplomacy in relation to foreign policy, while others focus on mutual trust. Some definitions deviate from these two focuses.

The article discusses the concept of cultural diplomacy in relation to foreign policy, referring to various definitions found in the literature. Traditionally, cultural diplomacy is considered a soft power strategy governments and international organizations use to advance their foreign policy objectives (Isar and Triandafyllidou 2021, 393). However, while cultural diplomacy is a form of soft power, it also serves political aims and functions as a foreign policy branch, enhancing global influence (Ociepka and Arendarska 2021, 6). Cultural

diplomacy has a political objective linked to foreign policy goals (Enders 2005 in Pajtinka 2014). These activities promote the state's foreign policy interests through cultural exchange with other countries (Pajtinka 2014). Cultural diplomacy is a strategic tool that governments use to achieve foreign policy objectives (Grincheva 2020, 89) by exporting cultural artifacts (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried in Indraswari 2015). In summary, a government employs its culture to conduct cultural diplomacy.

Although it does not directly relate to foreign policy, the definition provided by the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy is worth considering. This institution defines cultural diplomacy as a course of action that relies on exchanging ideas, values, traditions, and other cultural aspects. It can be used by public, private, or civil society sectors to achieve various goals, such as promoting national interests, strengthening relationships, and improving socio-cultural cooperation (Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, 2023). This definition emphasizes the importance of including non-state actors in cultural diplomacy. Unlike the definition that only acknowledges state actors, this one recognizes the existence of other actors who play a role in cultural diplomacy.

The concept of cultural diplomacy is centered around fostering mutual understanding between nations and their peoples through the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture (Cumming 2003). It promotes understanding through artistic expression, dialogue, and building trust to initiate cooperation, business, and peace (Laqueur in Goff Goff 2013; Carbone 2017). Mutual understanding is crucial in cultural diplomacy, allowing for trust and collaboration between the parties involved (Kim 2017).

Cultural diplomacy promotes cultural achievements and resources abroad (Cull 2009, 19) through values, ideas, and culture rather than using force (J. Nye 2002). This aims to persuade the target in ways that are well-accepted by them. The main objective of cultural diplomacy is to increase the country's interests by using national culture to enhance national security and standing abroad (Ang, Isar, and Mar 2015). This definition does not show any connection with foreign policy or mutual understanding. Cultural diplomacy is a national effort to facilitate cultural transmission and promote cultural resources abroad.

Cultural diplomacy is widely considered a means to achieve foreign policy objectives, as evidenced by the abovementioned definitions. This approach entails using cultural activities to engage with target audiences to effectuate foreign policy goals. However, some definitions emphasize the more fundamental objective of fostering mutual understanding and trust, which is a more practical and straightforward approach. It is worth noting that mutual understanding does not always require complete agreement on foreign policy objectives. It is crucial to understand that although various definitions offer a general understanding of cultural diplomacy activities, not all comprehensively explain the actors executing cultural diplomacy programs. Identifying and understanding the roles of the

implementing actors is essential in designing effective and impactful cultural diplomacy programs that promote intercultural understanding, enhance diplomatic relations, and foster global cooperation.

Cultural diplomacy can involve state and non-state actors who can collaborate. Although some experts believe that cultural diplomacy is entirely the responsibility of governments (Mark, 2008), others argue that states can cooperate with non-state actors (Pajtinka 2014). Although governments are often considered the main actors in cultural diplomacy because their actions reflect the culture they represent, non-state actors are becoming increasingly crucial due to globalization and technological advances. The Center for Arts and Culture suggests involving non-state actors in cultural diplomacy is necessary. According to this research, the government is considered a significant player in cultural diplomacy. However, this research also recommends involving non-state actors with cultural expertise to participate in this process. The implementation of IACS is an excellent example of a government program implemented through collaboration with non-state actors.

Defining Cultural Diplomacy Objective(s)

Cultural diplomacy has both high and straightforward goals. The former is related to a country's foreign policy, where cultural diplomacy supports its foreign policy or diplomacy (Mark 2008; 2009; Enders, Hubinger, Kurucz in Pajtinka 2014; see also Hrubý and Petru 2019, 123; see also Becard and Filho 2019, 14; Kantek, Veljanova, and Onnudottir 2021, 1; Dines 2021, 472; see also Trisni et al. 2018; 2019). Cultural diplomacy promotes economic and trade interests, improves bilateral relationships, and reduces tensions during turbulent times. It involves various actors, such as artists, academics, government officials, and cultural institutes. It aims to achieve numerous purposes, including but not limited to the ones mentioned earlier (Kolokytha 2022, 2).

Meanwhile, some experts believe that cultural diplomacy should focus on the targets, such as observing the positive changes in the targets after being exposed to the culture of a state. For instance, exposure to the cultural values of a state is expected to increase the target public's understanding of a state's fundamental values (Center for Arts and Culture 2004). Through this culture, the state hopes to win the hearts and minds of the target audience (Appel et al. 2008). Moreover, cultural diplomacy can help overcome the suspicion of targets toward official messages the state conveys, develop mutual understanding, combat ethnocentrism and stereotypes, and prevent conflict (Mark 2009). Trust can be built by developing relationships with outsiders through cultural diplomacy, and miscommunications, ignorance, and hostility can be reduced (Appel et al. 2008). Furthermore, cultural diplomacy can broaden understanding and alter viewpoints (Schneider 2009). Other goals, such as contacting overseas publics with influence (Appel et al. 2008), creating positive, peaceful, and constructive relationships (Carbone 2017), establishing a

forum for discussion and the exchange of viewpoints (Giles Scott-Smith 2009) , and promoting the arts and culture of a nation to international audiences (Azzahara Ulyana and Salleh 2018) are also considered objectives of cultural diplomacy.

Cultural diplomacy is a strategic tool states utilize to realize their foreign policy objectives by promoting their cultural values, traditions, and beliefs. The success of cultural diplomacy is contingent upon how well it aligns with a state's foreign policy objectives. However, cultural diplomacy also aims to influence the target audience's way of thinking or perception of the state without necessarily considering the impact on foreign policy goals. The effectiveness of cultural diplomacy is measured by the degree of favorable attitudes and perceptions toward the state that the target audience develops.

A Brief Overview of Soft Power

The notion of soft power has gained significant attention in recent times in both academic and public discussions concerning foreign policy (Gallarotti 2011, 25). Soft power is a term that was introduced by Joseph Nye, a professor at Harvard University, who recognized that power can take various degrees. These degrees of power include hard power, soft power, smart power, and others. Whereas some view hard power negatively, soft power is considered a more positive form. Hard power is primarily defined in terms of military capacity and, sometimes, equally, economic capacity. It involves using negative economic incentives, which can sometimes rise to the level of economic coercion, and targeting positive economic incentives. Hard power forces action, unlike soft power. It also differs from sharp power and political warfare because it uses neither bypassing nor surreptitious methods (deLisle 2020, 174). Soft power is non-coercive influence. Soft power is a two-way game played by the agent and the subject to decide what is attractive (Zhou 2021, 235). Smart power combines hard and soft power (J. S. Nye 2021, 10). Soft power discussions are closely linked to Joseph Nye's definition (Bakalov 2019, 2). Despite criticisms of how soft power can be exercised, many works still refer to Nye's definition, as it was the first to explain the concept.

According to Nye (2021, 1; 2008, 94), this term refers to the ability to influence others to achieve desired goals without using force or payment. Nye's definition emphasizes the non-coercive nature of soft power, which involves activities that are not threatening, oppressive, or intimidating. Instead, soft power activities are appealing and engaging, capturing the attention of the target audience and leading them to change their behavior willingly without feeling coerced or powerless. Soft power refers to the ability to attract and influence others. In behavioral terms, it means attraction, while in terms of resources, it refers to the assets that can produce that attraction (J. S. Nye 2008, 95). To achieve soft power, the activities carried out must be those that can attract and engage the target audience. This requires a deep understanding of the target audience, including their likes and interests.

According to Nye, exchange programs are more effective in achieving this goal than broadcasting activities, which tend to be one-way (J. S. Nye 2008, 103).

Soft power resources refer to a country's culture, political values, and foreign policy (J. Nye 2011, 84; 2004, 11; 2019, 7; J. S. Nye 2021, 5; 2008, 96; 2011, 19; J. Nye 2013). According to Nye, these assets cannot automatically be converted into soft power because the assets must be acceptable to the international public and possess a globally acceptable value. Narrow-minded, selfish, and arrogant cultures are unpopular globally. States with policies supporting global issues gain worldwide popularity. The United States' decision to continue funding research on HIV/AIDS sets a positive example for popular policy (J. S. Nye 2008, 103). A country's cultural assets are not guaranteed to attract foreigners, nor are policies based on local wisdom always popular. Soft power resources may not consistently achieve the intended results and can even lead to rejection (Zhou 2021, 235).

Soft power can operate in two ways. Firstly, it can influence decision-makers directly, changing their behavior in line with the desired outcomes. Secondly, it can indirectly impact the public, putting pressure on the leaders to act according to the preferences of the country implementing the soft power (J. S. Nye 2011). This implies that the target of soft power can be twofold. It may target the government or the community hoping to push for policy changes.

The idea of soft power has gained widespread popularity in recent times, with various countries vying with each other to enhance their soft power (see Diwan 2021; Hall and Smith 2013; Michalski 2016; Bakalov 2019; G Scott-Smith 2019; Siniver and Tsourapas 2023). However, some researchers argue that this concept has certain shortcomings. They maintain that this concept's operating mechanism and constituent elements are unclear and ambiguous (Bakalov 2019; d'Hooghe 2015; Hayden 2017; Gilboa 2008). This article employs Alexander Vuving's opinion to clarify the functioning of soft power.

According to Vuving (2009), soft power is the ability to attract others. To determine what is attractive, one can consider the power currency of Beauty, Brilliance, and Benignity. When dealing with clients or anyone else, it is essential to be kind and considerate. This behavior is known as benignity, which refers to positive actions and sentiments towards others. Benignity can be seen as a type of power based on reciprocal altruism, a concept in most living organisms. For humans, the expression of benignity leads to the creation of empathy and gratitude, which ultimately helps to build soft power (Vuving 2009, 8). Benignity can help you gain power by making others feel grateful and empathetic towards you. This assures others of your peaceful intentions and increases cooperation. Attempting to assert yourself can be counterproductive, as it may come across as aggressive and result in resistance from others. Treating others with kindness and keeping your ego in check makes them more inclined to work with you (Vuving 2009, 9).

One aspect of an individual's relationship with their work is Brilliance, referring to the outstanding results achieved through their actions. As a type of power currency, brilliance leverages people's tendency to derive success from others, generating admiration and producing soft power (Vuving 2009, 8). Vuving (2009) explains that admiration is often the outcome of being brilliant, and it can lead to various emotions such as fear, respect, imitation, or inspiration. One can achieve soft power by being brilliant in different ways. For example, creating a narrative of inevitable success and invincibility is a common way to achieve it. Another way is by setting an example of excellence that others can follow. This usually happens when someone performs a task or job very well, and others who are doing something similar take note of what they did and try to replicate the fundamental elements of their success or competence (Vuving 2009, 10).

Beauty refers to how actors relate to ideals, values, causes, or visions. It is an aspect that is closely linked to these factors. The positive impact is felt when they stand up for causes, visions, ideas, or goals. As per Vuving, Beauty works as a power currency when there are several possible candidates, including the need for aesthetic experience, the requirement for moral support and guidance, which includes having a moral community and obtaining vindication, the tendency to seek unity with individuals who share similar beliefs, and the propensity to work together with people who share your goals. Beauty can create a subtle influence by inspiring people (Vuving 2009, 9). The following paragraph explains how a powerful beauty can become a soft power. The first step towards embodying an ideal, value, cause, or vision is to inspire others through your unwavering commitment, powerful articulation, selfless devotion, and perseverance toward that very ideal, value, cause, or vision. By taking on this role, people will follow your lead and look up to you for guidance, motivation, and as an example. The promise of beauty lies in this approach. I have faith that you will continue to represent our interests, uphold our beliefs, and demonstrate good leadership by reflecting our shared principles, values, causes, or visions in a compelling way (Vuving 2009, 12).

Indonesian Art and Culture Scholarship

Indonesia has been utilizing cultural diplomacy to reach out to foreign communities for a significant period (Trisni 2020, 32). Even since the country's founding, Indonesia has carried out various cultural activities abroad. However, it was only in 2002 that the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs implemented a self-improvement program that focused on organizing diplomatic cultural activities. The Directorate of Public Diplomacy was established at the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Rachmawati 2016, 148). A year after the formation of this directorate, the Indonesian Arts and Culture Scholarship (IACS) program was launched. The Indonesian Arts and Culture Scholarship (IACS) is a collaborative program between the government and non-state actors, particularly art studios. It offers a

three-month course for foreign and Indonesian youth to learn about Indonesian art and culture. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program was temporarily suspended in 2020. As of 2019, more than ten studios had partnered with IACS, with partner studios in various regions of Indonesia offering different arts and culture courses.

In the past, IACS launched a particular program in collaboration with two educational institutions, namely the Universitas Pembangunan Nasional " Veteran" Yogyakarta (see further Admin Fisip 2019) and the Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. In this program, participants not only learned about Indonesian arts and culture but also gained knowledge about Indonesian politics. However, this program has since ended, and now IACS only focuses on learning arts and culture with art studios as implementers. All learning is based on modules and directions provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Indonesian Arts and Culture Scholarship (IACS) is open to individuals aged 18 to 35 passionate about Indonesian arts and culture (Admin Kemlu 2022). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recruits through embassies around the world. Once selected, successful participants are contacted by the ministry to arrange their relocation needs before departing for Indonesia (Ambulo in Nurwahyudi et al. 2017). The number of accepted participants varies yearly depending on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget. On average, 40 to 70 people are accepted annually (Kementerian Luar Negeri 2022), including five to six Indonesians ("Interview with Syofyani Art Studio, 2020," n.d.). This program has produced a total of 1,024 alumni across 83 countries up to the year 2022 (Kementerian Luar Negeri 2022).

The IACS program follows a unique "live-in" education model, immersing students in Indonesian society. They get to explore local wisdom and learn about local norms, beliefs, and customs, especially those related to Indonesian arts and culture. This program aims to develop the younger generation's character, who uphold the principles of peace, humanitarianism, tolerance, and unity while respecting diversity and individual differences (Dit. Diplik 2018).

Research Method

We have completed three main stages of data processing to arrive at the result. Firstly, we researched the objectives of cultural diplomacy. This involved collecting the objectives of cultural diplomacy put forward by experts, gathering data through testimonies of IACS alumni, and then coding the testimonies. We have analyzed 52 alumni testimonials and identified 292 categories based on the information provided. For instance, the statement **"...**those stunning locations that I've had the opportunity to visit**..."** was classified under the category **"amazed by the natural beauty of Indonesia."** All the different categories were gathered, followed by a thorough analysis, and eventually grouped into broader umbrella themes. For example, **"amazed by Indonesia's natural beauty," "amazed by Indonesian people,"** and **"amazed by Indonesian cuisine"** were included under the theme of **"**favorable

opinion toward Indonesia**."** This coding identified ten themes that comprise the goals of IACS cultural diplomacy**.** Second, the ten themes found were compared with expert opinion**.** Four themes were not found in the literature we reviewed**.** In the last stage, we examined four findings and their relation to the concept of soft power introduced at the beginning of the article**.** We conclude that these findings have the potential to generate soft power**.**

Result

Based on our analysis of the IACS's objective of cultural diplomacy, we have identified ten themes that contribute to this objective. These themes collectively form the basis of cultural diplomacy. The outcome of our study is presented below.

The first finding of this research is a favorable opinion by alumni of the IACS program toward Indonesia. Throughout their three-and-a-half-month stay in Indonesia, the participants had the privilege of visiting various breathtaking tourist destinations. These included everything from mountainous areas, rural regions, and modern tourist attractions to sprawling bodies of water such as oceans, rivers, and lakes. These tours allowed the participants to immerse themselves in the natural splendor of Indonesia, which left an indelible mark on their hearts and minds. Specifically, the stunning landscapes of Indonesia captivated the participants, who were deeply impressed with the country's natural beauty and grateful for the chance to witness it firsthand. The alumni spoke highly of their experience in Indonesia, highlighting positive impressions of the country's natural beauty, arts and culture, people, and cuisine.

During the program, the participants could engage in daily activities related to Indonesian art and culture. This allowed them to understand Indonesian culture deeply and appreciate its diversity. Throughout the three-month program, the participants took part in five days of weekly lessons on regional dances, music, crafts, Indonesian language, cultural philosophy, and other related cultural studies. The program instilled in them a strong admiration for Indonesian culture, and they developed a positive impression of Indonesia. The alumni were also impressed with the Indonesian people's hospitality, warmth, kinship, and helpfulness. The locals were always ready to assist the alumni in any way possible, whether with directions, public transportation, or navigating public places such as markets. Overall, the program successfully fostered a positive image of Indonesian culture and its people among the alumni.

The friendly attitude deeply ingrained in Indonesian culture has left a lasting impression on alumni visiting the country. They have expressed their admiration for the welcoming nature of the people, which has made them appreciate Indonesia even more. The experience of encountering such positive attitudes elsewhere can be challenging for them. Additionally, the alumni have praised Indonesian culinary delights. Despite the strong spices

used in traditional Indonesian food, most alumni find the food delicious. The traditional food served in these areas has left them with a positive impression of Indonesian cuisine. According to the above explanation, the study's first finding reflects a favorable opinion toward Indonesia.

Following the alumni's statements, the second finding is that they are emotionally close to Indonesia. They feel connected to the people they met during their stay and consider them as their family. Some alumni want to return to Indonesia to reunite with the people they have met, while others want to learn more about the country. For a few, Indonesia is their second home, while others express that they miss everything they have experienced in the country. Overall, these sentiments show their solid emotional bond towards Indonesia. According to these results, achieving emotional closeness can be considered an objective of cultural diplomacy.

The third finding of our study is reciprocal altruism. We discovered that these alumni are motivated to return the generosity they received in Indonesia. Some of them are determined to promote Indonesian culture in their respective countries. They plan to achieve this by teaching it, joining Indonesian associations, and researching the Indonesian culture to introduce it to the world. Furthermore, they aim to strengthen the friendship between their city and Indonesia by performing Indonesian cultural arts in their home countries. One alumnus is enthusiastic about representing Indonesia in cultural festivals, while another wants to introduce cultural products from Indonesia by opening novelty shops.

Other results related to reciprocation include their willingness to form an Indonesian community and continue studying Indonesian art and culture. As written in the testimony, a participant shared her desire to preserve the Javanese language, one of Indonesia's regional languages. She expressed her desire to preserve the language in her community of origin. It is impressive to see how even a short period of studying Indonesian culture in Indonesia can instill a sense of gratitude in alumni, motivating them to repay the favor. Some acts of reciprocation are concrete, like opening an Indonesian shop to introduce local products.

We have found that many alumni are willing to give back to Indonesia but face challenges in implementing their efforts, mainly due to a lack of financial support. However, receiving gratitude can benefit Indonesia, as some alumni are willing to return the favor voluntarily. Our third finding is reciprocal altruism.

Our research discovered that the fourth finding is related to alumni acquiring valuable experience. While in Indonesia, the alumni gained significant experience that proved extremely valuable to them. They had the opportunity to experience life in a new country, make new friends, and learn new things. These experiences left a deep impression on them and helped them better understand Indonesian culture and traditions. Many alumni of IACS used to feel inferior to foreigners before joining the studio. However, this feeling can vanish

once they become more familiar with the studio and its foreign friends. As they start socializing with foreigners, the shyness they feel towards them fades away. Meeting new people also helps them expand their network and gain new perspectives.

The IACS provided them with various opportunities that they still vividly recall. This experience has played a crucial role in their growth and equipped them with invaluable life skills. Based on our findings, one of the goals of cultural diplomacy should be acquiring valuable experience.

The fifth finding of our research concerned the IACS program. The alumni have a strong preference for this program due to various reasons. One fondly recalls all the memories made during the IACS program. One alumnus liked the program so much that they recommended it to their acquaintances. Other alumni also expressed gratitude for the scholarship and were impressed by the well-structured and detail-oriented program.

Furthermore, some alumni found the IACS activities engaging and felt at home while participating in them. They also stated that the IACS program positively impacted their lives. It is worth noting that these feelings are related explicitly to the IACS program, distinguishing this point from the previous one, which was more general. Since the activities conducted by IACS were memorable for the alumni, the aim of cultural diplomacy was formulated as appreciation for the program.

While in Indonesia, several alumni got a deeper understanding of the values that society holds. They realized that Indonesians value diversity and differences. The nation is diverse but still united as they consider differences and diversity normal and worthy of respect. Moreover, the alumni also gained an understanding of the Islamic values that most Indonesians practice. Learning about Islamic values through Indonesian Muslims helped change their views on Islam and Muslims, who are often portrayed as terrorists and violent in various media. The alumni also understood that Indonesian society is religious, regardless of their religion. These religious values are also reflected in art and dance movements. Art in Indonesia cannot be separated from religious values. Based on the earlier explanation, the overwhelming objective of cultural diplomacy is recognizing societal values.

Participating in cultural diplomacy activities has helped alumni gain much knowledge, leading to proficiency upgrading. We can divide the alumni's proficiency into two categories: identity proficiency and knowledge proficiency. Regarding identity proficiency, some alumni have better understood themselves, discovered their true identity, and learned what is most important in life and how they should live. In terms of knowledge proficiency, some alumni have experienced an improvement in their language skills, gained knowledge about Indonesia, developed a better understanding of the international world through interacting with foreign friends, and learned how to preserve their culture. Based on the findings, it can be inferred that cultural diplomacy helps the alumni enhance their knowledge

about themselves and their cognitive knowledge. Hence, it is recommended that the objective of cultural diplomacy should be proficiency upgrading.

The findings indicate that many alumni have fond memories of Indonesia and hold a special place in their hearts for the country. Indonesia has left an indelible mark in their memory, and they often think about returning soon. This finding emphasizes the significance of Indonesia in their lives and the lasting impact of their experiences in the country. As a result, cultural diplomacy should aim to ensure that alumni never forget Indonesia.

Our research indicates that the cultural diplomacy program is crucial for IACS alumni to self-expand, develop their skills, and broaden their perspectives on cultural diversity. According to testimony, the program has positively impacted its alumni's lives, helping them grow and develop new outlooks. The Indonesian Arts and Culture Scholarship (IACS) provides a unique perspective on the diverse culture of Indonesia, allowing its participants to expand their horizons and gain fresh perspectives. This study demonstrates that cultural diplomacy can be an effective tool for self-improvement.

The alumni are keen to maintain their relationships with other Indonesian alumni. Some individuals aim to establish follow-up forums to stay connected, while others plan to collaborate artistically and culturally with Indonesian studios. However, funding issues are hindering these collaborations. Therefore, it is necessary to continue the cultural diplomacy funding program to ensure its sustainability. The post-show program aims to maintain the positive results achieved in the previous program. Thus, cultural diplomacy through the International Arts and Cultural Scholarship (IACS) has played a crucial role in preserving the relationships between its alumni.
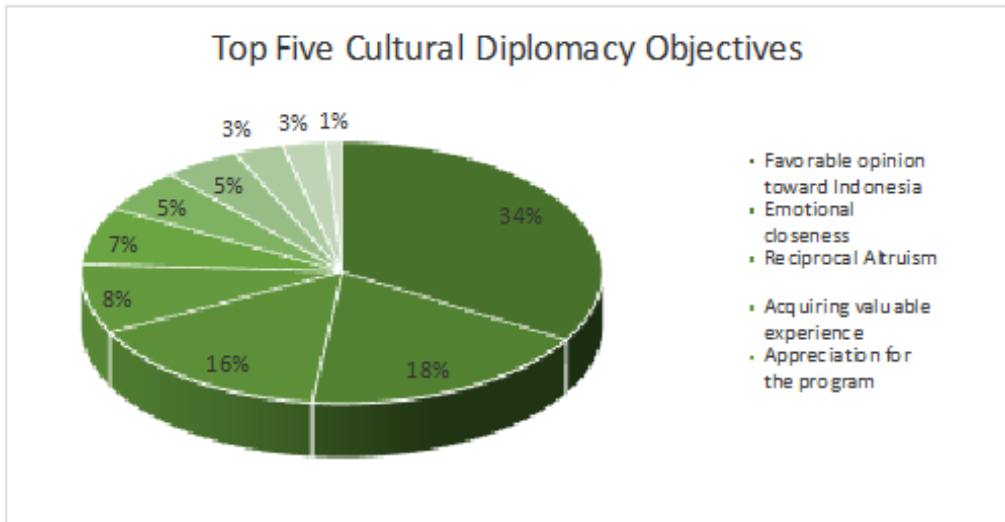
Figure 1 Cultural Diplomacy Objectives based on IACS

Source: The author

Discussion

This section has two essential objectives. First, a brief discussion is conducted to compare the goals of cultural diplomacy with those put forward by experts. The step reveals four distinct goals for cultural diplomacy. Secondly, it examines the four goals of cultural diplomacy and evaluates their potential for soft power to determine the significance of these outcomes.

Exploring Different Goals of Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy aims to foster a profound appreciation for the core values of a nation. This is in line with the objectives found in IACS. In the expert's argument, the second point discusses the penetration of the minds and hearts of the target audience. Our findings suggest a more specific interpretation that differs from the expert's argument. Our research indicates that the goal of cultural diplomacy in the IACS is to shift negative perceptions to positive ones rather than to overcome suspicion. Thus, we left the second and third points in Table 1 blank as they did not correspond to our research findings. It is important to note that all the points in the table are valid, but not all of them align with our findings. Perhaps because of the different research context, we did not find points four, five, and six in the IACS.

According to the experts, the main objective of cultural diplomacy is to establish and maintain positive relationships with individuals from various countries. Our research supports this notion. However, we could not locate information on points eight and nine, so we left those sections blank. Further, the expert stressed that cultural diplomacy aims to enhance

comprehension and shift viewpoints. These objectives align with the three goals outlined in the IACS. Points 11, 12, and 13 do not align with IACS, so we left them blank. The last point in the table matched our findings.

This study derives six goals of cultural diplomacy from the IACS, which correspond to some of the goals we cited. Meanwhile, four goals were considered inappropriate: emotional closeness, reciprocal altruism, appreciation for the program, and never forgetting Indonesia. If we observe, we can draw a link between the findings. The emotional closeness felt towards Indonesians and their appreciation for the program they have been through could be why they cannot forget Indonesia. Furthermore, these goals do not address foreign policy and directly focus on the target. We believe these aims link to the arguments advanced by Cumming, as highlighted in the previous section of this article.

Table 1 Objectives Comparation

No.	Expert	IACS finding
1	Obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the nation's fundamental principles	Recognizing societal values
2	Connecting with the thoughts and emotions of the target audience.	Not found
3	Eliminate distrust in state messages among the target audience.	Not found
4	Foster understanding between parties	Not found
5	Combatting ethnocentrism and stereotypes	Not found
6	Conflict avoidance	Not found
7	Establish a new friendship	Preservation of relationship
8	Build a groundwork for trust	Not found
9	Against misconception, idiocy and hostility	Not found
10	Enhance comprehension and shift viewpoints	Proficiency upgrading
Acquiring valuable experience
Increased self-expansion
11	Reaching out to influential international audiences.	Not found
12	Build a healthy, harmonious, and valuable relationship.	Not found
13	Make room for conversation	Not found

14	Presenting the nation's art and culture to an international audience.	Favorable opinion toward Indonesia

The Potential of Soft Power in The IACS Program

This section discusses four research findings that suggest the potential for soft power. However, this paper does not explore six other findings, which are assumed to have valid soft power potential based on expert opinion. According to Nye's 2021, 2019, and 2008 research, understanding "what the target thinks" is crucial in soft power. Therefore, learning about the target's thoughts is essential before designing a cultural diplomacy program. This article focuses on four findings: emotional closeness, reciprocal altruism, appreciation for the program, and never forgetting Indonesia, reflecting IACS alumni's views.

Emotional closeness encourages alumni to revisit Indonesia and reconnect with the people they met there. The phrase "Never Forget Indonesia" holds special meaning for alumni who have developed a strong attachment to the country. For many of them, Indonesia has become a cherished memory, and they hope to return soon. Some alumni even consider Indonesia as their second home. When we analyzed our data, we found that Emotional Closeness and Never Forgetting Indonesia resulted from Indonesian people's caring attitude toward alumni. Indonesian have been kind and helpful towards the alumni when they were still participants, and the studio has treated them like family. The Indonesian involved in IACS indirectly show Benignity, which generates gratitude and sympathy from the participants. The positive attitude shown by Indonesians has created emotional closeness and further enabled reciprocal altruism. This emotional bond and the sentiment of never forgetting Indonesia have great potential to generate soft power for Indonesia.

Alumni giving back is profitable for Indonesia, as they reciprocate benefits received while studying. According to research, exchange, and mobility programs expose participants to new perspectives (Atkinson 2010, 7), which may lead to a desire for reciprocal altruism. Leadership involves persuading people to follow your directions because they want to and have to (Axelrod 2006 in J. Nye 2019, 8). If we assume Indonesia is the leader, the alumni can be seen as the voluntary workers who serve the country. Those foreign alumni who wish to contribute to Indonesia can volunteer, such as performing Indonesian dances that promote Indonesian culture in their home country, without incurring costs. According to Nye (J. Nye 2019, 8), soft power is the ability to influence others' preferences. The Indonesian Arts and Culture Scholarship program can shape the preference for compensation.

Alumni strongly appreciate the IACS program due to its value and well-organized structure. This finding is in line with the Brilliance concept proposal by Vuving. Alumni value IACS because they feel it is well-managed. When others see IACS as a brilliant program, it can lead to admiration, imitation, and respect. This has a positive impact because alumni may follow IACS as an example. This can remove suspicion and hostility, promote

understanding, and create opportunities for cooperation (see Vuving 2009, 8–13) . The alumni's appreciation for the program has the potential to be a soft power for Indonesia.

IACS has shown positive results. Generating soft power can assist the government in directing the audience's thoughts toward desired initiatives (see Trisni and Putri, 2023). Fortunately, according to Zhou (2021, 235) , soft power assets can lead to unfavorable outcomes, but the IACS results indicate positive results are achievable. However, it is crucial to have consistency and a long-term commitment to fully benefit from cultural diplomacy (Goff 2013). Access to soft power resources does not guarantee desired results, and policymakers must consider relevant resources for effective power behavior (J. S. Nye 2021, 3) . Soft power results may take time to materialize (J. S. Nye 2021, 7) , but cultural diplomacy activities can change views over time. Populist governments' reluctance to fund soft-power instruments reflects their short-term vision. The importance of soft power in diplomacy has not diminished(J. S. Nye 2021, 8).

Conclusion

According to our research, cultural diplomacy should not be underestimated and should be implemented thoughtfully, considering the great potential that can be generated through its implementation. The value of cultural diplomacy programs increases if the government can use them properly. The research suggests that Indonesia can achieve ten goals through IACS, with four objectives not covered in the articles we reviewed. The four goals of emotional closeness, reciprocal altruism, appreciation for the program, and never forgetting Indonesia can generate soft power by winning alumni's affection, which is vital capital for the country.

However, the government must implement a follow-up program to maintain and sustain the positive results achieved. Social connections require continuous care and attention as they are not machines (Brown 2013 in Lee and Ayhan 2015, 61) . The government must focus on building long-term relationships with alumni, as they are valuable assets. However, due to their busy schedule, it is recommended that the government partner with a third party to execute this project. Collaborating with the same studios the alumni interacted with during their stay in Indonesia would be beneficial. The government should provide funding program details and supervise the program. Failure to implement an aftersales program can lead to losing positive feelings, as emotions can quickly fade if not nurtured. On the other hand, a good follow-up program can maintain the sustainability of the four findings and contribute to the production of soft power for the state.

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