



## Impact Of Saudi Arabia's Soft Diplomacy to Islamic Cultural in Indonesia

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### Abstract

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*This research was made to find out how much impact Saudi Arabia's Soft Diplomacy to Islamic Culture in Indonesia. This research uses secondary data. In this study, researchers used secondary data from media such as internet sites and Indonesian government sites, electronic newspapers, and journals related to the Impact of Saudi Arabia's Soft Diplomacy on Islamic Culture in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the data collection technique in this research is qualitative. Qualitative research is a continuous research process. This research is a qualitative descriptive research. The return of scholars who studied in Saudi Arabia to Indonesia certainly brought not only the influence of Islam to Indonesia, but also brought the influence of Indonesian culture to Saudi Arabia even though the people of Saudi Arabia did not accept it as a whole, but combined it with local wisdom owned by Saudi Arabia. Cultural diplomacy is an effort that countries make to fight for their national interests for cultural aspects. The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Indonesia is a long-standing relationship, unofficially the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Indonesia has been established since the first century of hijriyah and officially on May 1, 1950, in the course of the relationship between the two countries there has been a lot of cooperation that has been agreed upon and one of them is in the social and cultural fields.*

**Keywords:** Culture, Indonesia, Islam, Soft Diplomacy, Saudi Arabia

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## INTRODUCTION

Bilateral relations between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia have been going on for quite some time. Indonesia-Saudi Arabia diplomatic relations have been unofficially established for quite a long time and are estimated to be since the first century of hijriyah. Saudi Arabia is the destination country for the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages for Muslims around the world including Indonesia. It is inseparable from the background that the majority of Indonesian citizens are Muslims even though officially it is not an Islamic country. Starting from trade relations between Arab traders who traded and also broadcast Islam which has given a lot of influence on the Indonesian population to embrace Islam (Casidi, 2017).

Officially, diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia began on May 1, 1950 which was marked by the opening of the Indonesian Representative in Jeddah. In 1964, the Indonesian Representative changed its status to the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia. Along with moving the capital of Saudi Arabia to Riyadh, the Government of Indonesia also moved its Embassy from Jeddah to Riyadh in 1985. At the same time, Economic and Socio-Cultural relations or

cooperation between the two countries were further enhanced as the Indonesian Government opened the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah (Kemlu RI, 2018).

The fraternal relationship between the two countries continues to be strengthened with the leaders of both countries visiting each other. Starting in 1955, a state visit was made by Indonesian President Soekarno to Saudi Arabia. King Faisal visited Indonesia in 1970. And all Indonesian Presidents have made visits to Saudi Arabia during their reigns. Indonesian President Joko Widodo visited Saudi Arabia in 2015, 2017 and 2019. Meanwhile, King Salman ibn Abdulaziz Al Saud visited Jakarta, Bogor, and Bali in 2017 (Kemlu RI, 2018).

Diplomatic relations including cooperative relations between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia have experienced various dynamics and cover various fields, including security, defense industry, economy, tourism, Hajj and Umrah, employment, education, research and higher education, and then especially culture. Then at the end of 2018 cooperation in the field of culture was realized through the Janadriyah cultural festival where Indonesia was invited as a guest of honor in the 33rd Janadriyah festival activities which were held for 21 days from December 20, 2018 to January 9, 2019. This festival was first held by the Saudi National Guard Government Institution in 1985. The festival also organizes various scientific and cultural seminars. Seeing the positive response from the international community after several times holding this event, the government of Saudi Arabia then saw a greater opportunity through organizing this activity, namely as a means of diplomacy to expand its reach or network globally and find other countries that are rich in culture and civilization. That's why the Saudi Arabian government began inviting other countries as "guests of honor" every year (ArabNews, 2018).

Other countries invited to be guests of honor are countries that are considered rich in heritage and culture and have a cooperative relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In the Janadriyah festival, guest countries will display their respective traditional cultures as well as archives or documents that show the country's close relationship and cooperation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. For Indonesia, being a guest of honor is a matter of pride, because this event is one of the most awaited by many countries. Moreover, Indonesia was invited directly by King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. This shows that the relationship between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia is very well established and the purpose of Indonesia's participation in the janadriyah festival is to get to know each other more through culture and also further strengthen bilateral relations between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia (Saepulmikdar, 2021).

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that this research was made to find out how much impact Saudi Arabia's Soft Diplomacy to Islamic Culture in Indonesia.

## **METHODS**

This research uses secondary data. In this study, researchers used secondary data from media such as internet sites and Indonesian government sites, electronic newspapers, and journals related to the Impact of Saudi Arabia's Soft Diplomacy on Islamic Culture in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the data collection technique in this research is qualitative. Qualitative research is a continuous research process.

This research is a qualitative descriptive research. Descriptive research method is a method of examining the status of a group of people, an object, a condition, a system of thought, or a class of events in the present with the aim of making a description, description or painting systematically, accurately about the facts, properties and relationships between the phenomena investigated (Nazir, 2014). This research is also a qualitative descriptive research. Descriptive research is used to provide an in-depth explanation of an event, as well as in theorizing or concepts that explain the relationship between events (Silalahi, 2009).

### **Diplomacy**

Diplomacy is the art and practice of negotiating by a person (called a diplomat) who usually represents a country or organization. The word diplomacy itself is usually directly related to international diplomacy which usually takes care of things like culture, economy, and trade. Usually, people think of diplomacy as a way of gaining an advantage with smooth words. The simplest and oldest diplomacy is bilateral diplomacy between two parties and is usually the mission of embassies and state visits. Diplomacy has become a vital part of the life of the state and is the primary means of dealing with international issues in order to achieve world peace. With the means of diplomacy, the government carries it out in order to achieve its goals and gain support from the principles it adheres to. Diplomacy, which is a political process, is primarily intended to maintain the foreign policy of a government in influencing the policies and attitudes of other governments. As a political process, diplomacy is also part of a very broad and convoluted mutual influence effort in international activities carried out by governments and international organizations to improve their goals through diplomatic channels (Setiawan, 2016).

According to Sir Ernest Satow "Diplomacy is the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between governments of independent states. Which means diplomacy is the use of intelligence and tact to conduct official relations between governments of independent states. Sometimes it is also carried out in the relations of vassal states or more briefly, the conduct of such affairs is carried out between states by peaceful means". In practice, diplomacy must be distinguished from foreign policy, hence the need for a boundary between the two concepts. Whereas, "diplomacy is not a policy, but an institution to influence the policy. However, diplomacy and policy both complement each other because one cannot act without the cooperation of the other. Diplomacy cannot be separated from foreign policy, but both together constitute executive policy-policy to set strategy, diplomacy and tactics". On the one hand, foreign policy or politics is concerned with the substance and content of foreign relations, and on the other hand, diplomacy is concerned with the methodology for implementing foreign policy (Setiawan, 2016).

### **Soft Power Diplomacy**

Soft Power Diplomacy is a diplomacy concept first coined by Joseph Nye. Soft power is a diplomatic policy of a country that depends on three main points, namely culture, political policy, and foreign policy. According to Nye, he broadened the discussion on relations between states when he brought the term "Soft Power" to the debate in 1990. Military and economic coercion opened up space for symbolic, cultural, political, and evaluative constraints, expanding the

realistic vision of power that had been focused on "hard power" (Nye, 2005). According to (Nye, 2005), describes Soft Power as the ability to influence others to obtain desired outcomes through attraction rather than military or economic coercion. Soft Power indicates culture, political values, and forms of integration and interconnectedness in international politics. We can exemplify the influence of Soft Power between nations with the arts (especially cinema) and literature. These are features that influence international public opinion about a country and its visibility in the international arena. An important note is that Soft Power cannot be controlled easily. Nye himself observed, "*most of a country's soft power comes from its civil society rather than from its government*". Governments still have influence, firstly through the formation of civil society and, secondly, through public diplomacy, but these actions alone do not convince the international debate. Nevertheless, the consistency of these actions over time does. Soft Power is more an existential factor in the political environment rather than something that can be used by policymakers to their advantage.

The definition of culture is the values of a country in promoting the values and interests of the country simultaneously in improving the desired results. From the above understanding, Nye mentions that there are three main points of soft power diplomacy from a country, among others country, among others: culture, political values, and foreign policy. Soft power diplomacy itself is one of the ways used by countries in achieving international goals. Soft power diplomacy is an effort to attract the attention and interest of other countries through a gentle approach and without any intervention or threat in order to achieve what the country wants, one of which is the application of culture. With the government's steps in promoting the culture of a country, soft power diplomacy at this time has undergone significant changes, as well as in the international context (Maharani, 2022). This has become one of the positive breakthroughs for a country in order to design and use soft power which is thought to have great strength and can attract the interest of other countries to know the culture and one of the objectives of soft power diplomacy is to utilize the potential that already exists in achieving its national goals, one of which is cultural diplomacy (Nye, 2005).

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

### ***Results***

#### **The Impact of Saudi Arabia's Diplomacy on Islamic Culture in Indonesia**

Indonesia and Saudi Arabia have a lot of cooperation, the two countries enjoy close cooperation in the socio-cultural field and this is the most important field. In terms of Islamic affairs, Indonesia's cooperation with Saudi Arabia is unique, which cannot be compared with other countries. Saudi Arabia is home to two Muslim holy cities that Indonesian Muslims want to visit every year, either for Hajj or Umrah. The Indonesian government through its policy in fulfilling the invitation as an honorary guest of the Janadriyah Festival is not solely driven by the MoU agreed upon by the two countries during the state visit of the Prince of Saudi Arabia to Indonesia in 2017, but it is also driven by many factors in common between the two countries that make the Indonesian government feel very appropriate to participate in the Janadriyah Festival as an honorary guest (Kemenag, 2019).

The return of scholars who studied in Saudi Arabia to Indonesia certainly brought not only the influence of Islam to Indonesia, but also brought the influence of Indonesian culture to Saudi Arabia even though the people of Saudi Arabia did not accept it as a whole, but combined it with local wisdom owned by Saudi Arabia. In other words, basically Indonesia and Saudi Arabia have cultures that depart from Islamic values and form a culture that almost resembles one another. The factor of cultural similarities owned by the two countries is also influenced by the same religion. A belief or religion is able to create culture and civilization. The culture that exists in both countries is the result of the Islamic religion that has been institutionalized and rooted so that it will create values to sustain its civilization and culture. Indonesia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have the same basic cultural values, but Indonesia combines it with various local wisdom so that cultures originating from Saudi Arabia and rooted in Islam are not simply applied (Sofiandy, 2021).

The same basic cultural values will create a shared narrative (*shared ideas*) between the two countries that will make the two countries have the same perspective in viewing the international system. Examples of the similarities in the cultures of the two countries are marawis, qosidah, sholawat, and various Indonesian arts that have Islamic elements such as saman dance, as well as the influence of Arabic language that is fused into Indonesian. In the perspective of constructivism explained by Alexander Wendt, this phenomenon is caused by shared ideas that are built between the two countries, both Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Indonesia's perspective on Saudi Arabia is one form of shared ideas built on the factors described above such as religion and culture that have similarities in both countries. In the process of forming shared ideas, there is a factor that is quite influential, namely identity, Alexander Wendt in his book explains that identity is a subjective understanding related to one agent's view of how to understand himself and understand other agents understand him. How Indonesia sees Saudi Arabia will certainly be very different if we compare how Indonesia sees Israel. This is because Indonesia and Saudi Arabia have similar Muslim identities. Indonesia can influence other Muslim countries to accept a narrative that Saudi Arabia is a good country to be the main destination for cooperation in any field. Moreover, the invitation of Indonesia by Saudi Arabia as a guest of honor at the Janadriyah Festival will certainly make Indonesia closer to Saudi Arabia and feel special. This is expected by Indonesia to achieve its national interests towards Saudi Arabia (Sofiandy, 2021).

### **Indonesia's way to maintain Arab Culture so that Soft Diplomacy between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia continues**

Basically, cultural diplomacy is an effort made by a country to fight for its national interests in cultural aspects. Therefore, the Government of Indonesia conducts cultural diplomacy as a form of foreign policy and if we look at the example of the Janadriyah Festival facilities, it can also be a sign that Indonesia is trying to maintain Indonesian culture to be accepted and survive in Saudi Arabia in the midst of many other countries in conducting cultural diplomacy with Saudi Arabia. The main purpose of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy policy is to influence someone both in thought and heart cannot be measured and proven scientifically, but we can see the positive impact obtained from policies and participating parties.

A sign that cultural diplomacy carried out by other countries is something that is considered by the Government of Indonesia in producing and implementing foreign policy in response to existing phenomena. It is also stated in constructivism theory that there are identity factors that influence the process of forming shared ideas. The identity in question is if actors see other actors as friends or rivals, so that it will affect a country. For example, many countries conduct cultural diplomacy against Saudi Arabia and what we know from the many countries does not consist of one "alliance". Indonesia, which is so close to Palestine, certainly does not have a good relationship with the United States, which also conducts cultural diplomacy with Saudi Arabia. We can apply this in the case of how the Government of Indonesia continues to try to conduct cultural diplomacy and other types of diplomacy towards Saudi Arabia to avoid other countries dominating Saudi Arabia in terms of culture Indonesia will certainly have difficulty in fulfilling its national interests in Saudi Arabia if there are other countries that dominate. The impact of the domination of other countries besides Indonesia in Saudi Arabia does not only occur in the cultural aspect, but this can have an impact on other sectors such as the economy (Sofiandy, 2021).

The role of the Government of Indonesia through policies issued by the Government of Indonesia wants to make its culture also a soft power in diplomacy on an ongoing basis. The Indonesian government tries to develop the country to be able to become the heart of the world in terms of culture by building Indonesian Cultural Houses, one of which is located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, promoting culture and entertainment, and increasing the number of heritage sites registered with UNESCO. The Indonesian government's cultural diplomacy also aims to change the view that Indonesia is not a country that is closed to cultural exchange (Sofiandy, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

Cultural diplomacy is an effort that countries make to fight for their national interests for cultural aspects. The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Indonesia is a long-standing relationship, unofficially the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Indonesia has been established since the first century of hijriyah and officially on May 1, 1950, in the course of the relationship between the two countries there has been a lot of cooperation that has been agreed upon and one of them is in the social and cultural fields. There are many similarities in the culture of Saudi Arabia and Indonesia because the background of the country is both in Islamic culture. This is what Saudi Arabia is trying to spread more of its culture to other countries including Indonesia by inviting it as a guest of honor through the Janadriyah event with Soft Diplomacy.

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