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The early stage of Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy: in the middle of nowhere?

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Abstract. As one of the motor of public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy, gastrodiplomacy has been the option taken by several countries to work on their soft power. The idea of strengthening the image and identity of a country through its food and culinary has been proliferating. Indonesia, with its richness and various kinds of traditional food, is starting to use gastroplomacy to elevate its soft-power. This paper highlights the early stage of the development of Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy. The paper used the descriptive qualitative method to examine what has been done to boost Indonesia's gastrodiplomacy and who has been in charge of its development in Indonesia. This paper suggests that gastrodiplomacy may only be exercised on the right track when Indonesia finally decides to make a proper roadmap on gastrodiplomacy and placing the firm supporting policy to introduce Indonesian culinary broadly.

1. Introduction

The end of the cold war was the new chapter that put soft power into account in the study of international relations. Soft power place essential for foreign policy for some countries in the world especially for those who have a limitation of hard power. Previously, soft-power was unpopular until Joseph Nye first introduced the concept of soft power in 1990. Soft-power a national policy to win the heart and mind of the international public. It is about the power of attractiveness of a country to elevate the nation brand. Joseph Nye [1] has developed the framework of soft power concepts within three pillars; those are political values, culture, and foreign policy [1]. Since then, hard power is not the only thing that the state and other actors can count on; they also see soft power as another essential aspect of a country. The phenomena that drive the attention of the public towards soft power prevent the countries from focussing on merely hard power and high politics issues. It also provides a chance for secondary sectors like public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy to be the priority in foreign policy.

One essential element of culture in soft power, among others, is gastrodiplomacy. Since the 2000s, there has been a significant development of gastrodiplomacy done by many countries on the planet. The first time the concept of gastrodiplomacy was introduced by Thailand in 2002 with the "Global Thai Program." The success of Thailand in this program created an example for other countries to create a similar program regarding their national culinary and food as their tools. Many countries also have been counting on the potential of gastrodiplomacy that has its snowball effect on the development of the economy, especially in the tourism sector.

To do the gastrodiplomacy, actors are using the public and cultural diplomacy instrument. The actors use culture as an object to be promoted. Many countries are using gastrodiplomacy to improve their soft-power. Sam Chapple-sokol [2] underlined that gastrodiplomacy is the utilization of food and cuisine to create cross-cultural understandings to cooperation in international public interactions [2]. In other notions, Rokower [3] highlighted that the easiest way to win the hearts and minds of the international public is



through the stomach. In other words, food is an essential instrument to win the heart and mind [3].

Regarding Indonesian gastrodiplomacy, Indonesian culinary has its advantages to be promoted as its heritage is very diverse in light of both taste and form. Therefore, it seems to be essential for Indonesia to use the culinary diversity of the country as a significant power in gastrodiplomacy. However, Indonesia so far does not have any comprehensive program or policy when it comes to gastrodiplomacy. This paper, thus, examines the extent of Indonesia's policy in applying gastrodiplomacy, especially in its early stage. This paper suggests that building a roadmap of gastrodiplomacy and synergy between institutions is essential to promote Indonesian cuisine to the international community actively.

2. Methods

This paper used the secondary data collected from books, news, and journals as the primary source. In addition to the secondary data, the authors also had interviews with Indonesian gastrodiplomacy players. Among them are academics, diplomats, and government officials, associations, and individuals. The data is processed by doing classification and interpretation. To minimize bias, the authors make checks and checks by confirming the actors in the interview.

3. Result and Discussion

The cuisine is one of the essential nonverbal communication. Food is also a tool to develop an international public perception of the national identity of a nation. Promoting culinary diversity through gastrodiplomacy can be a medium for international communities to have an understanding and a taste of the culture of a country. Food can be an instrument to form a cross-cultural understanding to enhance international interaction and cooperation. Food can be a conversation starter between two actors, ranging from individuals, groups, to countries. Thus, some countries start to pay attention to the "role" of food in intercultural communication. Food may bridge the relations of different societies and even among the member of the states. In short, food, through gastrodiplomacy, provide an alternative role in international relations, especially in regards to public and cultural diplomacy.

Gastrodiplomacy is also an alternative tool for improving the soft-power of the country, especially those that have the limitation of hard power. The application of hard power has always been dominated by superpowers that have a strong influence on the international stage. The monopoly of hard power by the superpowers provides less space for the middle and small power countries to have their influence over the international community. Therefore, soft-power is an alternative element to support those who have a constraint in having hard powers. As part of soft-power, gastrodiplomacy may help countries to improve their existence in the international community and utilized their very own potential, promoting their culture as part of their soft-power.

In the context of Indonesia, gastrodiplomacy is mattered. Indonesia has various cuisine around the country. Although Indonesia has not done the campaign as intense as it should, there is evidence that tourists who are interested and intentionally come to Indonesia to taste the country's unique dishes. Indonesia has also had a rich variety of culinary. According to the professor of the Faculty of Food Technology, Gadjah Mada University, Professor Murdijati Gardjito, so far, there have been recorded around 3,259 typical Indonesian foods. However, according to Professor Gardjito, the number of Indonesian special foods is higher than what has been recorded (Interview with Mudijati Gardjito, 2019). Meanwhile, the latest data released by the Ministry of Tourism states that there are around 5,300 Indonesian culinary delights from across the country (Andriani, 2013) [4]. Also, Indonesian culinary has a unique place within the world community. CNN (Cable News Network) survey, the CNN GO survey in 2011, put both Rendang and Nasi Goreng as among the most known food in the world [5]. Schonhardt (2017) explains that some of the most well-known Indonesian foods are Rendang, Nasi Goreng (fried rice), Soto, Gado-Gado, Satay, Gudeg, Sop Buntut (oxtail soup), Sambal dan Tempe. Therefore, Indonesian gastrodiplomacy has a strong foundation with the recognition of several Indonesian foods by the international

community. That richness of Indonesia cuisine may also be utilized to boost its diplomacy widely.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (MOFA, hereafter MOFA) as the actor of first track diplomacy, has a strategic role in ensuring the optimization of Indonesia's diplomacy. In that context, the MOFA pays more attention to international political and economic interests that have always been vital for Indonesia's diplomacy. Further, regarding the development of soft-power, Indonesia pays more attention to the development of soft-power in general.

The following examples show Indonesia's commitment to developing soft-power in a broad spectrum. Indonesia's participation in international forums to improve the country's image including the Presidential Friends of Indonesia, Interfaith Dialogue and Empowering the Moderates, Indonesian Arts and Culture Scholarship (Indonesian-BSBI Art and Cultural Scholarship) and Indonesian Channel, Outstanding Student for the World, Public Diplomacy Campaign, Duta Belia, Updates from the Region, Diplomatic Gathering, Public Lectures, Public Services, Promotion and Community Outreach MKAA (Museum of the Asian African Conference), Publication of Tabloid Diplomacy, and Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) [3]. There are also Asia-Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogues, Global Inter-Media Dialogues, International Conference on Islamic Scholars and the New Asia Africa Strategic Partnership (NAASP) International Conference on the Capacity Building for Palestine [4]. Those international events tend to be more about the government to government communication. In short, Indonesia's soft power development has so far paid more attention to public and cultural diplomacy. Indonesia seems to have an inadequate policy in implementing culinary as a soft-power instrument

On the other hand, the implementation of soft-power through public diplomacy is not only about the formal level. Instead of prioritizing the potential of public diplomacy in the non-state sectors, including business to business (B to B) and individuals are also vital. In the context of developing soft-power through gastrodiploamacy, the Indonesian government, as it would be explained later, seems to have no concept, "blueprint," or roadmap as a reference for its implementation. However, enthusiasm and efforts to introduce Indonesian cuisine to the international public have been done by both the state and non-state actors. The absence of a clear roadmap causes the implementation of gastrodiploamacy has not had synergy actions.

Although there are growing number actors such as non-state actors like NGO, Bussiness, and individuals to be part of gastrodiploamacy, efforts have not been integrated, systematic, and measurable. As gastrodiploamacy may not be a priority, gastrodiploamacy in Indonesia is nothing but a blurred mission. Thus, it becomes difficult to get the best results that have a direct impact on the economy.economy.

Although the role of the Indonesian government has not been considered significant in encouraging the implementation of Indonesian gastrodiploamacy, interestingly, in 2011, the MOFA started to pay attention to the potential of Indonesian cuisine as a tool for state diplomacy. This attention can be seen from the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the promotion of Indonesian cuisine abroad [6]. The initial step to strengthen Indonesia's culinary role in this diplomacy seems to require the recognition and commitment from the government and society. From the results of the FGD, there are several important notes to increase Indonesian culinary standardization and creativity to be accepted by other countries. Also, there was an idea of the importance of food standardization based on the uniqueness of every host country. Also, the fact that every country in the world have their uniqueness and peculiarities when it comes to food they like to taste.

Indonesia has the Act to create some efforts to improve people's economy through social and culture that was issued on Law Number 11 of 2005 regarding ratification of the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights. Including cultural diplomacy is introducing Indonesian cuisine to the world. The implication of the law is an obligation to develop measures to improve people's economy [7]. However, in improving the Indonesian economy, Indonesian cuisine, as part of Indonesian culture, still has inadequate attention as other cultural sectors, such as dance, music, and Batik that have been promoted intensively and even massively.

In the context of culinary or food, it seems that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not yet have a definitive policy. On the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, there is almost no specific plan regarding the Indonesian gastrodiplomacy strategy. Besides, on the list of activities of the Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy of the MOFA, the possibility of gastrodiplomacy activities as an effort to renew Indonesia's soft-power diplomacy innovations, has been discussed, but has not yet applied into a comprehensive policy.

However, although gastrodiplomacy has not been in the official policy list, interestingly, some works regarding the promotion of Indonesian culinary have been done by the MOFA and the Ministry of Tourism. Activities are done by MOFA mostly related to food festivals. On the other hand, regarding the Ministry of Tourism, mostly about food promotion through tourism activities and supporting Indonesian restaurants overseas through a so-called co-branding program.

Regarding the MOFA, Indonesian representative offices in various countries have been implementing gastrodiplomacy within a to some extent. The Embassy and Consulate General offices hold culinary festivals to promote the diversity of Nusantara cuisine for at least once a year. The promotion of Indonesian cuisine is wrapped in cultural events to introduce Indonesian cuisine to the world. Also, the non-state actors such as Indonesian restaurants and diaspora (Indonesian who live overseas) are involved in the events. There are some examples of gastrodiplomacy that have been done by Indonesian representative offices abroad. In 2008, for instance, the Republic of Indonesia Embassy in the United States held an event to promote Indonesian cuisine that is rich in spices and helped promote the Indonesian diaspora restaurants in the U.S. Secondly, in 2016 the Indonesian Embassy in the Netherlands held an event to promote the cuisine at a diplomatic reception. The reception was to celebrate the 71st Indonesian Independence Day [8]. In addition to the two countries, many Indonesian representative offices abroad also held similar events such as those in Japan which are associated with Indonesian Days in collaboration with the Kyoto-Shiga Indonesian Student Association (PPI) which took place at least, from 2005 to now. In the United Kingdom (UK), there was an activity called Indofest that promotes Indonesian cuisine and culture performance. The Indonesian Embassy provides support for this event. This event also got the recognition from the Council of Nottingham. Later this activity was organized by Indosoc under the Student Union University of Nottingham, UK. (Interview Indriastuti, 2019). Indonesian's MOFA had created such activities to promote Indonesian Cuisine almost all over the world. Despite the lack of roadmap on gastrodiplomacy, Indonesian embassies individually promoted Indonesian culinary to the international public.

Similar to the MOFA, the Ministry of Tourism (Kemenpar) initiated the promotion of Indonesian cuisine abroad. This promotion aims to bring Indonesian culinary culture closer to the international community. Those efforts based on the argument that promoting Indonesian cuisine abroad will affect the increasing number of international tourists visiting Indonesia. Activities related to gastrodiplomacy by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism (Kemenpar) started in 2015, Kemenpar together with the Indonesian Gastronomy Academy (AGI), for example, made a gastrodiplomacy campaign by promoting Indonesia as a culinary destination with an Indonesian slogan "Spice up the World". Then the Ministry of Tourism named five cities, namely Bali, Yogyakarta, Solo, Semarang, and Bandung as Culinary Tourism Destination Cities. These cities were chosen because they have met the standards of eligibility as culinary tourist destinations [9].

Furthermore, the Ministry of Tourism also encourages restaurants and tours entrepreneurs can keep taking their role so that it has a constructive economic impact. For this reason, the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism made a breakthrough with the initiation of programs aimed at supporting Indonesian culinary promotions in early 2018. The program is a Co-branding that was published in the Wonderful Indonesia campaign. In the initial stage, the Ministry of Tourism collaborated with 10 Indonesian diaspora restaurants abroad. Ten restaurants are located across Europe, Australia, and the United States. From the restaurants belonging to the diaspora, stories about Indonesian culture and culinary are expected to spread widely. From those restaurants, the interest of the international community is expected to

grow. The following is a list of these diaspora restaurants, Gastrobar Indonesia (Amsterdam), Djakarta Bali (Paris), Yono's Restaurant (Albany), Kasih Restaurant (Los Angeles), Fluffy Lamb (Perth), Cutlery (Brisbane), Ubud Resto (Sydney), Sari Ratu (Singapore), Bumbu Desa (Malaysia) and Indonesia Grill & Gastrobar (Houston) [10].

For the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism, Wonderful Indonesia's Co-branding is the first step to go. Hence the Ministry of Tourism is still working hard to increase the number of restaurants abroad so that its co-branding program gets more support. Furthermore, the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism managed to attract around 100 other Indonesian diaspora restaurants in the Co-branding partnership. This moment was presented in the Wonderful Indonesia Gastronomy Forum 2018 on 22 November 2018 [11]. Quoting the former Tourism Minister's statement, Arief Yahya: "This is a strategic step to lift national branding while maximizing the contribution of Indonesian cuisine. At the same time, it also promotes Indonesian cuisine [10]. The Indonesian Ministry of Tourism has also prepared three strategies to maximize Indonesian culinary promotions [10]. First, setting national food that is popular in the international media. This strategy sets five Indonesian culinary as a national food. They are Rendang, Nasi Goreng, Sate, Soto, and Gado-Gado. Second, establish culinary tourism destinations with WTO UN standards. This strategy establishes three places that are considered to meet these standards, they are Bali, Bandung, and Joglosemar (Jogja Solo and Semarang). Third, the co-branding of Indonesian diaspora restaurants in other countries. In this strategy, the Ministry of Tourism continues to try to identify Indonesian restaurants located around the world. However, because this program is relatively new, the results are not yet apparent. However, in the context of Indonesian gastrodiploamacy, the efforts made by the Ministry of Tourism are both strategic and constructive first path.

Another essential aspect of carrying out Indonesian gastrodiploamacy is the role of the "diaspora." The concept of diaspora in this paper is in the loose definition; they are Indonesian who live overseas. The diaspora network is a chain that cannot be broken. The role of the diaspora is quite critical because it can play a role in increasing economic linkage between host countries and the home countries [6]. Diaspora is also the real frontline Messenger in introducing Indonesian culinary to the foreign public. They are also one of the important actors to open a new path in the culinary promotion. Diaspora is a resource that has a significant impact on Indonesian gastrodiploamacy to some extent.

During the administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the role of the Indonesian diaspora network (Global Diaspora Network-IDN-Global) was activated by forming the Indonesia Culinary Task Force [6]. This network is a platform for the promotion of Indonesian cuisine to a higher level around the world. Several efforts to introduce Indonesian cuisine, both traditional and modern, through catering to culinary events, providing cooking classes, workshops, cooking demonstrations, educational events and consulting Indonesian cuisine have been done. However, the strengthening of the diaspora network in the culinary sector appears to be underwhelming after the end of the administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

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network in the culinary sector appears to be underwhelming after the end of the administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The support towards the role of the diaspora in Indonesian gastrodiplomacy has not been maximized. In addition to encouraging diaspora to start a culinary business abroad is not easy; the government has not a specific strategy to support the culinary business.

In the CNN survey, there is Indonesian food acknowledged by the international public. However, some elements weakened Indonesian gastrodiplomacy need to note. First, Indonesian culinary branding is not very well known and the necessary ingredients of Indonesian cuisine, known as Bumbu Indonesia, are also challenging to get. Secondly, Management and rules in different culinary businesses between Indonesia and abroad, as well as the standard of hygiene, are issues that still have no solution. The solution for those issues is that the country should present pro-actively in helping Indonesian entrepreneurs in open restaurants abroad. The lack of integration and synergy of the stakeholders in supporting Indonesian gastrodiplomacy seems to be the main issue. In applying gastrodiplomacy, integration and synergy is seemingly a pre-requisite. Thus, national economic policies may be well integrated with public diplomacy policies that include Indonesian economic diplomacy in them.

In that maximizing all efforts to promote Indonesia's culinary worldwide, there are at least three essential institutions that can take part in Indonesian gastrodiplomacy. First, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs may become the leading sector as the one who is going to overseas public diplomacy. Second, the Ministry of Trade, which plays a role in the legalization process, material supply chain and business to business negotiations. Finally, as Indonesia is the land of the Muslim population, the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, or institutions related to Halal program, may provide support in realizing Halal Tourism and Halal culinary in a complete package with tourist attractions owned by Indonesia.

This paper aims to show that some notes need to be considered for the Indonesian government in the implication of its gastrodiplomacy. Because cuisine is not just limited to taste, but as conveyed by Prof. Andrik Purwasito (Indonesian cultural diplomacy activist) "the state must be present and become the main actor in Indonesian gastrodiplomacy as gastrodiplomacy is not only a matter of taste, food, and business." (Interview, 2019). Furthermore, it is about the country's political policy to promote its identity to the international public as the soft-power approach is essential. The Indonesian MOFA, as the leading sector, can take this vital role in building cooperation with domestic culinary businesses to open culinary businesses abroad. Some notes for the culinary festival by the Indonesian Embassy are the fact that the event is still more ceremonial for some Indonesian citizens and foreigners.

Another problem in Indonesian gastrodiplomacy is the role of government is needed to support or make the clear legal standing for Indonesian culinary entrepreneurs. Legal standing is about to make sure that the entrepreneurs are not trapped in difficulties to open their market abroad. During this time actors such as the diaspora, business people and government institutions are running on their abilities and willingness to promote Indonesian cuisine abroad. The roadmap is needed if the government made gastrodiplomacy as the priority to work on this issue. The roadmap may provide clarity of direction and purpose and the division of responsibilities of various actors. Without a clear roadmap, the synergy of various actors does not seem possible. For all of that, a clear roadmap on Indonesian gastrodiplomacy is essential.

Another critical aspect of doing is to standardize the food. In the context of culinary, cultural and cultural wealth that comes from the diversity of ethnicities and regions in Indonesia is a great gift that has not been utilized optimally. For example, one type of cuisine such as Soto has variations and characteristics based on their respective regions. So standardizing cuisine can have both positive and negative aspects. Standardization is needed to provide certainty of taste and presentation that is considered to represent one type of culinary. However, standardization can negate the diversity possessed by this nation. At that

point, the government has time to have a clear policy. Which one that must be prioritized, diversity or standardization.

In short, the diversity and richness of Indonesian cuisine have not been used optimally for gastrodiplomacy. As Rockower wrote with the title *Why not feed Indonesia to the World*, the time has come for Indonesia to utilize its natural potential to make it one of the best culinary identities in the world. If this gastrodiplomacy is done thoughtfully, it will contribute significantly to improving Indonesia's reputation in the eyes of the world.

Finally, to develop gastrodiplomacy, Indonesia needs substantial financial resources. Until now in the central government, there is no specific budget platform for gastrodiplomacy. In the Foreign Ministry itself, in the part of Indonesian public diplomacy, it has not placed the culinary sector in its public diplomacy.

4. Conclusion

This paper shows that Indonesia has world-class culinary potential. However, in its utilization, it requires clear and systematic steps. Gastrodiplomacy can be a platform to introduce Indonesian nation branding through the richness and diversity of the culinary. Gastrodiplomacy is an option for the government in a soft-power approach to improve image and nation branding that Indonesia has.

Various initial steps have been taken by the MOFA through Indonesia's representative offices abroad, the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and non-state actors such as restaurant businesses, diaspora, and Indonesian students through the Indonesian Student Association (Persatuan pelajar Indonesia, PPI) abroad. However, structured and systematic synergies and collaborations are still not clear. Gastrodiplomacy that involves various sectors seems to need serious attention. For this reason, the gastrodiplomacy can only be properly done, if not better, when Indonesia is decided to make a proper plan on gastrodiplomacy. Without a platform, a roadmap and policy that have clear directions and priorities, Indonesian gastrodiplomacy is very likely to be in the middle of nowhere.

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