

# Applying Soft Power Diplomacy through Istituto Italiano di Cultura to Promote Italian Culture

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## Abstract

A soft power diplomacy is one of ways of a state to spread away cultural elements. Such as language, arts, and natural riches. *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* is one of centers of culture that has significance for Italy in Indonesia. This study aimed to identify the efforts of Italian government in promoting the Italian cultures in Indonesia through *Instituto Italiano di Cultura*. The diplomatic relationship and national importance of the Italian government in Indonesia and ASEAN countries was one of factors that acknowledged the establishing of Italian center of culture in Indonesia. This study qualitatively used diplomacy approach with an analysis of Soft Power Diplomacy theory by Joseph Nye. As result, this study has found that the transmission of foreign policy of a state which was dominantly using Hard Power are now heading to Soft Power. Through *Instituto Italiano di Cultura*, the Italian government has seen a potency in the use of culture in national importance of a state and found effective. Besides, there were three matters used as media for soft power diplomacy of *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* in Indonesia, namely through language, education, and arts. These three matters were highly correlated one another to realize the objective of Italian diplomacy in Indonesia. Therefore, this study could conclude that a diplomacy in the mode of soft power was more effective than a diplomacy through politics.

**Keywords:** bilateral cooperation; center of culture; soft power diplomacy; international relations; diplomacy

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## 1. Introduction

Italy is one of the countries that plays an important role in the development of the world. A long before that, world civilization and science developed around the world. The Romans have proven to the world that a war strategy and military power can conquer other nations in order to fulfill the national interests of the Italian state. Not only in military terms, but in other aspects such as diplomatically Italy has pioneered the formation of an organization which is now known as the United Nations (UN). Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto designed a manifesto that would later become the embryo of establishing the United Nations. This design is known as the Ventotene Manifesto. The term is taken from the designer of one of the islands in Italy, namely Ventotene.

Italian culture is quite well received in the world. This is proven by the popularity of Italy in its consistency in maintaining its existence among new cultures that continue to emerge. Under the auspices of the Italian embassy (Ambasciata d'Italia), the Italian government has a center for Italian culture that aims to spread Italian culture around the world. Its cultural center has some affiliations spread in some countries that have a potency to meet the national needs of Italy, such as Indonesia. In Indonesia, its cultural center is greatly relied on as the starting point for Italy to carry out cultural diplomacy.

In the international world, every country communicates with other countries in order to fulfill the national interests of their country. In communication among countries, there is a cooperation in various fields, such as economics, education and development. To carry out this cooperation, each country has its own foreign policy (Rosenau, 1976).

Intercultural communication is basically communication that is inclusive as compared to communication among races and communication among ethnic groups. Meanwhile, intercultural communication is more informal, personal and not always between nations or between countries. International communication usually tends to study communication between nations through formal channels and mass media. In international communication, culture is one way of soft diplomacy. Unlike the previous era, where hard power or military force was the most powerful diplomatic way to fulfill the national interests of each country. However, everything has changed and more preferable to soft diplomacy. Cultural exchange is considered to be a very powerful way of creating global hegemony that will benefit a country whose culture has become global hegemony. Economically and politically, hegemony is greatly beneficial for a country whose culture has become a global culture and known in almost every country. Therefore, soft culture is considered the most effective way to perform diplomacy (Ramadhan et al., 2019). Although the effects felt are not as fast as diplomacy with hard power, the effects that will be felt later will be very satisfying.

To spread Italian culture around the world, the Italian government opened Italian cultural center in several countries called "*Instituto Italiano di Cultura*". In Indonesia, precisely in October 2000 the Italian cultural center was officially opened. *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* or commonly abbreviated as IIC teaches a lot about Italian

culture, ranging from food, music and language. For language, the IIC opens classes for anyone without exception to get to know Italian more deeply. It also opens classes to learn and cook Italian specialties, such as pizza, spaghetti and *Gelato*.

Thus, this study analyzed and communicated *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* in using soft power to fulfill the interests of the Italian government in Indonesia. The analysis was based on the theory of Soft Power Diplomacy, so that everyone could ensure how the pattern of relations between two countries in synergizing the culture of a country in another country with a good consensus.

A research on *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* has been conducted by Hidayat et al. with a research focus in the form of an interior design model for the Italian Cultural Center in Jakarta. The research found that there is still a lack of facilities that the cultural center does not yet have. The research mentioned the lack of waiting rooms, places to talk and discuss, and places for services that still use only one area (Hidayat et al., 2018).

From above research, it could be seen that there was still one study that discussed and studied *Instituto Italiano di Cultura*, namely from an interior design perspective. Thus, a research that raises and analyzes *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* from the perspective of critical social theory has not been carried out, so that it will be the novelty in this study. This novelty will give any significance in enriching the study of critical social theory in term of culture as well as extending an insight on *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* with a different perspective.

## 2. Method

This study used qualitative research. The data were described in written or spoken words, and obtained from people and the observed behavior. Qualitative research is research that tends to focus on understanding a meaning, concept, definition, characteristic, symbol and description of something (Berg, 2007).

This study was conducted from September 2017 to June 2018. The informants of this study consisted of 3 respondents, namely (1) the leader of the Italian cultural center who had been in Indonesia for a long time as a representative of the Italian government under the Italian embassy in the field of culture; (2) one of the student participants at IIC who studied Italian culture with his ability to speak Italian and visited Italy; and (3) teachers and students at IIC who have studied Italian culture and have even visited Italy to learn Italian language and culture. In this concern, this study expected to get the views of an Italian student and teacher at the same time. The focus of this research was on the role of *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* in carrying out soft diplomacy in Indonesia through language, music, and education.

Table 1. Research Focus

| Object  | Element   | Evidence  |
|---|-----------|---|
| Italian efforts to perform soft power through cultural diplomacy at IIC | Language  | Language education program.<br>Participants' perceptions on Italian language and culture.                             |
|   | Music     | Music concert program.<br>Participants' perceptions on Italian music and Italian culture.                             |
|   | Education | Education scholarship program in Italy.<br>Perceptions of study program participants in Italy against Italian culture |

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Italian Soft Power Diplomacy through Language

Language is not only limited to verbal communication, but language has a very important influence in gaining power. For example, the influence of the European continent in controlling all aspects of the world. The European continent is considered a more developed continent and has better potential than other countries (David, 2013). One of the factors that makes European countries the mecca of other continents is language. The majority of languages from European countries are spoken in many countries or continents. For example, English has become an international language, and followed by French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian and Dutch, which have a number of speakers not only from their home country, but also in worldwide. The Europeans have been colonizing since ancient times. In the process of colonization, these European countries spread the language of their home country in the colony. Along with the development of era, language spread and was spoken in many colonies by the local people. Indeed, it is not uncommon for even the language of the home country to have been modified on several types of words and accents (Nugraha, 2018).

During the colonial era, one of the media to communicate was radio. Radio is a propaganda tool (Irianti, 2014). When Germany expanded its colonies in each of its colonies, the Germany used radio as a propaganda tool, and the language used on the radio was German. German became the main language of all radios in the colony. Automatically, many local residents learnt Germany language to find out the information conveyed (David, 2013).

The more people speak a language of a country, the more benefits that the language can give for the country,

in the business perspective, it is beneficial when both countries have an understanding in the same language and make it easier to communicate, so that both parties can understand and agree on what they understand. The Italian language is currently an international language established by the United Nations. On the other hand, diplomacy through language is also carried out by Indonesia and Thailand through the BIPA (Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers) program. The teaching of Indonesian is given to disseminate the identity and national values of the Indonesian (Darma et al., 2018).

In Indonesia, the cultural center of *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* is expected to be the spearhead of the Italian government in spreading Italian in Indonesia. By learning Italian, it is expected that other Italian cultures will be studied and various cultural factors will attract Indonesian people to visit Italy and increase their love for Italian products. By this, a trend will be created, namely "Italian-Minded". If this trend has been created, the Italy will successfully run its soft power in Indonesia.

### 3.2 Italian Soft Power Diplomacy through Arts

Art is one of the factors that has its own impact on the economic development being carried out. This factor also functions as a generator or driver in the development process, but it can also be a barrier to development. Art provides another view of how to gain power (Suryokusumo, 2008).

Basically, art is one example of culture that we do in everyday life. Italy has had artistic advancement since ancient Roman times. Since ancient Roman times, the Italian art has evolved through many stylistic changes. In fact, the Italian painting is traditionally characterized by warm, light colors, as exemplified in the works of Caravaggio and Titian, and a delight with religious images and motifs. One of them is Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*: the equivalent of the Mona Lisa, is the most imitated and parodied religious portrait and painting of all times (Martel, 2003).

Many of the world's philosophers came from Italy; one of them is Giordano Bruno, Marsilio Ficino, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Giambattista Vico. Modern literary figures and Nobel laureates are the nationalist poet Giosuè Carducci in 1906, a realist writer Grazia Deledda in 1926, a modern theater writer Luigi Pirandello in 1936, a poet Salvatore Quasimodo in 1959 and Eugenio Montale in 1975, a satirist and theater writer Dario Fo in 1997.

The performing arts (e.g., theater) is no less worldwide. The Italian theater can be traced back to the Roman tradition which was heavily influenced by Greece; like most literary genres, Roman dramatists tended to adapt and translate the Greek works. For example, Seneca's *Phaedra* was based on Euripides, and many of Plautus' comedies were the translations of Menander's works. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century and into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the *commedia dell'arte* was a form of improvisational theater, and it is still performed today (David, 2015).

The Italian government and *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* in collaboration with several parties in 2017 held a concert to commemorate the 10 years of Luciano Pavarotti's departure. In addition, they also invite artists from Italy to give seminars to introduce Italian art tradition. In a different way, a study proves that film is also part of the art that is carried out in a diplomacy, because films are considered effective in spreading values, influencing emotions, and demanding the behavior of the audience to act in the same way according to the essence of the film (Rachmawati, 2019).

### 3.3 Italian Soft Power Diplomacy through Education

Many factors influence the development of a country. One of the things that gives important attention to the continuity of the country is education. Education is one of the important and strategic agendas that requires a real attention from all parties. This is because education is a determining factor for the nation's future progress. If we (as a nation), succeed in building the basics of national education properly, it is expected that it can contribute to progress in other fields. Education is a form of human capital investment that will determine the quality of a nation's human resources (HR) (Chabod, 2014).

The quality of human resources is one of the important factors in the development of an organization, especially a country (Brata, 2002). The developed countries in the world are supported by quality human resources, so that they have advantages in almost all fields, including the economy. According to a number of experts, the economic crisis that hit Indonesia was so devastating, apart from being caused by technical economic factors, but also due to the limited human resources and competence of our human resources.

This is what Suparwi calls as the intellectual capital; which means that HR is the first and important asset in an organization and company (Suparwi, 2018). In fact, quality human resources are an important element in building the nation's (economic) resilience. The multidimensional crisis that has hit Indonesia since mid-July 1997 until its influence until now seems to confirm and convince us how vital the human resource factor is. Education is one of the most important elements in building quality human resources.

Education is one of the soft powers that the Italian government uses for the national interest in Indonesia. The Italian government provides opportunities for Italian students who wish to study Italian or Italian culture directly in Italy. Apart from trying to get the attention of Indonesian students, it is not uncommon for Italian students to visit Indonesia to learn Indonesian language and culture.

The Italian government pays a great attention to the development of education in Italy and also the spread of Italian culture outside Italy. The Italy realizes the importance of the quality of human resources has a very strategic value in long-term period, because it will make a very large contribution to development progress and also the economy. Through the education provided by the Italian government, it is expected that students who study Italian culture can love the Italian state and also Italian culture more deeply. Somehow, education is the most effective way to instill cultural values (Normina, 2017).

A study proves that the existence of events about education held in big cities in Indonesia has also triggered the emergence of interest in Indonesian youth to study in Japan. Thus, with this high interest, the Japanese government provided a forum for study and training scholarships for students, teachers, government employees and other elements to raise the standard of Japanese knowledge and teaching standards in Indonesia (Amalina, 2012).

In the context of this research, in Italy, the image of Indonesia has gradually begun to attract the attention of the Italian people. Many Indonesian cultures have been studied in Italy. One of the areas that is very active in promoting Indonesian culture in Italy is Naples. Therefore, Napoli (Naples) is one of the number one destinations for Indonesian students who want to study Italian culture in Indonesia due to number of the Indonesian living in the area.

Napoli (Naples) is an Italian region located in the southern Italy and from Naples, the Indonesian culture has become well-known in several southern regions of Italy. There is a reciprocal that Indonesia feels is that the interest in visiting people of Naples to visit Indonesia is increasing with the aim of studying Indonesian culture and also tourist attractions in Indonesia. Italy has beautiful geographical conditions and is also a well-preserved natural tourist spot. However, Indonesia's image as a tropical country and also having a different nature from Europe has attracted Indonesia's image to Italian society today. In the same way, Riwayatiningasih and Purnaweni (2017) also argue that the potential of Indonesia's natural resources as a tropical country has great opportunities in the very potential tourism sector.

The Italian government has also sent many researchers to research Italy for developments of the Italian state and also for appeal materials. The education provided by the Italian government for Indonesian students is also a jump-start in promoting Italian culture. Students who get scholarships to Italy are expected to become ambassadors to promote culture starting from the smallest aspects, namely the family, work environment and the student's daily environment. Of course, the interest of other students will be stimulated to also study Italian culture with the scholarships provided by the Italian government.

After returning from Indonesia, of course, a lot of Italian culture has been brought back by students to Indonesia. One of the fundamentals is language. The use of Italian in some communications will be introduced by students in their daily life and will make their environmentalists interested and know more about Italian culture. Today, there are many ways to learn Italian culture either from the Internet or from books, of course, if you want more, you can study it at the Italian cultural center or IIC.

#### 4. Discussion

Every country in the international world has different national interests and in its implementation it is different too. One thing in common with a national interest is power. Power is meant to influence other countries to do what the country wants. Prayuda (2019) state that power is a discourse in international relations, as well as tools to achieve national interests. Besides, Joseph Nye thinks that power is like the weather and everyone talks about it, but a few of people really know about power.

Just like farmers and meteorologists who know and analyze a weather and can predict it (Nye, 2004). In addition, Joseph Nye in a book "*Public diplomacy and Soft Power*" defines soft power as a way to make other parties do things that benefit us without us asking or forcing them to do so (Oktaviani et al., 2008). Thus, the soft power of a country comes from culture, values and policies.

Many people interpret power in a narrow sense. Power is said to be a way of forcing other countries to do what other countries we want. But not in terms of factors, in exercising power, it is needed by force or by means of power or militarization. For example, how Catholics around the world respected and followed the orders of the Pope as the highest leader in Catholicism. In another way, it is also about how the Al-Qaeda fighters fought for Osama Bin Laden. These fighters fought and gave their lives not for money or position, but to show their loyalty to Osama Bin Laden and his legacy towards the group.

Power is not always about money or infrastructure. It is often understood that a country that is rich and also has a very reliable military power will have great power in the world. In a world history, when the United States fought Vietnam, and that the United States lost. To achieve power always means using hard power. Hard power uses the power of militarization to influence foreign policies of other countries for the benefit of other countries. Soft power offers something else that has a more beneficial impact and is also very different from the context of hard power. Soft power uses the side that is easier to assimilate in a country than militarization. Culture is an example of what is used in soft power (Nye, 2004).

Basically, soft power is to influence a country with the culture of another country. However, soft power is not only limited to influencing, but also forming a power. Soft power does seem softer or softer than hard power. Soft power is more than just persuading or influencing the state with arguments, but emphasizes a co-optive approach. (Rosyidin, 2014). By using the power of natural resources or human resources, it becomes an asset to influence and persuade other countries and which will later become the attraction of a country in influencing other countries.

Since the era of colonization, Indonesia has attracted European countries, because it has spices that are very popular with European people. The study conducted by Mansyur recounts that since the beginning of his arrival in Indonesia, Dutch traders tried to establish a food/commodity warehouse to accommodate all food needs, especially spices in the Maluku region (Mansyur, 2014). Trade routes both land and sea often cross Indonesia.

Many countries view Indonesia as an attraction and carry out diplomatic relations for the sake of their national interests. Italy is a country that sees Indonesia's potential in several factors. For its national interest, Italy has implemented a social power policy in Indonesia with several cultures such as language, arts and education. It is hoped that the inclusion of Italian culture in Indonesia can have a positive impact on Italy.

#### 4.1 *Instituto Italiano di Cultura as Medium Soft Power*

The Italian government has entrusted *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* as a medium for spreading that culture. The spread of Italian culture such as language, arts and education is one of the main goals of the Italian government in spreading soft power in Indonesia. IIC is fully responsible to the Italian embassy in Indonesia which will later report to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Chabod, 2014).

IIC is not only located in Indonesia, but spread across almost eighty countries in the world. Each of the scattered IICs has different goals and visions in carrying out the national interests of the Italian. Especially in Indonesia, the spread of Italian culture through language, art and education is the main thing of the Italian project. IIC is the center and also the medium in carrying out the mandate given by the Italian government in Indonesia.

Since its establishment in 2000 in Indonesia, IIC has made positive developments in the spread of culture in Indonesia. This can be seen from the increase in students learning Italian and also the enthusiasm of the audience who attend various Italian cultural activities in Indonesia. During 18 years, the cultural center of Italy survived the exposure of other cultures that entered Indonesia. IIC is not only limited in three things which are the main task in spreading culture in Indonesia. Many other factors or activities will be supported by IIC to promote Italian culture in Indonesia. One example is watching a sport final session together in 2006 when Italy entered the final against France.

The existence of IIC in Indonesia makes it easier for Indonesians to learn Italian culture. IIC also makes Italy's positive imagery, because there are not many cultural centers of other countries in Jakarta. Not all countries that have embassies in Indonesia have cultural centers. The IIC is a medium for the Indonesian people to learn Italian culture easily, because every foreign embassy in Indonesia has strict protocols for entering the embassy. Therefore, IIC exists as a medium that makes it easier for Indonesians to learn Italian culture.

It is in line with Italy's political policy to expand cooperative relations not only in Europe. The Italian foreign policy focuses on Europe. Since the formation of the European Union which was also spearheaded by Italy, the welfare and security of Europe has been the main focus. Italy is well aware that with the formation of the European Unions, every European country has a connection (fellowship) to one another. In other words, if one European country experiences a crisis, then the crisis must be overcome together; otherwise the crisis can spread to other European countries which can threaten the stability of European countries.

Along with the progress of globalization, Italy sees a potency that exists not only in Europe, but also throughout the world; one of which is the Southeast Asia region. Southeast Asia is considered by the Italy as one of the regions that has the potential to benefit from several aspects, such as trade and natural resources. ASEAN was founded before the existence of the EU and was one of the pioneers in the formation of regional cooperation in world development. Therefore, the EU and Italy are trying to take some positive values in ASEAN (Mahubani & Jeffery, 2017).

In Indonesia, the image of the European country is quite popular. One of them is culture. The culture of European countries has long been favored by people in Southeast Asia. During the colonial era, the Southeast Asian countries were colonized by European countries and European culture slowly entered the Southeast Asian region. The use of culture is one method used by the Italian government to gain power.

*Instituto Italiano di Cultura* exists as a medium that makes it easier for Indonesians to study Italian culture in Indonesia. Not only in Indonesia, this cultural center can also be found in several countries, such as Europe, Latin America and Southeast Asia. As in Europe, the IIC does not receive a significant response because each European country really admires the culture of their respective countries. Therefore, IIC is located in countries outside of Europe which still make Europe being the central of several fields.

Indonesia is the second country to have an Italian cultural center and has received attention from the Italian government. In contrast to Singapore in terms of population and culture, Indonesia is superior to several factors

than Singapore (Chabod, 2014). In terms of culture, Indonesia is already rich in local culture because of number of ethnic groups in Indonesia. Many opinions prove that with such a large number of cultures, it will not be easy for foreign cultures to assimilate in and dominate in Indonesia.

The positive response was given by the Indonesian people to the existence of Italian culture in Indonesia. The Italian government has certainly responded positively by providing infrastructure and cultural events free of charge to the Indonesian people. The diplomacy of the Italian government by using cultural diplomacy is part of soft power in Indonesia and can be considered successful. This can be assessed from the response of the Indonesian people to every event presenting Italian culture. On the other hand, one of the most important aspects is that the value of Italian trade in Indonesia which can survive and increase, although it is not significant. Apart from Indonesia, the Italy also plays an economic role in Morocco with a value of 6.6% and become one of the largest importing countries in Morocco (Chabod, 2014). It is true that not all factors play a role in Italy in term of trade, but in the automotive and food aspects, the Italy is still successful in spreading its production in Indonesia (Widyasari, 2008).

IIC positions differently from the Italian embassy in Indonesia, which seems to be diplomatic-etiquette and strict. If the IIC applies the same thing, it will certainly reduce students' interest in studying Italian culture. IIC has a private protocol which is implemented in the IIC environment. However, the protocol is not as strict as that enforced in the Italian embassy. IIC is considered as an appropriate medium in conveying culture in Indonesia. In the eighteen years of IIC in Indonesia, the yearly positive response has been given by the Indonesian people, especially Jakarta which has increasingly stimulated the Italian government in providing support to IIC.

## 5. Conclusion

The spread of Italian culture is one of Italy's foreign policies in achieving Italian national interests. The spread of culture through soft power is the method used by the Italian government to gain power. The Italian government has paid greater attention to the spread of culture since globalization era and after the end of the Cold War.

The benefit that comes from having IIC in Indonesia is the ease with which Indonesian can learn Italian culture in Indonesia. They do not need to go to Italy to learn and know Italian culture. For Italy itself, the benefits is the attention of the Indonesian to learn Italian culture as an expectation that the Indonesian will love the Italian and its products. It is also expected that the interest in tourist visits by Indonesian to Italy can increase and have a positive impact on Italian economic growth.

The relation between Italy and Indonesia is in line with the economic growth and trade for both countries. As Indonesian loves the Italy and its products, the growth of Italian trade in Indonesia will automatically increase significantly. The author expects that the study on *Instituto Italiano di Cultura* in promoting Italian culture in Indonesia can be used as a reference in subsequent studies related to cultural centers, Indonesia's relations with Italy and soft power.

The author also expects that the results of this study can trigger curiosity for the next researchers, so that they can examine more deeply the function of cultural centers and the relationship between Italy and Indonesia or also other cultural centers in Indonesia.

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