

# Cultural Diplomacy through Hallyu: Managing Bilateral Relations between South Korea and Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

South Korea's cultural diplomacy has permeated and become a phenomenon among the younger generation in Indonesia. The issue of culture as an instrument in conducting diplomacy has become a global phenomenon that attracts the attention of many countries. This phenomenon illustrates the use of cultural aspects as a means to achieve diplomatic goals, implement policies, and shape a country's attitude towards others. The significance of cultural influence in diplomacy goes beyond material aspects, encompassing normative and ideational dimensions of a nation. The use of culture as an instrument in diplomacy is not unidirectional, where one country tries to influence another. Instead, it involves exchange and mutual influence between different cultures, creating a framework for more inclusive and sustainable cooperation. The research methodology employed in this study is descriptive qualitative analysis. Descriptive qualitative analysis focuses on a deep understanding of a phenomenon or event, leading to descriptive data interpretation. Data for this research is sourced from information released by the governments of South Korea and Indonesia, as well as South Korean cultural centers. The study is implemented using theories within the field of International Relations. Data collection techniques involve literature review, interviews, and online data searches. Hallyu, as an expression of popular South Korean culture, has created a strong allure among Indonesian society, facilitating cultural exchange, ideas, and information between nations. Cultural diplomacy through Hallyu has proven to be an effective tool in strengthening relations between South Korea and Indonesia. However, caution, transparency, and close cooperation among involved parties are necessary to mitigate risks and safeguard the national interests of each country in effectively and sustainably conducting cultural diplomacy.

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## ABSTRAK

Diplomasi budaya Korea Selatan telah merambah dan menjadi fenomena di kalangan generasi muda Indonesia. Persoalan kebudayaan sebagai instrumen dalam melakukan diplomasi telah menjadi fenomena global yang menarik perhatian banyak negara. Fenomena ini menggambarkan pemanfaatan aspek budaya sebagai sarana untuk mencapai tujuan diplomasi, melaksanakan kebijakan, dan membentuk sikap suatu negara terhadap orang lain. Pentingnya pengaruh budaya dalam diplomasi lebih dari sekedar aspek material, tetapi juga mencakup dimensi normatif dan ideasional suatu bangsa. Pemanfaatan budaya sebagai instrumen dalam diplomasi tidak bersifat searah, dimana satu negara berusaha mempengaruhi negara lain. Sebaliknya, hal ini melibatkan pertukaran dan pengaruh timbal balik antar budaya yang berbeda, sehingga menciptakan kerangka kerja sama yang lebih inklusif dan berkelanjutan. Metodologi penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah analisis deskriptif kualitatif. Analisis deskriptif kualitatif berfokus pada pemahaman mendalam terhadap suatu fenomena atau peristiwa, sehingga mengarah pada interpretasi data deskriptif. Data penelitian ini bersumber dari informasi yang dikeluarkan oleh pemerintah Korea Selatan dan Indonesia, serta pusat kebudayaan Korea Selatan. Kajian ini dilaksanakan dengan menggunakan teori-teori dalam bidang Hubungan Internasional. Teknik pengumpulan data melibatkan tinjauan pustaka, wawancara, dan pencarian data online. Hallyu, sebagai ekspresi budaya populer Korea Selatan, telah menciptakan daya tarik yang kuat di

*kalangan masyarakat Indonesia, memfasilitasi pertukaran budaya, gagasan, dan informasi antar bangsa. Diplomasi budaya melalui Hallyu terbukti efektif dalam mempererat hubungan Korea Selatan dan Indonesia. Namun, kehati-hatian, transparansi, dan kerja sama yang erat di antara pihak-pihak yang terlibat diperlukan untuk memitigasi risiko dan menjaga kepentingan nasional masing-masing negara dalam melakukan diplomasi budaya secara efektif dan berkelanjutan.*

*Kata kunci: Diplomasi, Budaya, Hallyu, Pengaruh budaya, Hubungan bilateral*

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between South Korea and Indonesia has developed since 1966, when diplomatic relations at the Consulate General level were first accredited. For over five decades, they have fostered beneficial bilateral cooperation, creating a robust foundation for economic, cultural, and political exchanges (Leonardo, 2019; Saputro, 2022). South Korea and Indonesia have a complementary relationship, meaning they mutually complement each other. Indonesia, as one of the largest countries in Southeast Asia, and South Korea, as one of the major economic powers in Asia, have the potential to fill in and support each other's development (Padmo et al., 2021). In terms of the economy, South Korea and Indonesia have mutually beneficial advantages. South Korea, with its technological advancements, has become a significant alternative source of technology, especially in heavy industry, IT, and telecommunications. Collaboration in technology transfer between the two countries has enriched the industrial sector and advanced innovation. Besides economic aspects, this relationship also encompasses cultural and educational exchanges (Arini & Hartati, 2022). Student exchange programs, art exhibitions, and collaboration in cultural areas have strengthened the ties between the two nations. In the political arena, South Korea and Indonesia often collaborate in international forums to support peace, security, and other global issues. They play crucial roles as strategic partners in the Asian region, sharing aligned positions in efforts to promote regional stability (Pramadya & Oktaviani, 2021; Anindia, 2022).

Economic cooperation between South Korea and Indonesia continues to grow, prompting South Korea, as an industrialized nation, to seek various resources. This goes beyond natural resources, some of which are imported due to South Korea's limited natural resources (Manafe, 2019). To address the shortage of available workforce, South Korea imports foreign labor to operate industrial machinery, especially considering the highly prosperous South Korean population tends to be less interested in working in the industrial sector, particularly in jobs deemed hazardous and challenging (Arini & Hartati, 2022; Al-Fadhat & Effendi, 2019). In the socio-cultural sphere, cooperation between South Korea and Indonesia is further strengthened through cultural cooperation agreements ratified by both countries in 2000. This bilateral cooperation intensifies thanks to the Hallyu phenomenon, the South Korean cultural wave increasingly embraced by Indonesian society. Hallyu, or the Korean Cultural Wave/Fever, becomes a global phenomenon strengthening the South Korea-Indonesia bilateral relationship, where the popularity of South Korean culture significantly rises among South Koreans and extends globally (Leonardo, 2019).

South Korea's cultural diplomacy has penetrated and become a phenomenon among the younger generation in Indonesia. The trend of adopting the fashion styles of South Korean artists has become popular among teenagers, and this influence extends beyond fashion, reaching into South Korean music and dramas (Fazry et al., 2022). Indonesian society is increasingly drawn to Korean culture, considering it to have high market value. This phenomenon also encompasses the culinary sector, with Korean cuisine becoming more widely available in Indonesia. Moreover, the growing interest in Korean culture is reflected in the opening of Korean language courses in Indonesia (Fitria et al., 2021; Trisni et al., 2019). In fact, several universities in Indonesia are beginning to offer Korean language majors, marking a shift from the previous dominance of Japanese and Mandarin. This includes the popularity of Hanbok, traditional Korean attire, which is

gaining recognition and appreciation. With the increasing number of students and fans of Korean culture this indirectly supports Korean investors (Schlonsky & Damayanti, 2022). The presence of many Korean companies investing in several countries, including Indonesia, creates a demand for experts with knowledge and skills to interact and do business with Koreans. The Indonesian public's interest in the Hallyu phenomenon seems to serve as a stepping stone for South Korea to develop cross-sectoral cooperation with Indonesia, creating new opportunities in the bilateral relations between the two countries (Salsabila & Rahmadhani, 2023; Glodev et al., 2023).

The issue of culture as an instrument in conducting diplomacy has become a global phenomenon that increasingly attracts the attention of many countries. This phenomenon illustrates the use of cultural aspects as a means to achieve diplomatic goals, implement policies, and shape a country's attitude toward others (Mulyaman, 2020). It is a strategic step in efforts to meet national interests more efficiently. The importance of cultural influence in diplomacy goes beyond material aspects but also encompasses the normative and ideational dimensions of a nation. Culture has a strong absorptive power over the thought patterns and values held by its people. Thus, changes in the culture of a society can have a significant impact on how that country interacts with others (Mustafha & Abdul Razak, 2020). When culture becomes a determining factor in shaping all aspects of society, including social norms, values, and even government policies, the influence of that culture in facilitating the diplomatic process becomes increasingly significant (Dirir, 2022). This indicates that diplomacy is not only related to political and economic negotiations but also to a profound understanding of a country's culture. The use of culture as an instrument in diplomacy is not unidirectional, where one country tries to influence another. Instead, it involves exchange and mutual influence between different cultures, creating a framework for more inclusive and sustainable cooperation (Lee et al., 2020; Bajenaru, 2022).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The research method employed in this study is qualitative descriptive analysis. This research focuses on a profound understanding and interpretation of the issue under discussion, which is the influence of foreign culture and the role of the South Korean and Indonesian governments in addressing this phenomenon. This method is chosen because it can provide a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of the bilateral relationship between the two countries in the cultural context. Essentially, qualitative descriptive analysis research emphasizes a deep understanding of a phenomenon or event, leading to interpretative and descriptive data. The data for this research are derived from information released by the South Korean and Indonesian governments, as well as South Korean cultural centers, implemented by utilizing theories within the realm of International Relations. Data collection techniques involve literature reviews, interviews, and online data searches. This approach is chosen to ensure the sustainability of relevant data and information, which is then processed in-depth. The research's focus on the government's role in dealing with the influence of foreign culture necessitates the collection of high-quality data from reliable sources. In analyzing the data, the researcher uses data reduction techniques. This means that data obtained from literature reviews, online searches, and interviews will be carefully processed and selected according to the research's needs and established objectives. This is done to ensure that the utilized data correlates significantly with the formulated research problems, resulting in relevant and meaningful findings.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Impact of South Korean Culture in Indonesia**

Cultural diplomacy conducted by South Korea in Indonesia aims to disseminate Korean culture and expand its market. Utilizing the phenomenon of Hallyu as the main instrument, this cultural diplomacy creates positive impacts involving various aspects, including economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions (Fazry et al., 2022). The

South Korean government, along with Korean companies, employs K-Pop celebrities as cultural ambassadors to promote Hallyu and Korean products such as Samsung, LG, and Hyundai. This collaboration is designed to align with the consumptive nature and enthusiasm of Indonesian society towards Korean culture. Beyond music, the presence of Korean cuisine in Indonesia is also part of the effort to spread culture (Leonardo, 2019; Padmo et al., 2021). Restaurants and stalls serving Korean food have become widespread, creating a culinary experience closer to everyday Korean life. The influence of Hallyu is also evident in the Indonesian music industry, which has begun to adopt Korean music patterns. This change reflects the significant appeal and influence of Korean culture in the Indonesian entertainment industry (Schlonsky & Damayanti, 2022). The influence of South Korean culture in Indonesia extends beyond the music and food industries, significantly impacting consumer behavior and national values, especially among teenagers. One observable impact is the influence on lifestyle product enthusiasts (Fitria et al., 2021; Mulyaman, 2020; Putri et al., 2019).

The Hallyu phenomenon has created trends among Indonesian teenagers to adopt the lifestyle and products originating from South Korea. This can lead to a decline in local nationalism and culture as the consumption of South Korean products and lifestyles becomes more dominant, overshadowing local preferences (Vial & Hanoteau, 2019). Indonesian teenagers also become more consumptive and appear extravagant, especially when purchasing equipment, concert tickets, or original albums from their South Korean idols. The tendency to support foreign products over domestic ones can create economic and financial imbalances among the population (Glodev et al., 2023). Additionally, there are even TV channels in Indonesia with special programs for South Korean culture enthusiasts, indicating the high interest and popularity of Korean culture among the public. While this can be considered a form of media freedom expression, it also raises questions about the dominance of foreign culture in the local media space (Al-Fadhat & Effendi, 2019; Padmo et al., 2021). Negative influences are also observed in the Indonesian film industry, where people tend to be more interested in watching Korean films than domestically produced ones. This could have serious consequences for the national film industry, threatening its sustainability and development (Lee et al., 2020).

Despite the presence of negative influences, the Hallyu phenomenon also brings significant positive impacts in Indonesia. One notable positive impact is the emergence of local boy bands and girl bands. Their presence is considered to bring a fresh perspective to the Indonesian music industry, providing variety and alternatives that refresh the public's musical taste (Glodev et al., 2023). This also opens opportunities for local talents to explore their abilities in music and dance. Furthermore, Hallyu, or the Korean Cultural Wave, also has a positive influence on the bilateral relationship between Indonesia and South Korea. Through culture, strong bonds are formed among the people of both countries, creating closer cooperation and enriching cross-cultural interactions (Zulkarnain & Suharyono, 2022; Permatasari, 2022). Another positive impact is seen in the field of education. The Indonesian community can learn about and study the culture of other countries, in this case, South Korea, without losing their Indonesian cultural identity. The use of the Korean language in K-pop songs also encourages Indonesian teenagers to learn the language, contributing positively to the enhancement of knowledge, insight, and foreign language proficiency (Ismail, 2023). Besides economic and cultural impacts, South Korea's cultural diplomacy in Indonesia also brings positive political implications. Good political relations between the two countries naturally facilitate cooperation in various other fields. Cultural diplomacy, therefore, serves as a gateway to strengthen bilateral relations, creating a broader and sustainable framework for cooperation (Bajenaru, 2022; Dirir, 2022).

### **Implications of South Korean Cultural Diplomacy for Bilateral Relations**

South Korea has been building bilateral relations with Indonesia at the government level, leading to various agreements in different fields to strengthen both nations. The negotiation process to reach these agreements is not easy and requires mutual

understanding between the two parties (Saputro, 2022; Setiawan, 2020). In this context, cultural elements play a crucial role as facilitators in smoothing the negotiation process to achieve agreements. Cultural aspects become key in building understanding and trust between the governments of South Korea and Indonesia. Hallyu, or the Korean Wave, is the result of these cultural aspects and emphasizes people-to-people contact significantly (Arini & Hartati, 2022). Hallyu extends beyond music and drama, encompassing various aspects of Korean culture, such as food, fashion, and lifestyle. People-to-people contact created through Hallyu establishes more dynamic relations between Indonesian and South Korean societies. This phenomenon not only creates attraction and interest in Korean culture but also fosters a deeper understanding between the two countries. Through understanding each other's cultural values, traditions, and ways of life, a strong foundation is formed for effective negotiations and bilateral agreements (Shertina & Utomo, 2021; Mulyaman, 2020).

Cultural diplomacy between South Korea and Indonesia can be understood through the concept of multitrack diplomacy, where agreements are made to maintain closeness and achieve efforts for each country's national interests. Cultural diplomacy has been developed through various actors, exploring several tracks to strengthen and deepen bilateral relations (Trisni et al., 2019). The government track serves as the primary foundation of cultural diplomacy. Agreements and policies produced by the governments of South Korea and Indonesia create a framework for cooperation in the cultural domain. Government actors are responsible for forming the formal basis and regulations supporting cultural exchanges between the two countries (Fazry et al., 2022; Anindia, 2022). Furthermore, the business track plays a crucial role as a significant actor in cultural diplomacy. Collaborations between South Korean and Indonesian companies, especially in the entertainment and creative industries, create a platform to disseminate South Korean culture through the products and services produced. The educational track also acts as an intermediary in incorporating Korean art and culture into Indonesian society (Kumalaningrum, 2021). Student exchange programs, university collaborations, and the opening of Korean language departments in several educational institutions in Indonesia provide avenues to enhance understanding and appreciation of South Korean culture. Meanwhile, the citizen and activism track is also an integral part of cultural diplomacy. The role of the general public, especially K-pop fans and enthusiasts of Korean culture, in promoting Hallyu and gauging the acceptance of this culture at the societal level is significant (Mulyaman, 2020; Glodev et al., 2023; Schlonsky & Damayanti, 2022). Cultural activism can also play a critical role in advocating for cultural diversity and preserving local identity. All these tracks can function effectively thanks to the key role of mass media and information technology. Broadcasting, digital platforms, and social media provide broad outreach to disseminate South Korean culture in Indonesia, accelerating the information exchange process and facilitating interactions between actors at various levels (Salsabila & Rahmadhani, 2023).

The history of Indonesia as one of the pioneers of the Non-Aligned Movement remains a strong memory in the global order. Indonesia's involvement in helping resolve international issues and conflicts has garnered widespread attention, including from South Korea, which sees Indonesia as a potential ally in addressing issues on the Korean Peninsula (Agustin et al., 2020; Zulkarnain & Suharyono, 2022). In the context of bilateral relations between South Korea and Indonesia, South Korea's cultural involvement plays a significant role. South Korea's soft power, stemming from three main elements—Hallyu (Korean Wave) as an expression of traditional and popular culture, the president's vision related to cultural development domestically and abroad, and foreign policies supporting the cultural role—all come together to provide a strong appeal to Indonesia (Leonardo, 2019). Hallyu, as a key element of South Korea's soft power, has created significant interest in Korean culture among the Indonesian population. South Korean music, drama, food, and lifestyle have become popular in Indonesia, creating emotional bonds between the two nations (Arini & Hartati, 2022; Pramadya & Oktaviani, 2021). The South Korean president's vision for cultural development encompasses not

only traditional aspects but also incorporates innovation and creativity, making it relevant on a global scale. This creates a shared perspective between Indonesia and South Korea in efforts to advance and preserve cultural heritage (Al-Fadhat & Effendi, 2019). Furthermore, South Korea's foreign policy supporting cultural diplomacy provides the country with legitimacy and moral authority. By recognizing culture as an effective diplomatic tool, South Korea strengthens its position in bilateral relations with Indonesia and other countries (Fitria et al., 2021).

South Korea's cultural diplomacy, as part of soft diplomacy, has a powerful influence, especially in building positive relations and strengthening ties between the two countries. Cultural exchanges bring benefits by deepening Indonesia's understanding of South Korean culture, fostering mutual understanding, and tolerance (Ismail, 2023). However, Indonesia needs to be cautious about the potential unconscious influence on its society. Cultural diplomacy, sometimes subjective, can impact public opinion and preferences without people realizing it (Permatasari, 2022; Bajenaru, 2022). South Korea, through Hallyu, can shape the opinions and views of Indonesians on South Korean culture, values, and policies. Additionally, there are concerns that, in pursuing its national needs, South Korea might have hidden agendas not realized by Indonesia. Cultural diplomacy that seems positive and open may conceal more complex intentions or interests not immediately apparent to the public (Saputro, 2022). Therefore, while cultural diplomacy can serve as a bridge to build interstate relations, it's crucial for Indonesia to remain vigilant and critical of potential impacts. Establishing open and transparent dialogue channels between the Indonesian and South Korean governments can help maintain balance and avoid potential risks arising from intensive cultural diplomacy (Mulyaman, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

The research findings assert that the phenomenon of Hallyu, or the Korean Wave, has a significant impact on strengthening and deepening the relationship between South Korea and Indonesia. Hallyu, as an expression of South Korean popular culture, has created a strong appeal among the Indonesian population, facilitating cultural exchanges, ideas, and information between the two countries. However, in the context of cultural diplomacy, it needs to be acknowledged that there is a potential for unconscious influence on society. While cultural diplomacy aims to strengthen international bonds, there are concerns about the possibility of indirect influence that can affect the opinions and policies of Indonesians without them realizing it directly. It is crucial to recognize that in efforts to build sustainable bilateral relations, transparency and open dialogue between the governments of both countries are crucial. This will help address potential risks and concerns related to hidden agendas that South Korea might have, thus maintaining a balance between Indonesia's national interests. Cultural diplomacy through Hallyu has proven to be an effective tool in strengthening the relationship between South Korea and Indonesia. However, vigilance, transparency, and close cooperation among the parties involved are necessary to mitigate risks and preserve the national interests of each country in conducting cultural diplomacy effectively and sustainably.

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