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Baiq Wardhani¹ 

Abstract

The South Pacific region has become a top foreign policy priority for Jakarta. This essay explains Indonesia's utilisation of the cultural approach in its diplomatic engagement with the South Pacific. Cultural dissemination as a tool of international relations is scantily studied even though its use in diplomacy has successfully forged mutual understanding between people of discrete backgrounds. Indonesia uses a cultural approach to catch up diplomatically in its neighbouring, but previously overlooked, region and to address its 'poor image' problem that has persisted there for more than three decades. The cultural approach is intended to complement political and economic approaches. This study aims to bridge the gap in the literature vis-à-vis the role of culture in shaping foreign policy goals. Indonesia undertakes this 'soft diplomacy' based on its long-term orientation toward its national identity, politico-business and strategic interests. The Indonesian government is optimistic that cultural diplomacy will succeed in enhancing Indonesia's status in this zone.

Keywords

Cultural diplomacy, identity, foreign policy, Indonesia, Oceania

Introduction

Indonesia has faced diplomatic difficulties with its Pacific neighbours, which it now needs to redress. Indonesia disregarded most Pacific countries for many

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decades, having taken the region for granted as its 'backyard'. The Pacific region was neglected to some extent and was absent from strategic calculations. Although previous governments, with the exception of those during President Sukarno's administration (1967–1998), had initiated cooperation, attention to the Pacific intensified under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014). Suharto established diplomatic relations with a limited number of Pacific states to address specific issues, in particular, with Papua New Guinea to settle border issues. The short-lived presidency of B. J. Habibie (1998–1999) instituted significant changes in foreign policy even though they did not directly affect the Pacific region; for instance, he accentuated human rights diplomacy. President Abdurrahman Wahid (1999–2001) founded the Southwest Pacific Dialogue (SwPD) in 2001 to leverage Indonesia's influence in the Pacific region. President Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001–2004) produced no significant contribution to foreign policy towards the Pacific region, but her administration began the process of reinstating Indonesia's international reputation thanks to a massive reorganisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In 2004, during the Yudhoyono administration, Indonesia displayed greater political stability at home and a higher profile in its foreign policy of substantive and intellectual leadership. Under Yudhoyono's leadership, Indonesia restructured its orientation toward the Pacific by demonstrating a meaningful foreign policy toward a region it had long considered as its 'backyard'. Yudhoyono used the magic words 'connectivity' and 'identity' to undertake numerous measures to improve bilateral and multilateral relationships with countries in this region. His successor, the current President Joko Widodo, has sustained the efforts of his predecessor, effecting many improvements in ties with Pacific countries. Widodo has generated more tangible political, economic and cultural changes in Indonesia's foreign policy towards the Pacific. This study specifically observes the cultural approach. It is evident that President Widodo employs culture as a means beyond traditional hard power tools to approach Indonesia's eastern neighbours. As argued in another section of this article, Indonesia, in its relationships with Pacific countries, needs to 'act outside the box with the countries in the region, representing a "non-formal" pillar according to their ways' (Wardhani & Dugis, 2020, p. 20). Like other countries in pursuit of national interest, Indonesia uses culture as one pillar of multi-track diplomacy. Indonesia has introduced soft power (co-optive power), which Nye (1990, p. 167) claims to be 'just as important as hard command power'. To attract Pacific countries, Jakarta emphasises the similarities of their cultures, including shared ethnicity with the subregions of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

A cultural approach has always been relevant for the fostering of diplomatic relations with the Pacific countries. In addition, the identity card discharges a significant attraction for the indigenous people of the region. Indonesia must select the right tools to navigate its turbulent relations with the Pacific countries and to serve its own high-stake national interests. Culture as a tool has been shown to achieve foreign policy goals and foster interstate relationships (Bethke, 2016; Critchlow, 2004; Lebow, 2009; Mazarr, 1996; Seeger, 1949; Vlahos, 1991), but its importance remains under-investigated. In particular, few studies have investigated the use of culture as a diplomatic tool in the Pacific region.

This article is structured as follows: Part 1 briefly introduces the topic. Part 2 examines the role of cultural diplomacy in foreign policy. Part 3 outlines Indonesia's cultural approach as part of its 'total diplomacy' with a 'humanistic face' in relations with the Pacific states. Part 4 addresses how Jakarta connects past and future by employing a cultural approach to the Pacific, contemplating the effectiveness of the cultural approach in strengthening Indonesia's Pacific identity and propagating its economic and business interests. Finally, Part 5 presents concluding remarks.

Cultural Diplomacy and Foreign Policy

Culture shapes and is shaped by global politics; it encompasses diverse art practices such as music, dances, poetry, painting and photography, among other manifestations, and is usually associated with forms of identity. Although culture plays an essential role in shaping nationalism, it is neglected by international relations (IR) scholars and politicians. The study of the role of culture in shaping foreign policy has long been neglected because IR focuses heavily on the pursuit of power (Realism), the quest for markets (Liberalism) and the search for social transformation (Marxism). Seeger (1949) asserted that 'the possibility that the arts might be useful in the development of political relations among nations is a notion often dallied with, and occasionally taken seriously by the foreign offices of foreign governments'. Only 'middle-way theories such as Constructivism, English School and post-positivist paradigm began to look at culture as an essential concept in studying IR' (Khodaverdi & Shahmohammadi, 2017). Culture is everywhere in global politics and spans issues such as human rights, xenophobia, terrorism, multiculturalism and nationalism. The failure to understand the cultural elements of world politics leads to a misunderstanding of the big picture pertaining to global events.

Notwithstanding mainstream theories of IR, the study of culture is essential for bridging the gap between the 'hard' aspects of politics in the international arena and the 'soft' facets of non-political life. Culture is inherent to any political existence. It often becomes a determinant in decision-making; however, it is difficult to utilise culture as an analytical tool because its conceptual definition is not universally standardised. Although it remains vague, broad and complex, culture has powerful applications recognised by IR. Nevertheless, it is still vastly under-investigated. Contemporary significations of culture are characterised by openness and flexibility, countering the traditional view of culture as being closed and bound. These new definitions offer ways of using culture as a unit of analysis in IR (Reus-Smit, 2019).

In addition, it is possible to position culture within discussions of world politics by integrating the cosmopolitan view and expanding the boundaries of culture to a non-territorial milieu. The social constructivist perspective views culture as a dynamic element that is 'made and remade', and 'chosen depending on circumstances' (Barth, 1969). Accordingly, cultural boundaries are fluid and porous. Entailing social exclusion as well as incorporation, cultural differences are

sustained despite inter-ethnic contact (Wimmer, 2008). The global order of the future will be marked by cultural diversity and heterogeneity rather than unity and homogeneity. Understanding of the culture of the other requires 'cosmopolitan sociability' (Schiller et al., 2011) and 'cultural competence' (Hannerz, 1990). The practice of cultural diplomacy is evidenced through history and has been conducted by formal and informal diplomats and exchanges in domains as varied as science, literature, arts, sports and music.

Cultural diplomacy is simply defined as 'diplomacy between cultures'. It is:

...a course of actions, which are based on and utilise the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural cooperation, promote national interests and beyond and includes the 'exchange of ideas, information, art, language and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding'. (Waller, 2009, p. 7)

Accordingly, cultural diplomacy is used as a tool for achieving foreign policy and diplomatic goals by fostering different kinds of people-to-people exchange with other states (Pajtinka, 2014, p. 100). In this context, cultural diplomacy complements hard power and denotes activities undertaken by state actors, sometimes in collaboration with non-state bodies. Cultural diplomacy promotes understanding by disseminating distinct cultural components with the final goal of achieving a foreign policy agenda. Cultural diplomacy activities include exchanges, exhibitions, events and performances that showcase the unique attributes of a nation.

Hwajung's (2017) study discloses the 'great debate' about the signification of cultural diplomacy and how it differs from public diplomacy and intercultural relationships. He emphasises the importance of bridging cultural and public diplomacy to construct a theoretical foundation that can intensify the understanding of the terms, which are often confused by general readers who tend to juxtapose them. Without becoming further mired in the academic debate, this study construes cultural diplomacy as a part of public diplomacy (Kim, 2017). Public diplomacy is more citizen-oriented and targets broader audiences (Ang, 2015); cultural diplomacy is government-sponsored and aimed at particular issues to achieve a political purpose (Mark, 2015). Scholars do not evince a clear-cut agreement on the demarcation between cultural and public diplomacy; interestingly, however, the two notions are intertwined with the concept of 'nation branding'. Whereas public diplomacy allows the government of one nation to address the society of another nation, cultural diplomacy promotes direct dialogue between the two societies. However, public diplomacy has often overshadowed the role of culture in achieving diplomatic goals. Cultural diplomacy does not consider foreign policymaking even though public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy have 'a parallel history and took off during the age of imperialism in the late nineteenth century' (Gillibert, 2017, p. 11).

The use of culture by a state to promote external ties implies deploying elements of soft power to persuade foreign nationals of benefits to be gained from greater mutual understanding. Cultural diplomacy, as opposed to traditional

economic, political and military interactions, attained great importance during the Cold War. The US and the Soviet Union signed the 'Agreement between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Exchanges in the Cultural, Technical and Educational Fields' on 27 January 1958. This Agreement enabled the two countries to arrange visits to each other despite their mutual distrust (Critchlow, 2004). However, cultural diplomacy appears to have been abandoned when the two superpowers became involved in the intense military rivalry. In recent years, however, states have used their cultural expressions to strengthen their soft power positioning in world politics because 'arts and culture provide meeting points for exposition and explanation' (McPherson et al., 2017).

Indonesia's Cultural Approach

This section explains the cultural approach used by Indonesia to extend its influence in the Pacific region. The formal integration of the western half of the island of New Guinea into Indonesian territory as the new province of Irian Jaya in 1969 has been followed by an on-going independence movement that Jakarta has sometimes aggressively suppressed; Indonesia has consequently suffered a poor image among some Pacific countries, especially those more proximate to this province (since divided into Papua and West Papua). In general, Indonesia for many decades has neglected relations with the Pacific region despite its geographic proximity. Unsurprisingly, countries in this region have developed negative sentiments towards Indonesia. Since the early 2000s, each successive government in Jakarta has sought to correct this situation by improving relations with countries in this region through foreign policy innovations, such as delivering foreign aid, providing technical assistance and reaching out through international organisations.

Geographically, Indonesia is located at the crossroads between Asia and the Pacific. Hence, Indonesia by nature holds a dual identity. However, Indonesia's self-concept over the three decades from 1967 to 1999 has ignored this duality. Indonesia has identified more with Asia than with the Pacific. This view is explained by Indonesia's foreign policy that emphasises the concept of 'concentric circles' (Anwar, 1994), adapted from the Javanese tradition, that prioritises that which is 'nearest' the centre, namely Southeast Asia, or the nations of ASEAN.

In consequence, relations with ASEAN form the central pillar of Indonesia's foreign policy. Since its founding in 1967, ASEAN has provided a 'safety blanket' (Weatherbee, 2019) for Indonesia with the principle of non-intervention. Indonesia considers itself as the 'core' of the concentric circles that contain the other ASEAN nations. Because Southeast Asia receives this priority, the Pacific region has often been taken for granted. Jakarta's foreign relations with Pacific nations barely developed during Indonesia's three decades under Suharto. His New Order developmental regime viewed this region as having a relatively little economic benefit for Indonesia. Insofar as some Pacific nations are politically unstable, the region has a potential negative impact on Indonesia's national security. Indonesia's

attitude of indifference toward the Pacific has resulted in its constituent being backed by an ethnonationalist identity that supports the Papuan secessionist movement.

There are several reasons why a cultural approach is vital for improving Indonesia's diplomacy with Pacific countries. First, Indonesia needs to repair its poor image. Post-Suharto governments have developed an increasing awareness of Indonesia's damaged reputation among Pacific countries. Seeing itself as a big country, Indonesia wishes to erase any impression of being overbearing toward its small Pacific neighbours. Indonesia has reached out to Pacific countries by providing foreign aid and technical assistance. Furthermore, Indonesia has been actively involved in regional groupings in the Pacific such as the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) (as an associate member), Pacific Island Forum (PIF) (as a dialogue partner), Pacific Island Development Forum (PIDF) (as development partner). Its cultural approach, intended to complement these measures, uses its Pacific identity to approach Pacific countries. Five provinces in eastern Indonesia are ethnically Melanesian (Papua, West Papua, Maluku, North Maluku and East Nusa Tenggara), and thus share an ethnic identity with the nations of Melanesia (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu). Burnishing its Pacific identity can help redeem Indonesia's previous neglect of these countries in its 'backyard', many of which have become independent nations since 1967 when Indonesia began focusing its foreign relations more on its Southeast Asian neighbours.

Second, Indonesia wants to show its seriousness in cooperating with the Pacific countries by using culture as a tool of diplomacy. Indonesia frequently introduces its own cultural diversity by sponsoring various cultural events in western countries in Europe and the United States (Warsito & Kartikasari, 2007), but hardly does so among its nearer neighbours. Indonesia has taken for granted and, to some extent, has ignored smaller countries lying to its east. The use of culture as an instrument of diplomacy demonstrates the seriousness of Indonesia's attempt to 'win the heart and mind' of its Pacific neighbours.

Third, using a cultural approach can help Indonesia strengthen its position as an emerging power. Indonesia's presidency of the G20 in 2022 will be crucial for strengthening its relations with the Pacific region. According to Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, Indonesia will pay special attention to this region by inviting representatives from Pacific countries to attend the G20 summit in Bali (Chatherine, 2021). With the theme 'Recover Together Recover Stronger', Indonesia will no longer overlook its eastern neighbours. Involving these Pacific countries in the Indonesian-hosted G20 demonstrates the posture of inclusivity in Indonesia's leadership. Enhancing Indonesia's status as an emerging power in the eyes of Pacific countries has been carried out several times by using a cultural approach through education and the arts. Since 2003, Indonesia has introduced soft power to Pacific countries through Indonesia's Art and Culture Scholarship (IACS) scheme. IACS was initiated to introduce Indonesian culture to the South Pacific, ASEAN, Europe and America.

Indonesia taps into the historical experiences of some Pacific states in conducting cultural diplomacy. Furthermore, Indonesia sees an opportunity to get

closer to Pacific countries by using a cultural approach since they too are actively promoting culture against the threat of globalisation. The collapse of economic borders accords globalisation with the possibility of disintegrating cultural barriers. However, it has ushered in many challenges to the way of life and traditional culture of indigenous peoples in the Pacific region. Pacific islanders, as inhabitants of small and less advanced countries, are strongly affected by globalisation as they lose the uniqueness of their identity and culture. Pacific peoples need to revitalise their cultural existence through means such as The Festival of Pacific Arts (also called the Pacific Arts Festival or FESTPAC), a traveling celebration hosted every four years by different countries of Oceania. This festival represents the world's largest celebration of indigenous Pacific islanders and draws artists, cultural practitioners, scholars and officials from member nations of the Pacific Community (SPC). Since its first iteration in 1972, the festival has become an occasion of cultural exchange, reuniting people, reinforcing regional identity and forging mutual appreciation of a Pacific-wide culture. The festival aims to preserve and revive the traditional arts and cultures of the Pacific, exploring new forms of cultural activities suited to the needs of the Pacific. It intends to create a broader awareness of the cultural richness of the Pacific throughout the world. It further proposes to foster a greater sense of unity throughout the Pacific to promote excellence in arts and propagate the development and use of ethnic [indigenous] languages (Pacific Community, 2020).

Excluding Australia and New Zealand, the South Pacific region comprises 20,000 to 30,000 islands inhabited by about 10 million people. This region encompasses 20 million square miles of ocean and 117,000 square miles of land. The inhabitants of this region are commonly grouped into Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia and display different historical, geographical, language and physical characteristics. Despite its diversity, there are some basic common elements of culture among Pacific peoples, such as origin stories, navigational skills, visual decorative designs and modes of raising livestock and crops, not to mention the Austronesian languages. In addition, Pacific countries share other features that tie them together: geographical isolation, vulnerability to natural disasters, the trauma of colonisation, commitment to the preservation of cultural values and dependence on foreign aid.

Even though Pacific cultures are much diverse in specificity, similarities such as remoteness, smallness and history of colonisation are unifying factors among Pacific islanders. This commonality can be witnessed in the practice of their 'Oceanic diplomacy' (Carter et al., 2021). Acknowledging the uniqueness of Pacific cultures, Indonesia engages with the Pacific by employing an alternative approach that complements traditional diplomacy. Indonesia thus prioritises using culture as an instrument of diplomacy since culture is a powerful currency that escapes legal barriers and state borders. A senior Indonesian diplomat, Djumala (2020), claims that promoting culture within Indonesia's portfolio of diplomatic tools is significant in projecting an image of a diverse, moderate, democratic and tolerant Indonesia.

Customs, traditions and identities in Pacific nations are disrupted by the pursuit of progress and economic development and pressures against good governance

practices (Hooper, 2005, p. 1). Against this backdrop, several things encourage Indonesia to use a cultural approach in its diplomatic relations with these countries. First, the indigenous cultures of the South Pacific have been threatened with extinction by cultural transformations since the colonial period. From the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present day, the school curriculum replicates that of their colonial masters, resulting in alienation among the indigenous people (Thaman, 1993, p. 251). Therefore, there is a need to reinforce the Pacific cultures because of the spectre of the loss of identity due to long stretches of colonialism. The loss of identity initiated by Western colonisation effected massive changes to the Pacific cultures because this region represented a *tabula rasa* for European and American colonialists. The traditional cultures of the islands of the South Pacific have become extensively Westernised. The colonial period changed the lifestyle of the Pacific islanders, who strayed from their indigenous customs as they adopted Western habits (Ross, 2009, p. 7). Linguistic imperialism replaced native languages; Christianity transformed the traditional beliefs of the native peoples. Therefore, the identity, culture, traditions and customs of the indigenous people went through a process of politicisation (Diaz & Kauanui, 2001, p. 321) that exerted a long-term impact on their lives.

The Jakarta Way: Connecting the Past with the Future

Current developments in the Pacific may provoke Indonesia to harness the circumstances to suit its national interests. Since the early 2000s, Indonesia has endeavoured to reach out to the Pacific countries, primarily through political and economic overtures such as offering development assistance and accession to the Pacific Island Forum (PIF), the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF) and the Pacific Islands Development Forum. However, the Government of Indonesia (GoI) also began to employ a new means of cultural engagement with this region in the late 2000s. The GoI decided upon using culture for diplomatic manoeuvres in the region based on the following reasons.

First, the cultural approach was deemed the most effective method of dealing with the Pacific people. Mainstream IR scholars portray culture as *terra incognita* for the discipline or as *terra nullius* in Grayson's (2015) terms. However, contrary to this claim, Jakarta seeks to fill the gaps in engagement by mainstreaming and centring this *terra incognita* in its foreign policy agenda to enter a new geopolitical space. Singer-turned-diplomat Tantowi Yahya [NOTE: is he ethnic Austronesian (i.e., Malayo-Polynesian) or Melanesian? Does he already have a fan base in NZ, Samoa and Tonga (all Polynesian nations)?] asserted in an interview with the author that one could not expect to adopt a single template for the execution of diplomacy because every country/region is unique. The Pacific people, such as the Melanesians, Polynesians and Micronesians, live simple lives and use their arts and cultures to express themselves. Yahya observed the existence of many similarities in the cultures of Indonesia and the Pacific islands. Arts and culture are their daily languages; hence, the cultural approach is regarded as

the most apposite to the nature of the Pacific people and thus an apt means of gaining their acceptance of Indonesia's presence. Ambassador Yahya referred to such efforts as 'soft diplomacy'. Previously applied methods such as political and economic approaches are considered incomplete in the absence of a cultural approach. Ambassador Yahya acknowledged Indonesia's tardiness in adopting soft diplomacy, as did the former Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda, but this method of forging relations is extremely expressive in the Pacific. Cultural diplomacy was initially used to build affinity with Indonesia among Pacific people because many countries in the region have viewed Indonesia as an unfriendly giant that behaves aggressively towards its neighbours to the east. Indonesia's poor image in the region can be attributed to Jakarta's political adventures in the past, primarily related to problems in eastern Indonesia, which lies in proximity to the Pacific, the Free Act Choice of 1969, through which Papua was incorporated into Indonesia following a questionable referendum and the military's 'integration' of former Portuguese colony East Timor as a province in Indonesia in 1975. Generating trust among Pacific countries is not easy because of entrenched stereotypes about Indonesia. The deployment of a cultural approach offers Pacific countries the space to learn more about Indonesia and gradually develop confidence. The Indonesian Embassy in Wellington often holds cultural events to foster such trust. For example, singing is a tool Ambassador Yahya employs to engage in diplomacy with the Pacific. Music diplomacy can build a relationship of faith between Indonesia and the Pacific and help Indonesia become accepted as a friend by the Pacific countries. Yahya alluded to this outcome as 'the power of cultural diplomacy'.

Second, Indonesia, being a nation with an Austronesian majority population that is joined to the Pacific through its easternmost provinces, seeks to emphasise its geographical and cultural identity that it shares with the nations of Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia in order to establish its Pacific identity in their eyes. Indonesia's problematic relations with the countries of the Pacific begin with the question of identity. Indonesian elementary schools teach pupils to recognise their national identity as geographically located between the continents of Australia and Asia. Indonesia describes itself as a large country located in the Southeast Asia region. Two oceans and two continents flank Indonesia: The Pacific and Indian oceans and the Asian and Australian continents. Indonesia is geographically placed in an 'open' region that has historically been exposed to numerous influences from outside the archipelago. Consequently, varied ethnicities, cultures, customs, languages, religions and belief systems may be observed in Indonesia. Such a wide geographic area results in numerous cultural variations representing the country's geographical range. Indonesia is often referred to as a country with a very high level of diversity because of this relationship between space and people.

Indonesia indeed holds a dual identity: it sees itself as a vital member of ASEAN with an important connection to countries of the Indian Ocean (through which it received its earliest outside influences), but it has heretofore left undeveloped its identity as a part of the Pacific Ocean. Indonesia's Pacific identity was unexplored since Jakarta had until recently excessively identified itself as

part of the traditional Malay world. Indonesia has become increasingly aware of its Pacific identity through the population of its eastern provinces such as Maluku, East Nusa Tenggara and Papua. This population is estimated at thirteen (13) million people. Given the great distance at which they lie from Jakarta, Indonesia's eastern islands have suffered relative neglect from the capital. The problem starts at this juncture. During Suharto's long period of rule, his leadership style was influenced by the Javanese culture, which views power as a single and centralised entity: the national capital was a political, economic, cultural and even mystical centre. Areas far from the country's capital did not receive adequate attention. This perspective affected the way Indonesia identified itself and had implications for domestic and international politics. Suharto's developmental regime did not see Pacific countries as offering economic benefits to Indonesia. The controversial Development Trilogy formed the basis of the New Order development strategy that ignored smaller neighbours. The failure to recognise its Pacific identity created a foreign policy hurdle for Jakarta with its so-called backyard neighbours.

Efforts to trace its Pacific identity and rediscover Indonesia's Pacific roots are also undertaken using genetic analysis. Herawati Supolo-Sudoyo, a speaker from the Eijkman Institute of Molecular Biology in Jakarta, revealed solid genetic evidence of Indonesia's natural membership among Pacific nations during the Zoominar Pasifika Indonesia, a session organised by the Indonesian Embassy in Wellington. Genetic analysis conducted by Supolo-Sudoyo concluded that the migration of ancestors 'out of Africa' (i.e., Melanesian ancestors) and 'out of Taiwan' (i.e., Malayo-Polynesian ancestors) led to a genetic spread and created a unique genetic component in the Pacific. The human migration of ancient times illuminates that a part of the human journey began from the Indonesian archipelago and eventually reached the islands of Oceania. Although *Homo Sapiens* arrived on the island of New Guinea about 50,000 years ago, the peopling of most outer islands is much more recent (Thomas, 2021, p. 66). The furthest arc of Pacific islands, including New Zealand and Hawaii, were settled as little as 1,000 years ago (Thomas, 2021, p. 105). The genetic blending of Melanesians and Malayo-Polynesians in coastal areas of New Guinea. This mixed gene flow over the course of many centuries eventually migrated to Remote Oceania. Consequently, there are many linguistic similarities in the vocabularies of Indonesia and the Pacific nations because they share the same root language, Austronesian.

Herawati Supolo-Sudoyo uses genomic data to trace the pattern of migration of Austronesian-speaking populations from the Indonesian archipelago to the Pacific islands. According to her, a naturalist named Johann Reinhold Forster was a part of James Cook's entourage in his second voyage of discovery to the Pacific (1772–1775) and was the first person to assert the cultural and linguistic unity of the islands and atolls of the central Pacific (1772–1775). Forster suggested that the similarity of the languages spoken in the region, now known as Polynesian, reflected a comparatively shallow time-depth pertaining to their dispersal: the region was 'Not only linguistically similar but also [in] the form of Fijian, Samoan and Wallis houses with traditional Papuan houses' (Supolo-Sudoyo, 2020).

Indonesia celebrated the upgrading of its status to an associate member of the MSG with a Melanesia Festival in Kupang in East Nusa Tenggara from 26 to

30 October 2015. The event was attended by Fiji Islands, New Caledonia (a self-governing overseas territory of France), Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste. Indonesia also formed the Indonesian Melanesian Brotherhood in October 2015. The Melanesian Festival was meaningful in promoting Indonesia's bond with the Pacific and became a means of communicating to a larger audience that Indonesia is indeed a part of the Pacific with the proven presence of Melanesian racial stock in its eastern provinces. Indonesian of Melanesian ethnicity exist in the largest number in East Nusa Tenggara (around 13 million) and in smaller numbers in Maluku, West Papua and Papua. Indonesia claims that the number of its own citizens of Melanesian ethnicity is greater than the combined 9 million Melanesians who populate Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Solomon and Fiji. Being home to a significant number of Melanesians entitles Indonesia to become a member of numerous regional groups in the Pacific, specifically the Melanesian-dominated organisations such as the MSG. With such a large number of Melanesian citizens, Indonesia cannot be ignored by the Melanesian majority nations of the Pacific. In this context, the identity factor is instrumental in supporting Indonesia's foreign policy.

Third, the cultural approach is an entry point for the achievement of other strategic Indonesian interests such as those related to its economy and business. Indonesia must discover new dimensions of diplomacy that can help its presence be received more amicably in the Pacific as it intensifies its efforts among Pacific island countries. Indonesia has realised that the South Pacific is disadvantaged in terms of opportunities for economic development and trade. The Pacific islands are characterised by economic volatility because of their small domestic markets, remoteness from major markets, limited natural resources and narrow-based economies. Such circumstances offer them limited avenues of transforming into well-developed countries. They are thus more vulnerable to external shocks, which result in negative economic growth and increased poverty (The World Bank, 2020).

Indonesia hosted the Indonesia South Pacific Forum (ISPF) on 21 March 2019 to display its seriousness about engagement with the Pacific islands. The event was themed 'Our Future, Shared Ocean, Shared Prosperity'. It was attended by delegations from 15 countries and territories: Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, New Caledonia, Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Tonga and Tuvalu. The ISPF aims to bolster cooperation between Indonesia and the Pacific countries as a platform for dialogues. According to Santo Darmosumarto, the Director of East Asia and the Pacific, Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the strategic agenda of the ISPF seeks: (a) to increase the role and presence of Indonesia in the region; (b) to strengthen mutual understanding between Indonesia and its Pacific partners on shared concerns, including climate change, maritime and development of coastal areas and (c) to explore the possibility of establishing preferential trade agreements between Indonesia and the Pacific islands (Darmosumarto, 2021). In addition, Desra Percaya, the Director of Asia Pacific and Africa, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, iterated that Indonesia seeks to provide entrepreneurship training to women and youths in the region (Pramudyani, 2019).

Indonesia's seriousness about becoming more involved in the Pacific was shown by two important initiatives (KBRI Wellington, 2020). First, the Pacific Elevation (introduced by Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi during the 1st Pacific Exposition in Auckland in 2019). Pacific Elevation commits Indonesia to assist Pacific countries/territories through various forms of bilateral and regional cooperation as well as direct assistance. Second, the appointment of a Roving Ambassador for the Pacific, which is currently entrusted to the Indonesian Ambassador to New Zealand.

The Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised the 1st Pacific Exposition at the SkyCity Convention Centre in Auckland in New Zealand from 11 to 14 July 2019 as a tangible manifestation of enhancing diplomacy and making the Pacific region a foreign policy priority. The Pacific Exposition was attended by representatives from 20 countries, including Pacific nations and territories such as New Caledonia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and representatives of various regions outside of the South Pacific. The four-day event entailed various activities, such as the Tourism Forum (11 July), the Business and Investment Forum (12 July), the Pacific Cultural Forum (13 July) and the Pacific Arts and Culture Festival (12–14 July). It ended with the Sound Concert of the Pacific (13–14 July). The mix of business and entertainment at the 2019 Pacific Exposition targeted a transaction of US \$100 million (kemlu.go.id, 2019). According to Ambassador Yahya, the Pacific Exposition was designed to facilitate the promotion of business opportunities in the countries of the South Pacific. Indonesia's approach to the Pacific is designed to reinforce its Pacific identity and take advantage of business opportunities that have thus far been neglected. For example, hundreds of business people, including those engaged in infrastructure, communications and tourism, also gathered at the Pacific Tourism Forum to discuss collaborative networks aimed at the formation of the 'One Pacific Destination' in the Pacific region. Meanwhile, Indonesia invited Pacific nations and territories to the Pacific Cultural Forum in Auckland, on 11–14 July 2019 to preserve the region's cultural heritage and globally propagate Pacific identities that remain unknown (Ambassador Yahya, 2021). Minister Retno Marsudi introduced the term 'Pacific elevation' for the first time in her opening speech for the Pacific Exposition: 'We are creating momentum to engage each other and strengthen our fraternity with fellow Pacific countries and territories. This is a new era of the Pacific Partnership. A "Pacific elevation"' (Bernama, 2019). Minister Marsudi also confirmed:

'Pacific Exposition 2019 will connect the dots between the 17,000 Indonesian islands and the thousands of Pacific islands, Australia and New Zealand. I underline three areas of cooperation to pursue: trade, tourism and cultural cooperation; cooperation to strengthen people-to-people relations and enhance engagement with regional forums. This is a new era of Pacific Partnership, a Pacific Elevation' (Official Tweeter of Indonesia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, 12 July 2019). She further added, '... it is imperative that we should strengthen our bonds, our brotherhood and our cooperation with the Pacific countries, which face many challenges geographically'. (Septiari, 2019)

Indonesia offers Pacific countries opportunities to access different markets other than those of their traditional trade partners, such as Australia, New Zealand

and the other South Pacific island nations. Ambassador Yahya highlighted the importance of the Pacific Exposition as an event that explores investment prospects for Pacific countries. Trade and investment relations between Indonesia and the Pacific island countries remain limited, but this does not stop Indonesia from pursuing its plan to provide market access to Pacific countries. Identity-based connections can create business opportunities for Pacific islanders to sell their products to Indonesia. For example, the Pacific islands could sell products such as water, traditional beverages and foods by linking their products with Pacific identity brands, which would add value to the products, for instance, Fiji Water. Further, Indonesia and the South Pacific countries could form a preferential trade agreement that would allow trade and investment between the two parties to advance more easily.

Indonesia hosted the Pacific Exposition to make its Pacific identity more widely known. The Pacific Exposition was a large-scale event held for the first time to discuss opportunities for business and investment cooperation, tourism and cultural exchanges between the countries and territories in the Pacific, including Indonesia. This event was conceived as a follow-up to the ISPF held in March 2019 in Jakarta, which initiated the commitment to create a 'new era of Pacific engagement' with the objective of highlighting the potential of eastern Indonesia as a hub of East Asia. Indonesian and Pacific representatives exchanged viewpoints at the Pacific Cultural Forum and identified joint steps that could be taken to help Indonesia cement a cultural approach-based friendship with the region.

Indonesia's full acceptance by Pacific countries as a fellow member is still a long way off. Indonesia faces challenges such as the suspicion that it always harbours a hidden agenda and could be entering the Pacific to help assert its sovereignty over its provinces on the western half of New Guinea. If Indonesia's interests in the South Pacific are only related to the Papua issue, then the Pacific will lose its strategic meaning for Indonesia if the Papua issue is no longer significant. In this regard, Indonesia must persuade its international audience not to assume that its primary motivation lies in a hidden agenda. Another challenge relates to Indonesia's Java centrism. Jakarta's representative in New Caledonia is an active promoter of Indonesia's culture. This representative hosts numerous cultural events in the territory, attracting local members of the Indonesian diaspora, the indigenous Kanak and French descendants. The Indonesian Consulate General in Noumea has organised diverse cultural events that incorporate Indonesian traditional music, dance and cooking classes. Interestingly, most of these cultural events remain Java-centric because of the predominance of the Javanese diaspora in the Pacific. In addition, historical and romantic factors form the rationale for the choices of the cultural events showcased in New Caledonia. Meanwhile, Indonesia's Pacific identity as an appeal to Kanaks has not yet become an essential aspect of cultural events in the territory (Pramana, 2021). The next challenge is to sustainably implement the notion of Pacific Elevation, especially in terms of trade and investment given the small Pacific population, limited production base and complex connectivity factors that result from geographic isolation.

Conclusion

A nation's identity and its foreign policy bear a close relationship. Indonesia is an excellent example of how neglecting an aspect of its identity has weakened its diplomatic efforts. Indonesia's dual identity (as a member of both Asia and the Pacific) can be advantageous if it is appropriately exploited. Indonesia's lateness in becoming fully aware of its dual identity has resulted in lost opportunities that pose significant risks to Indonesia's foreign policy. The late awareness of an aspect of its national identity stems from the complex difficulties of diversity management in Indonesia that often create identity crises for some Indonesians who believe their Indonesian identity has not yet fully materialised.

The nations of the Pacific are unique, yet share a cultural attachment. The Pacific cannot be effectively approached only through political channels; therefore, another means of diplomacy must be found. The method of a cultural approach represents a standard IR practice of introducing oneself to another country. Interestingly, Indonesia has only recently taken advantage of this cultural approach in Oceania because it had been too busy using political means to counter anti-Indonesian 'attacks' in multilateral forums such as the United Nations.

For Jakarta, increasing the connectivity between Indonesia and Oceania means shifting its focus. The Oceania region occupied a peripheral position in Indonesia's foreign policy from the decolonisation of the Pacific (1960s) up to the end of the New Order regime (late 1990s). Oceania now forms a top priority of Indonesian diplomatic overtures, as Jakarta has increased the intensity of Indonesian relations with this region in the last two decades. By building bridges of shared identity to Pacific nations, Jakarta has shifted the region's image of Indonesia away from one that is largely based on the issue of Papua and reflects poorly on itself to one that promotes various benefits to both sides. Indonesia's construction of a Pacific identity that emphasises Melanesian ethnicity and culture helps connect the Southeast Asian archipelagic nation with Oceania. Further, Indonesia's dual identity allows it to liaise between ASEAN and the Pacific. This positioning makes it easier for Indonesia to become a critical player in creating enhanced connections between the ASEAN and the regional organisations in the South Pacific, such as the PIF, PIDF and MSG.

Indonesia has been strenuously seeking a new geopolitical space for itself. After solidifying its role in the Southeast Asian zone of its traditional diplomatic focus it is now time for Indonesia to pursue its interests in the South Pacific. The shift in this direction should be manifested in suitable institutional developments, such as the plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to separate its Directorate of East Asia and the Pacific into two separate ones: The Directorate of East Asia and the Directorate of the Pacific. Such a separation would indicate Indonesia's increased focus on the Pacific and bonds with the region that has intensified and matured over the last ten years.

Indonesia's Pacific identity must extend both inwards and outwards. There must be a strengthening of awareness among Indonesian citizens that Indonesia is a part of the Pacific. Indonesia's slogan *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity) does not make full sense without the expression of its Pacific identity. Indonesia

must also open its doors wider and interact more extensively with neighbouring countries to its east. The cultural approach represents an effective means of acceptance in the Pacific region because cultural reciprocity already exists there. Jakarta and the countries of the Pacific share complementary interests, through which mutual dependency might grow. Although some of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy efforts have successfully mitigated the country's negative image among pro-independence voices emanating from the Pacific region and have strengthened economic relations between both sides, the full mission will not be accomplished until all Pacific nations support Indonesia's sovereignty over West Papua.

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