

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND THE STRENGTHENING OF TOLERANCE VALUES IN INDONESIA - MALAYSIA RELATIONS : A CONSTRUCTIVISM PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the role of cultural diplomacy in strengthening tolerance values between Indonesia and Malaysia through the perspective of constructivism. Indonesia and Malaysia are two neighboring countries that not only because of their geographical location as neighbors but also both have similar cultural diversity, because they have a similar racial background, the Melanesian race. Therefore, the emergence of the problem of mutual claims about some cultural products (dances, songs, musical instruments) is a common thing, because building cultural understanding in neighboring communities is not an easy matter. Therefore, cultural interaction can create dialog and better understanding. For instances, through some activities such as cultural festivals, art exchanges and research collaborations contribute to strengthening bilateral relations by emphasizing the importance of moderation and respect for diversity. This approach not only reduces potential conflicts, such as cultural claims, but also promotes values of tolerance through art and shared social norms. In line with that, this research uses a qualitative method using a constructivist perspective that relates the similarities in values and cultures between Indonesia and Malaysia.

Keywords: Cultural diplomacy, tolerance, constructivism, Indonesia-Malaysia

A. INTRODUCTION

The cultural diplomacy between Indonesia and Malaysia is a relevant issue in the current social context, with close historical and cultural ties between the two countries. In the era of globalization, where intercultural interactions are increasing, cultural diplomacy has become an important tool to strengthen bilateral relations and to promote tolerance values. This research focuses on how cultural diplomacy can contribute to strengthening the values of tolerance between the people of Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as the challenges faced in the process. For example, research shows that cultural programs such as art exchanges and cultural festivals can increase understanding and appreciation of differences between the two countries (Aswan et al., 2023) .

The issue of tolerance is becoming increasingly important in the midst of rising social tensions and identity conflicts that often occur in various parts of the world. In Indonesia, for example, although the society is known for its ethnic and religious diversity, there are still challenges in building harmonious relations between religious communities. Previous research

shows that misunderstandings about the meaning of tolerance often lead to inharmonious interactions between different groups (Khoir & Anshory, 2023) . In this context, cultural diplomacy can serve as a bridge to build dialog and mutual understanding, which in turn can reduce social tensions.

In previous studies on Indonesia-Malaysia relations, there is a gap in understanding the role of cultural diplomacy as an instrument to strengthen tolerance values. Many studies focus more on the political or economic aspects of bilateral relations without considering the cultural dimensions that can contribute to social stability. This research aims to fill that gap by exploring how cultural elements can be used to build bridges of communication between the two countries.

One important aspect of this research is the application of constructivism perspective in analyzing Indonesia-Malaysia relations. Constructivism emphasizes the importance of ideas, norms and identities in shaping the behavior of states and societies. In this context, the research will explore how values of tolerance can be built through cultural interaction and how this can influence people's perceptions of each other (Bangsu & Al-Fadhat, 2023) . As such, the study will not only provide new insights into the dynamics of the two countries' relationship but also offer relevant theoretical approaches to understanding the social phenomenon.

The main objective of this research is to analyze the role of cultural diplomacy in strengthening the values of tolerance between the people of Indonesia and Malaysia. Through a qualitative approach, this research will explore the various forms of cultural interaction that exist and their impact on people's perceptions and attitudes towards differences. It will also explore how existing cultural programs can be strengthened or enhanced to achieve this goal.

The benefits of this research are not only limited to the development of science but also have practical implications for society. By understanding the role of cultural diplomacy in building tolerance, policy makers and practitioners can design more effective programs to promote interfaith and intercultural harmony. In addition, the results of this study are expected to be a reference for academics and other researchers interested in issues related to cultural diplomacy and tolerance.

Overall, this research aims to make a significant contribution to our understanding of how cultural diplomacy can be an effective means of strengthening tolerance values in the context of Indonesia-Malaysia relations. With its in-depth qualitative approach, it is hoped that this

research will pave the way for further studies on intercultural interactions in the Southeast Asian region.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

A qualitative approach is chosen in this study because of its ability to explore in depth complex social phenomena, such as cultural diplomacy and tolerance. This method allows researchers to understand the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of individuals or groups involved in cultural interactions between Indonesia and Malaysia. According to Creswell(2003) , qualitative approaches are particularly effective for exploring social and cultural contexts, as well as providing insight into how individuals construct meaning from their experiences. In the context of cultural diplomacy, this approach helps in identifying the norms and values formed through intercultural interactions, as well as how it can strengthen tolerance between the people of the two countries.

The constructivism framework provides a powerful perspective in understanding the interactions between state actors in the context of cultural diplomacy. Constructivism emphasizes that social identities and norms are formed through social interactions, which means that values of tolerance can develop through mutually beneficial cultural diplomacy practices. Research by Wendt(1999) shows that state behavior is not only determined by material interests, but also by norms built through interactions with other states.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. An Analysis of Constructivism Perspective in Indonesia-Malaysia Relations

In the context of international relations, a constructivist perspective offers a deep understanding of how identities, norms and social interactions shape the dynamics between states. In the relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia, constructivism can be used to analyze how history, culture, and perceptions influence each other in building cooperation and overcoming conflict. Constructivism emphasizes that social reality is shaped by interactions between individuals and groups, which in this case are the countries. Therefore, the national and cultural identities of both countries play an important role in shaping their foreign policies and bilateral relations (Clark & Pietsch, 2014) .

The two ideas of Constructivism are : first, the belief that the structures that hold humanity together are determined more by shared ideas than material forces. This belief represents the

idealist perspective that once dominated the discipline of IR especially before World War II: and second, the belief that the identities and interests of actors are determined more by shared ideas than by natural factors. This means that the actions of each actor are not solely determined by their motives, reasons and interests but rather shaped by interactions between individuals in the surrounding environment (social structure, politics, economic culture and so on) (Pramono & Purwono, 2010).

One important aspect of constructivism in Indonesia-Malaysia relations is the role of diplomacy between two states. The goal of a diplomatic relation between countries is for the sake of each country's national interest (Martin et al., 2024). Indonesia-Malaysia diplomacy in constructivism perspective can't be separated from cultural diplomacy among these two neighboring-countries. Cultural diplomacy serves as a tool to strengthen relations between countries by promoting each other's values and traditions. Research shows that cultural diplomacy programs conducted by both countries have helped reduce tensions that arose due to social issues in the past. Through student exchanges, performing arts, and other cultural activities, Indonesia and Malaysia were able to build better mutual understanding between their peoples, which in turn strengthened bilateral relations (Clark & Pietsch, 2014) .

In addition, a shared identity as countries with similar cultural backgrounds is also a key factor in this relationship. Constructivism highlights how collective identity can create a sense of solidarity among countries that share a common history and culture. In this context, both Indonesia and Malaysia have much in common in terms of language, religion and traditions. These commonalities are often used to strengthen cooperation in areas such as the economy and regional security.

However, while there are many similarities, Indonesia-Malaysia relations are also affected by conflicts arising from differences in national interests. For example, the issue of illegal migrant workers is often a source of tension between the two countries. From a constructivist perspective, the way the two countries handle this issue reflects how they perceive each other and how they want to be seen by the international community. The normative approach taken by Indonesia in dealing with this issue shows an effort to maintain good relations with Malaysia despite the challenges.

Finally, constructivism also invites us to consider how historical narratives are constructed and maintained in the societies of both countries. Collective memories of the past, such as the confrontation in the 1960s, still influence people's perceptions of each other today.

Through education and media, these narratives can be reinforced or revised to create a better understanding of bilateral relations. Therefore, a constructivist understanding of identity and historical narratives is crucial in shaping the future of Indonesia-Malaysia relations (AMRY & VANDENBOSCH, 2023) .

2. Indonesia-Malaysia Cultural Diplomacy Program

The joint cultural festival between Indonesia and Malaysia is an effective form of cultural diplomacy to strengthen relations between the two countries. This activity not only showcases the arts and culture of each country, but also creates a space for wider social interaction. Through this festival, people can get to know each other and appreciate the cultural differences that exist. Research shows that cultural festivals can increase intercultural understanding and tolerance (Afrianda & Iskandar, 2023) .

The festival also serves as a dialog space where people can discuss the differences and similarities that exist in their cultures. By promoting direct interaction between citizens of both sides, the festival helps to reduce misunderstandings that often arise due to negative stereotypes. This is in line with the principle of constructivism, which emphasizes that identities and social norms are formed through social interaction.

The artist and cultural exchange program between Indonesia and Malaysia plays an important role in strengthening cultural relations between the two countries. Through this program, artists from each country can learn from each other and share experiences, techniques, and new perspectives on art. This exchange not only improves the quality of the art produced but also enriches the understanding of each other's cultural values.

Art as a medium of communication can effectively bridge the differences. When artists from both countries collaborate, they create works that reflect elements from both cultures, resulting in unique and innovative art products. This encourages people to appreciate cultural diversity and reduce negative stereotypes that may exist between them.

Cultural research collaboration between academics from Indonesia and Malaysia is also an important aspect of cultural diplomacy. Through joint research, both countries can dig deeper into their shared history and cultural values. This research not only provides new insights but also strengthens academic ties between the two countries (Clark & Pietsch, 2014).

Table: Indonesia-Malaysia Cultural Diplomacy Program (2018-2023

Year	Program	Description
2018	Arts Festival	Traditional art performances from both countries in Kuala Lumpur.
2019	Student Exchange	Student exchange programs between leading universities in both countries.
2020	Culture Webinar	Online discussion on shared cultural heritage during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2021	Art Exhibition	A contemporary art exhibition involving artists from Indonesia and Malaysia.
2022	Movie Collaboration	Co-production of movies describing stories of friendship between nationals.

3. The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Strengthening Indonesia-Malaysia Tolerance

On December 5-9, 2018, a cultural event was held in the form of the Indonesian Cultural Congress (KKI). As a result, the congress agreed on a document in the form of an "Indonesian Cultural Strategy" or SKI which was submitted to President Joko Widodo. The document contains the direction of the road for the promotion of national culture which is elaborated into seven strategic agendas. The first agenda of this cultural strategy mandates the need for inclusive cultural expression and interaction spaces (*Tempo*, 2018) .

When receiving this cultural document, the president emphasized the importance of providing a platform for cultural expression. And even more importantly, "the availability of a stage for tolerant interaction". The question is, how important is a tolerant cultural profile?

SKI's vision is to build a happy Indonesia based on cultural diversity that educates, reconciles for peace and improves the welfare of all Indonesian people. From that long vision, there is one word that is full of meaning "reconciling for peace". For Indonesia, which is very diverse in culture (both in terms of values and products), the word "peace" is important. Cultural diversity that manifests in the form of customs, traditions, rituals, and art products is a process of cultural commodification. On the one hand, it is a strength in the promotion of culture. However, on the other hand, if not managed wisely and with an open mind, it becomes a weakness.

As an asset, inter-ethnic and regional cultural interactions will actually open up a wide space for the imagination and creativity of art activists. But imagine when cultural products, which are traditionally rooted in the life of one community, interact with other community groups? Yes, a clash of values, between cultural products (both tangible, such as handicraft

products and clothing; and intangible, such as traditional ceremonies, traditions, and rituals in various regions) or efforts to claim each other's culture between neighboring countries that are allied.

Indonesia and Malaysia are two neighboring countries that not only because of their geographical location as neighbors, but also both have similar cultural diversity, because they have a similar racial background, namely the Melanesian race. Therefore, the emergence of the problem of mutual claims about some cultural products (dances, songs, musical instruments) is a common thing.

Building cultural understanding in neighboring communities is not an easy matter, there will often be mutual cultural claims due to the similarity of cultural roots between Indonesia - Malaysia which are indeed allied, therefore, it is very important that Indonesia-Malaysia continue to build tolerance between cultural communities in the two neighboring countries.

So, who really owns a cultural product? The answer is, absolutely, humans and the people who build and preserve the culture are the owners. Because culture is born from a community and culture will survive as long as the community preserves it.

This clash of values and cultural clash must be managed wisely and must complement and enrich each other. As mandated by President Jokowi to "provide a stage for tolerant interaction" in every Indonesian culture. Respect for diversity and difference in the articulation of culture enriches the space for imagination and creativity. Tolerance in culture actually celebrates differences and diversity itself.

The question is, how to articulate this culture of tolerance in the practice of cultural diplomacy? After the world was no longer characterized by ideological competition in relations between countries, cultural diplomacy became increasingly important in foreign policy. After the Cold War era ended, cultural factors were not only important in relations between nations, but became the driving force for increasing the intensity of international relations (Michael J. Mazarr, Culture in International Relations, Global Policy Forum, Spring 1996). In line with this, it is natural that Indonesia also uses culture as an instrument of diplomacy and foreign policy.

However, what kind of cultural diplomacy profile is to be developed? Observing media coverage, the end of the KKI left a new term for Indonesian cultural politics, which is tolerant culture. A tolerant cultural attitude is a way of articulating a culture that respects differences and diversity in society, both ethnic and religious. This way of culture that celebrates

differences and diversity can only grow if there is also a moderate attitude in politics. History teaches us that it is precisely this tolerant and moderate attitude of our nation (both in ideology, politics and religion) that is the binding factor of the nation. It is no wonder that the president also reminded the cultural space for tolerance to culturalists and art activists.

This is the new narrative of cultural politics, moderate and tolerant culture. Moderate refers to an attitude that can compromise with the values that develop in society (cultural values and religious values). Tolerant refers to an attitude of respect for differences and diversity.

Cultural diplomacy is not necessarily meant to be an image diplomacy of a culturally rich country. But what values should be portrayed? With the terminology of "tolerant and moderate culture", Indonesia's cultural diplomacy requires new interpretation. This new interpretation is necessary because the promotion of culture must be framed in a grand narrative, the narrative is Indonesia that respects differences and diversity. Indonesian cultural diplomacy abroad must tell the unity and integrity of the nation that continues to exist precisely because of mutual respect for differences in customs, traditions, culture and religion. This is the profile of cultural diplomacy that contains strategic value, which is imaging a united, moderate and tolerant Indonesia.

These three images: moderate, tolerant, and democratic, should be narrated in all cultural diplomacy activities. Indonesia's democratic, moderate and tolerant image places Indonesia in the mainstream of international politics. The three images projected through cultural diplomacy make Indonesia's diplomatic became much more flexible, which ultimately expands the space for Indonesia's diplomacy to explore broader interests, including those related to political and economic interests (Djumala, 2021).

D. CONCLUSIONS

Cultural diplomacy plays a strategic role in strengthening the values of tolerance between Indonesia and Malaysia, especially in the context of shared history and culture. Through a constructivism approach, bilateral relations between the two countries can be analyzed based on the formation of norms, identities and social interactions. Cultural diplomacy not only serves as a tool to promote arts and traditions, but also a bridge to create a deeper cross-cultural understanding. Cultural programs such as art festivals, student exchanges, and artist collaborations are effective means of building dialogue between communities. These activities not only introduce the beauty of each country's culture, but also reduce negative stereotypes,

increase understanding, and promote social harmony. In addition, collaborations in academia and the arts provide opportunities to strengthen cultural understanding, creating innovative works that reflect a shared identity. However, challenges such as mutual claims of cultural products and conflicts of interest remain. Cultural diplomacy based on tolerance and moderation is needed to manage these differences. This strategy should be directed towards a grand narrative of the importance of appreciating diversity as a shared asset, not a source of separation. In the international world, Indonesia-Malaysia cultural diplomacy not only reflects cultural diversity, but also highlights the image of both countries as tolerant, moderate and democratic societies. By strengthening this relationship, cultural diplomacy can be an important instrument to promote social, economic and political stability in Indonesia-Malaysia and also in the Southeast Asian region.

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