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## Digital Public Diplomacy Narratives: Content Analysis of Indonesian Embassy's Engagement in the U.S. via @IndonesiainDC

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### Abstract

This study examines digital public diplomacy narratives of Indonesian Embassy abroad through a case study of the Instagram account @IndonesiainDC, managed by the Embassy of Indonesia in Washington, D.C., the United States of America (U.S.). Using a descriptive qualitative approach with content analysis, the research analyzes posts published between 19 September 2025 and 31 December 2025, a period marked by the appointment of Ambassador Dwisuryo Indroyono Soesilo after a two-year vacancy. The study applies Cull's (2009) taxonomy of public diplomacy (listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting) to assess how the Embassy projects Indonesia's identity, communicates policy priorities, and engages with foreign publics. Findings reveal that @IndonesiainDC actively employs all five functions of Cull's taxonomy. Listening is reflected in diaspora engagement and informal community events; advocacy appears in posts promoting Indonesia's positions on critical minerals, palm oil sustainability, and gender equality; cultural diplomacy is evident in language programs, performing arts, gastrodiplomacy, and museum collaborations; exchange diplomacy emerges through symbolic gestures such as university visits and structured initiatives like Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) and free *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language) courses; and international broadcasting is demonstrated in Ambassadorial announcements, Embassy closures, and diplomatic milestones. Beyond Cull's framework, this account also engages in hybrid practices such as webinars for Indonesian producers, knowledge diplomacy through academic collaboration, and ceremonial protocol functions, highlighting the evolving nature of digital diplomacy. This case contributes to the broader understanding of soft power and digital diplomacy in the field of International Relations, showing how Embassy adapts traditional functions to contemporary digital narratives.

**Keywords:** Digital Diplomacy; Indonesian Embassy in Washington DC; Instagram Content Analysis; Public Diplomacy; Soft Power

### Introduction

Public diplomacy has grown to play a crucial role within global politics. It emphasizes how important communication, perception management, and personal relationships are for achieving global objectives. Public diplomacy has become an increasingly vital part of international communication. Public diplomacy initiative extends into areas that go beyond traditional practice of diplomacy, which includes two basic kinds, namely advocacy and branding (Maunder & Stivachtis, 2023). The contemporary issues in International Relations study have also been characterized by competing geopolitical powers and digitally connected populations. As a result, both States and regional organizations now use public diplomacy as one of their means of gaining influence and strengthening partnerships, in order to support their foreign policies. The importance of public diplomacy in today's world is that it helps countries building trust in international relations, while

at the same time adding value to formal diplomatic engagement through social or cultural resonance with a wider audience (Wrighton et al., 2022).

As social media is becoming such a crucial channel of public diplomacy today around the world, governments and Embassies have direct access to their foreign audiences using platforms such as Instagram. This effort helps to advance the nation's interest while building trust and credibility across cultural and political boundaries. Academics have indicated that the development of digital diplomacy allows States to connect with public and create public opinions, receive support for specific policies, and interact cross-culturally in ways that would never occur with traditional measures. There are several existing academic research highlighting the development of digital diplomacy. Social media plays a pivotal role in contemporary public diplomacy, particularly during critical moments such as political crises, invasions, or global health emergencies like COVID-19. By enabling governments to communicate directly with foreign audiences and disseminate information rapidly across borders, social media enhances both reach and immediacy. Moreover, interactive engagement with global publics provides valuable feedback that can inform the development of public policy and diplomatic strategy (Perdani et al., 2024). Previous study has conceptualized nation branding on social media as *Selfie Diplomacy*, where States construct and project their own "self-portrait" to global audiences. It allows nations to counter stereotypes and present a more complex, multi-layered image of themselves. In this sense, social media functions not merely as a communication channel, but as a strategic instrument for reshaping perceptions and advancing nation branding (Manor & Segev, 2015).

However, aside from the potentials of public diplomacy, there are also several challenges and risks of its utilization. For example, social media use for diplomatic purposes exposes individuals, businesses, governments, and organizations to the risk of misinformation, propagandizing objectives, misuse of platforms, and bad-faith attempts at manipulating public perception (Mekaj, 2025). Furthermore, the accelerated dissemination of extremism, hate speech, and hostilities on the internet might create an increased level of risk for cyber security threats. Digital public diplomacy offers valuable opportunities for States to engage foreign publics, yet it also carries risks such as misinformation, miscommunication, and cyber threats. The evolving dynamics of digital diplomacy present ongoing challenges for diplomats. Because social media changes rapidly, they must continuously refine their technological skills and adapt their communication strategies to remain effective and visible in the online sphere (Bjola & Jiang, 2015). To understand how these opportunities and challenges unfold in practice, a focused case study is needed. Previous study by Han (2025), for instance, highlighted the implementation of Russia's digital diplomacy with the U.S. and China. Perdani et al. (2024) observe that Twitter has been the dominant platform examined in studies of digital public diplomacy. They argue that future research should expand to other platforms, particularly Instagram, which has become increasingly popular among diplomatic officials worldwide. Building on this recommendation, the present study focuses on Instagram as the primary site of analysis.

U.S.–Indonesia relations have always been an intriguing topic in examining the current development in the Indo-Pacific. Recent circumstances are marked by the launch of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in 2023, followed by Plan of Action 2024–2028. Yet, there are still several efforts that can be suggested to strengthen their relations, including promoting "champions" between these two countries and appointing high-quality diplomat as an Ambassador, as well as maintaining "regular and intensive communication" (Alexandra, 2024). Indonesia–U.S. relations provide a compelling context for examining digital public diplomacy because both States actively employ social media to strengthen bilateral ties and engage diverse publics. Within this relationship, the Instagram account @IndonesiainDC represents a crucial State actor's perspective. Managed by the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, D.C., it projects Indonesia's official positions, promotes cultural diplomacy, and maintains dialogue with relevant audiences. The justification for focusing on @IndonesiainDC lies in the appointment of Ambassador Dwisuryo Indroyono Soesilo, which marked the restoration of Indonesia's ambassadorial presence in Washington, D.C. after a two-year vacancy since July 2023.

This leadership transition is not a minor detail but a critical momentum in Indonesia–U.S. diplomacy. The selection of @IndonesiainDC as the focal case is justified by the unusual diplomatic circumstance of Indonesia’s ambassadorial vacancy in Washington, D.C. for two years, a rare occurrence for a major and strategically important posting. The resumption of leadership thus provides a meaningful starting point to analyze how digital diplomacy strategies are recalibrated under new authority.

Considering the current condition mentioned above, this paper presents an important case study. First, it allows us to capture the formative months of the new Ambassador’s tenure, a period when narrative framing and strategic messaging are most actively shaped. The appointment of Ambassador Dwisuryo Indroyono Soesilo thus represents not only a leadership transition but also the restoration of Indonesia’s diplomatic presence at the ambassadorial level. It ensures the continuity in one of the most critical bilateral relationships, proven by a significant trade agreement (BPMI Setpres, 2026), as well as an intensive promotion of sustainable development, digital transformation, people-to-people connection, and commitment to maintain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific (US Embassy Jakarta, 2023). This moment provides a unique analytical window: the initial three months of a new ambassador’s tenure are crucial in shaping diplomatic narratives for Indonesia’s visibility, credibility, and communication strategies with U.S. audiences. Second, examining @IndonesiainDC during this period addresses a clear research gap, while existing studies have not explored how leadership transitions intersect with digital public diplomacy, nor how Embassies recalibrate online strategies following the appointment of a new ambassador. This case therefore offers an important contribution to International Relations scholarship by showing how digital engagement functions as a strategic tool in bilateral relations. While the notion that digital engagement serves as a strategic tool in bilateral relations is not new, the novelty of this study lies in its specific content analysis of the Instagram account @IndonesiainDC during the first three months of a new ambassador’s tenure.

While there are numerous frameworks for analyzing public diplomacy, this study adopts Nicholas J. Cull’s taxonomy of public diplomacy, which identifies six core elements: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, international broadcasting, and psychological warfare (psywar) (Cull, 2009). For the purposes of this research, the focus is limited to the five functions relevant to digital diplomacy, namely listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting, while excluding psywar, as it is not reflected in the content of Instagram account. Cull’s (2009) taxonomy is being utilized in this study because it offers a practical and adaptable framework for analyzing digital diplomacy on Instagram. Its five relevant elements map directly onto the types of content typically shared on the platform, from policy messaging and cultural promotion to interactive dialogue and event outreach. Thus, this paper argues that this conceptual framework is particularly suitable for examining how @IndonesiainDC employ Instagram to advance Indonesia–US public diplomacy. Therefore, the research question in this paper is: to what extent do the digital public diplomacy narratives presented through the Indonesian Embassy’s Instagram account (@IndonesiainDC) reflect the taxonomy of public diplomacy identified by Cull (2009), namely listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting? The following section breaks down the methodology used in this paper.

## Method

This research uses a qualitative approach, which emphasizes the collection and interpretation of non-numeric data such as documents, observations, and interviews. In qualitative research, the researcher plays a central role in gathering information and interpreting its meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This research focuses on Instagram as a platform for digital public diplomacy engagement, which provides highly interpretable data for analysis. Each post on Instagram must include visual content, such as an image or video, making the material naturally richer and more informative for research purposes. Instagram research offers three data collection options: automated tools, manual collection, or user engagement (Laestadius & Witt, 2022). This study

uses the second option, which is manual collection through the Instagram interface. After collecting data, the author conducted a manual content analysis by analyzing the content (photo or video) and captions provided on Instagram @IndonesiainDC and thus categorized the content into Cull's (2009) public diplomacy indicators.

For this study, data collection relies on social media and digital materials, with a specific focus on the Instagram accounts @IndonesiainDC. To ensure systematic analysis, the author conducts a manual content review by analyzing each post one by one and connecting the caption, image, video, or text to Cull's five elements of public diplomacy. Acknowledging that there are 3,192 posts (as of 7 February 2026), this paper focuses only on a specific timeline, that is from 19 September 2025 until 31 December 2025. The timeline begins on 19 September 2025, the date of the first post introducing Ambassador Dwisuryo Indroyono Soesilo. This provides a clear and meaningful starting point, as it marks the the initial months of the Ambassador's tenure, after the position had remained vacant for two years since July 2023. This period limitation allows the study to examine how digital diplomacy strategies were shaped under new leadership. Narrowing the scope ensures a focused and manageable dataset for systematic analysis, especially for content analysis. Restricting the sample to three months is justified, as it shows the formative stage of the Ambassador's digital diplomacy. This paper argues that, in analyzing digital public diplomacy engagement on Instagram research, focusing on a defined period allows for systematic and consistent content analysis, ensuring the dataset remains coherent while still reflecting meaningful patterns of communication. Rather than emphasizing the quantity of posts, this paper focuses on the substantive content of the materials, connecting them to five public diplomacy elements. This approach ensures that the analysis highlights the qualitative dimensions of digital diplomacy, capturing how meaning and strategy are conveyed through Instagram posts. Furthermore, secondary data are derived from academic article of reputable journals, official website, and online news media. This scope provides both a clear limitation and a distinct contribution to the study. (Australia, UK, and US). Thus, existing research tends to explain shifts in Australia's foreign policy toward China entirely in terms of external influences, ignoring the importance of domestic variables and internal political calculations. Thus, most extant research explains shifts in Australia's foreign policy toward China primarily as a result of external influences. As a result, the research gap is the absence of study on domestic political calculations.

This research explores how the Instagram accounts @IndonesiainDC establish and project national identity through cultural narratives while simultaneously building dialogue consistent with Cull's taxonomy of public diplomacy, namely listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting (Cull, 2009). While this account is central to Indonesia-US public diplomacy and provide rich material for analysis, this paper acknowledges its limitation by not representing the full spectrum of Indonesia-US' digital diplomacy efforts across other platforms or accounts. As such, the findings cannot be generalized to all Indonesia-US public diplomacy initiatives online. Instead, the study offers a case-specific contribution, highlighting how @IndonesiainDC account utilize Instagram for public diplomacy efforts and provide a specific contribution to the field of International Relations, soft power, public and digital diplomacy. Future research could expand the scope by including additional accounts, platforms, or comparative case studies to provide a more comprehensive picture.

## Results

### *Understanding Soft Power. Public, amd Digital Diplomacy*

Joseph Nye defined soft power as "the ability to shape the preferences of others through attraction rather than coercion or payment" (Nye 2004, p. x). Soft power resources build on the use of culture, political values, and foreign policies to provide a basis of attraction for other nations (Nye 2004). Public diplomacy is one of the instrument to enhance soft power. Cull (2009)

uses public diplomacy as the tool used to operationalize soft power by identifying five elements of public diplomacy: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting. Trisni and Putri (2023) compiled a table summarizing the perspectives of 11 experts on the relationship between soft power and public diplomacy. Based on their findings, soft power and public diplomacy should be understood as separate concepts, but ones that are closely connected. Public diplomacy is described as a set of interactive, two-way activities carried out by governments, sometimes in partnership with domestic audiences or through qualified non-state actors. These activities are designed to reach both domestic and foreign publics in pursuit of national interests. At the same time, such initiatives create opportunities for States to build and project soft power, provided they are presented in an appealing way, highlight resources of attraction, avoid coercion, and are implemented effectively.

Recent research has been conducted in analyzing soft power and public diplomacy. A study by Yildirim (2025) investigates Poland's approach to soft power and public diplomacy. This study utilizes both Joseph Nye's definitions of soft power and public diplomacy and statistical data from the Elcano Global Presence Index and the Global Soft Power Index to assess how these indicators have changed over time. Furthermore, the study illustrates how Poland's public diplomacy activities have supported its core soft power elements. The results demonstrate that culture, education and science are Poland's top three soft power strengths. The data shows that during that time there have been many fluctuations in Poland's rankings, however, overall it has had a positive increase in its soft power capacity. In the context of utilizing cultural diplomacy as an instrument to enhance soft power, Korean Hallyu and Cool Japan aim to influence Indonesian public opinion towards South Korea and Japan (Islamiyah et al., 2020).

Indonesia has attempted to enhance its soft power and securing its national interests by specifically developing a positive national image by virtue of being a democratic, moderate, and progressive country. Indonesia seeks to present itself as an example of a tolerant and generally moderate country, as well as a progressive country that is open to new ideas and adapt to new circumstances, such as through promoting sustainable economic growth and developing new technologies for enhancing social welfare. To promote this image, Indonesia relies on four key areas of soft power, namely politics and national values, economy and tourism, social culture, and the role of key actors. All four areas are present and reflected in the many different aspects of Indonesia's diplomatic agenda. While there may be opportunities for Indonesia to develop its international influence through how it implements these four areas of soft power, there are still obstacles, particularly the ongoing debate regarding how effective soft power is versus hard power in achieving a country's foreign policy objectives (Nuaba, 2025). Another example of Indonesia's public diplomacy is the utilization of *Rumah Budaya Indonesia*, which serves as an effective instrument of cultural diplomacy in projecting Indonesia's soft power in the US (Sanam, 2025). Similarly, the US has promoted its national interest in Indonesia through public diplomacy 2.0 (Nuswantoro, 2013).

On the other hand, not all public diplomacy initiatives have been met with favorable reactions. For instance, Al-Rawi (2019) examined the US Department of State's Digital Outreach Team (DOT) as part of broader American public diplomacy efforts in the Middle East. His analysis revealed that much of the audience response was predominantly negative. This study concludes that the DOT struggled to meet its objectives. Furthermore, there is another existing research that relates to US' public diplomacy on social media. Pu, Wang, and Zhou (2025) analyzed the U.S. Embassy's presence on Weibo between 2010 and 2020 to understand how American public diplomacy operates within Chinese cyberspace in the context of understanding Chinese censorship and content sensitivity. Taken together, public diplomacy has its own development Post-Cold War era, ranging from its implementation in global peace as well as global conflict (Gilboa, 2024).

In examining soft power and public diplomacy, recent scholarly works have also discussed about digital diplomacy. Digital diplomacy refers to the utilization of digital technology in diplomatic activities. In the digital age, both state and non-state actors use social media to promote their programs and agenda. A study by Triwibowo (2023) noted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia "has performed the early stages of digital diplomacy", particularly to support

domestic agenda by disseminating information. Embassies and Ambassadors in various countries attempted to connect to wider public through social media. As an example, Indonesia has promoted its national interests through social media and awarding various efforts on it, such as the case studies of Ambassador of Indonesia in London and Indonesia in Jeddah (Intentilia, 2023). Furthermore, the study of Fachrie (2025) emphasized penta-helix collaboration in Indonesia's digital diplomacy, including the role of government, industry, academia, civil society, and mass media.

Other than State actors, the role of non-state actors in public diplomacy has faced various academic debates. A study by Ayhan (2019) addressed the taxonomy of public diplomacy perspectives, which consist of five perspectives, namely: (i) state-centric; (ii) neo-statist perspectives; (iii) nontraditional perspectives; (iv) society-centric perspectives; and (v) accommodative perspectives. The role of non-state actors as public diplomacy actors is also being problematized in this taxonomy context. In state-centric perspectives, non state actors can only be perceived as public diplomacy actors only if state agencies are being involved. Neo-statist perspectives also mentioned that non-state actors can be categorized as social or grassroots diplomacy. The third perspective, nontraditional perspectives, emphasized that non-state actors can engage in public diplomacy initiatives. In society-centric perspectives, non-state actors are the main actors of public diplomacy. The last one, accommodative perspectives highlight that non-state actors can become a public diplomacy actor when meeting the terms and conditions, including legitimacy, political agenda, and public interest.

#### *Taxonomy of Public Diplomacy*

The first element of the taxonomy of public diplomacy identified by Cull (2009) is listening. Listening is a fundamental function of public diplomacy. It describes the way a diplomatic actor seek to interpret and manage the interaction by gathering information about foreign publics and their opinions. This process involves collecting and analyzing data, then using those insights to adjust policies or refine broader public diplomacy strategies. Listening has historically been embedded across other practices, namely advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange programs, and broadcasting, since each of these domains requires attention to audience feedback and opinion research (Cull, 2009). Moreover, the monitoring of foreign public opinion has long been part of conventional diplomacy and intelligence work, underscoring that listening is not a new activity but a core element of how states engage with external audiences. In the implementation phase, international actors attempt to reach out and form an engagement with foreign audience by listening, rather than speaking. This paper argues that listening is central to public diplomacy because it allows States and institutions to understand how foreign publics perceive them and to adjust their strategies accordingly. Without listening, public diplomacy risks becoming one-sided messaging that is unable to establish emotional relevance with the foreign audience.

The second element is advocacy, which can be defined as the deliberate efforts made by diplomatic actors to conduct international communication activity in order to "actively promote a particular policy, idea, or that actor's general interests" in the opinion of foreign audiences (Cull, 2009). In practice, advocacy ranges from formal embassy press relations, which often represent the more direct and policy-driven end of communication, to softer informational activities that emphasize persuasion without rigid policy framing. This paper argues that advocacy is closely linked to the national interests that States want to advance, since it provides a way for governments to communicate their priorities and values to foreign audiences. Policies and ideas cannot stand on their own, they need public support to gain legitimacy and influence. That is why advocacy is such a central part of diplomacy. At the same time, its success depends heavily on whether the actor is seen as credible and whether the audience is open to the message. This makes advocacy both essential and contested, as governments must constantly balance the drive to promote their interests with the challenge of earning genuine trust abroad.

Cultural diplomacy is the third element. This part consists of utilizing cultural resources and achievement as well as facilitating cultural transmissions abroad. Cultural diplomacy can be seen from the work of various institutions, including the British Council, Italian Cultural Institute, and

the French international network to maintain their language (Cull, 2009). Taking this explanation into consideration, this paper emphasized that cultural diplomacy is highly relevant because it allows States to project their identity and values, creating attraction and persuasion through cultural expression. It connects people at a cultural level, fostering awareness and mutual understanding that go beyond political or economic interests. Importantly, cultural diplomacy tends to operate over the long term, building relationships gradually and often without clear or immediate measures of impact. This makes it both powerful and difficult to evaluate, as its influence lies in shaping perceptions and trust over time rather than producing short-term results.

The fourth element is exchange diplomacy. Cull (2009) describes exchange diplomacy as the effort of a state or institution to shape the international environment by sending its citizens abroad and, in turn, welcoming foreign citizens for periods of study or cultural immersion. While this can be understood in a one-way sense, where students are expected to return home and promote the positive image of the host country, the reciprocal nature of exchanges has made this area of public diplomacy a stronghold of the principle of mutuality. The vision here is that both sides benefit from the experience, gaining new perspectives and being transformed through shared learning. Exchange diplomacy therefore emphasizes people-to-people contact, building long-term relationships that extend beyond official state channels, and fostering deeper understanding between societies. Despite the existence of multiple exchange programs nowadays, this paper argues that there are several challenges in its implementation. First, participation in exchange programs does not guarantee that individuals will return with exclusively positive impressions. Experiences abroad can be shaped by cultural misunderstandings, social tensions, or unmet expectations, which may lead participants to form negative views of the host country rather than the intended admiration. Second, exchange initiatives risk becoming "one-time" event only, limited by funding cycles and short-term planning. Without sustained follow-up or mechanisms to maintain connections after the program ends, the impact of exchanges can fade quickly, reducing them to temporary experiences rather than long-term relationship-building. These limitations highlight the difficulty of ensuring that exchange diplomacy consistently delivers on its promise of mutual benefit and transformation.

The fifth and final element explored in this paper is international broadcasting (news). International broadcasting is the use of radio, television, and internet technologies by States to engage foreign publics and shape the international environment. Broadcasting overlaps with other functions of public diplomacy, such as listening through audience research, advocacy through policy messaging, cultural diplomacy through program content, and exchange diplomacy through cooperation among broadcasters (Cull, 2009). Yet, because of its technological demands and institutional structures, international broadcasting often operates as a distinct practice. Its most defining feature can be seen in the role of news. Historically, the credibility of international broadcasting has depended on the ability to deliver objective news, aligning it with the ethical standards of domestic journalism. In this way, broadcasting has not only served as a tool of communication but also as a mechanism for diffusing journalistic culture across borders. Understanding that news has always been a vital element in international broadcasting, this paper asserts that in today's digital environment, news can be packaged in diverse formats that allow audiences on social media to grasp the main ideas quickly and in engaging ways. Platforms like Instagram make it possible to present news not only through text but also through visuals, short videos, and interactive content that feel more accessible to younger and digitally active publics. The following section examines the Instagram content produced by @IndonesianDC through the lens of taxonomy of public diplomacy by Cull (2009).

## Discussion

### *Taxonomy of Public Diplomacy in @IndonesianDC*

Before moving into each element of the taxonomy of public diplomacy, it is useful to consider the current social media presence of the Instagram account under study. As of 7 February 2026,

@IndonesiainDC has published 3,192 posts, with 39.8K followers and 377 accounts followed. Established in October 2013 and based in the United States, the account obtained its verified badge in 2016. The content analyzed in this discussion covers the period from 19 September to 31 December 2025, based on the appointment of Ambassador Dwisuryo Indroyono Soesilo in September 2025. This was particularly significant, as the position of Indonesian Ambassador to the United States had remained vacant for nearly two years since July 2023 (Sutrisna & Setuningsih, 2025). His arrival restored Indonesia's highest-level representation in Washington, D.C., ensuring that bilateral initiatives could be advanced with renewed authority and continuity. This leadership transition also provided momentum for strengthening Indonesia–U.S. relations, including through digital public diplomacy.

### *Listening*

The Christmas celebration of more than 450 Indonesian diaspora members in Rockville on 6 December 2025 illustrates how Indonesian diaspora engagement can be understood through the concept of listening. While Cull (2009) defines listening as gathering information about foreign publics and their opinions, this paper distinguishes between two audiences: U.S. citizens, who represent the foreign public in the context of public diplomacy, and Indonesian diaspora communities, who remain relevant as intermediaries. They embody Indonesian cultural roots while simultaneously interacting with international societies. Therefore, diaspora can offer insights to the Embassy on how Indonesian identity is lived abroad. Their experiences, values, and actions, such as donating offerings to flood victims in Sumatra depict how solidarity is expressed transnationally (@IndonesiainDC 16 December, 2025). Another example of engagement with Indonesian diaspora can be seen in San Francisco (@IndonesiainDC 16 November, 2025). This paper argues that by listening to diaspora voices, the Embassy might better understand how Indonesia is perceived in foreign contexts, identify opportunities for cultural and economic collaboration, and strengthen trust with communities that serve as bridges between Indonesia and foreign audiences.

Furthermore, the Halloween event at the Indonesian Embassy can be understood as an example of listening, since it created an informal forum where Embassy staff could observe and interact with U.S. community members (@IndonesiainDC 4 November, 2025). This paper argues that listening is not limited to formal dialogues. Rather, it can also occur through casual, participatory settings that reveal how publics respond to cultural gestures and hospitality. By opening its doors and sharing Indonesian treats, the Embassy gained opportunities to collect data informally on the perceptions of American people towards Indonesia. The limitation, however, is that without structured mechanisms to analyze feedback, the insights risk being informal impressions rather than actionable data for shaping future public diplomacy strategies.

### *Advocacy*

A post from @IndonesiainDC on *Hari Ibu* (Mother's Day in Indonesia) demonstrates how advocacy operates within public diplomacy. The account commemorates the day with messages of gratitude while also highlighting its historical roots in the 1928 Indonesian Women's Congress in Yogyakarta, a pivotal moment of political awakening when women united to demand education, equality, and participation in nation-building. By adopting the theme "*Perempuan Berdaya dan Berkarya*" (Empowered and Productive Women), the post projects a phrase that in *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language) conveys not only women's empowerment and agency but also their creativity, contribution, and meaningful participation in society. This post highlights Indonesia's values of gender equality and women's empowerment to international audiences. It promotes the idea that women play essential roles in both society and the State, reinforcing Indonesia's identity as a nation committed to inclusivity and progress (@IndonesiainDC 23 December, 2025).

Another post can be seen from Indonesia's key role in critical minerals. This panel appearance can be read as a clear example of advocacy diplomacy, where Indonesian diplomat actively promoted Indonesia's policy interests by emphasizing the country's role in supplying critical minerals essential for renewable energy and EV batteries, while framing collaboration as the pathway to

resilient supply chains (@IndonesiainDC 21 November, 2025a). In Cull's terms, this is advocacy because it projects Indonesia's strategic narrative into a policy-oriented forum. However, it should be noted that the audience was highly specialized, the Association of Women in International Trade (WIIT) and the U.S.–Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Business Council, meaning the advocacy was directed at a narrow circle of trade professionals and policy elites rather than broader publics. Furthermore, Indonesia also advocates its position in palm oil. Indonesia's advocacy in palm oil diplomacy is reflected in its strong emphasis on sustainability and green growth. At the World Bank headquarters, the Embassy co-hosted a seminar to underscore the strategic role of sustainable palm oil in job creation, innovation, and climate-smart development (@IndonesiainDC 15 October, 2025). This advocacy is particularly important, acknowledging Indonesia's multiple tensions in palm oil and sustainability issues, especially with the European Union (Kettunen & Pratiwi, 2025).

The commemoration of Veterans Day in the United States and National Heroes Day in Indonesia exemplifies symbolic advocacy diplomacy, as the Embassy actively promotes shared values of sacrifice, respect, and national pride to strengthen bilateral understanding (@IndonesiainDC 10 November, 2025 & @IndonesiainDC 11 November, 2025). By drawing parallels between the two observances, the Embassy frames Indonesia and the U.S. as connected through their admiration for heroes and veterans, projecting a narrative of common ideals. Furthermore, there are two posts that can illustrate advocacy diplomacy in the economic context, as the Embassy promotes Indonesia's trade interests and highlights trusted partnerships with U.S. stakeholders. The recap of Trade Expo Indonesia 2025 emphasizes concrete outcomes, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings, and forums on U.S. market regulations, showing how the Embassy advocates for Indonesian exporters by positioning them as reliable suppliers of high-quality products. Similarly, the *Primaduta* Award ceremony celebrates loyal importers and diaspora champions, reinforcing Indonesia's narrative of sustainability, friendship, and shared growth (@IndonesiainDC 8 November, 2025a; 2025b).

### *Cultural Diplomacy*

An example of cultural diplomacy portrayed on Instagram is the *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language) & Balinese *Gamelan* (traditional instruments) Showcase hosted by the Embassy of Indonesia in Washington, D.C., which exemplifies cultural diplomacy in practice. The Embassy received a recognition for achieving the highest enrollment in a free online *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language) course among overseas missions, which further underscores the program's success. The strength of this initiative lies in its ability to foster cultural collaboration and people-to-people engagement. By combining language learning with traditional arts, the program builds bridges between Indonesia and foreign publics, while also reinforcing Indonesia's identity as a nation that values education, creativity, and cultural exchange (@IndonesiainDC 16 December, 2025). However, this paper argues that a notable limitation still exists, particularly in the narrow cultural representation. Indonesia's rich diversity often remains underrepresented, with international showcases frequently centered on Bali or Java. Further innovation in programming the cultural diplomacy programs, such as incorporating traditions from various other regions in Indonesia, would provide a more inclusive picture of Indonesia's cultural wealth and strengthen the impact of its cultural diplomacy.

Another example of cultural diplomacy can be seen from the visit to the Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art (NMAA). By advancing the implementation of the MoU between NMAA and the Indonesian Heritage Agency, the Embassy is not only preserving and showcasing Indonesian cultural heritage but also investing in capacity-building programs for museum professionals. Workshops on curatorial practice, conservation, exhibition development, and digital collection management demonstrate a commitment to professional exchange and institutional collaboration, which strengthens Indonesia's cultural presence abroad. The guided tour of rare Indonesian objects further highlights the value of Indonesia's contributions to global collections (@IndonesiainDC 26 November, 2025a). Moreover, at Sandy Spring Museum, Indonesia's tradi-

tional dances, such as *Pendet*, *Enggang Gading*, and *Saman*, are shared in participatory workshops that engage diverse audiences (@IndonesiainDC 22 October, 2025), as well as the performances of *Balinese Wayang Gamelan* (traditional Indonesian shadow puppet theatre) and *Opera Jawa* (Javanese Opera) (@IndonesiainDC 1 October, 2025). These complementary initiatives show how museums can both institutionalize cultural heritage and animate it through performances.

The Embassy's participation in #Winternational2025 demonstrates how cultural diplomacy extends beyond performing arts into everyday traditions and practices. By showcasing Indonesia's wellness heritage, coffee culture, craftsmanship, and introducing tempeh as a plant-based superfood, the Embassy highlights aspects of Indonesian identity that resonate with global audiences interested in sustainability, creativity, and healthy living. This complements earlier initiatives such as the dance and language showcase, reinforcing people-to-people engagement through diverse cultural expressions. The strength of this approach lies in its ability to present Indonesia as innovative and relevant to contemporary global conversations, particularly around food culture and sustainability. Highlighting *tempe* (tempeh) is an example of gastrodiploamacy, which is using food as the key element of introducing culture to foreign audiences. Many research has explored how gastrodiploamacy can support Indonesia's nation branding at the global level (Simatupang et al., 2024). This paper proposes that sustained efforts are needed to translate cultural appeal into tangible economic outcomes, not just symbolic visibility. Thus, these initiatives must be strategically linked to trade promotion and economic diplomacy, through brand development, certification, diaspora networks, and ongoing campaigns that connect producers with international buyers.

The World *Angklung* Day 2025 concert at the Field Museum is an illustration of cultural diplomacy through performance. By celebrating 15 years of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognition, the event elevated *Angklung* not only as a traditional bamboo musical instrument but also as a symbol of harmony, unity, and cooperation (@IndonesiainDC 24 November, 2025). Another event related to utilizing *Angklung* as cultural diplomacy can be found on the occasion of ASEAN Spouse Circle (@IndonesiainDC 21 November, 2025d) and celebration in Millbrae, California (@IndonesiainDC 19 November, 2025b), as well as *gamelan Raras Sari* in UC Berkeley (@IndonesiainDC 21 November, 2025c). Beyond gastronomy and musical instruments, film also serves as a vital channel of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy, exemplified by an event featuring the Indonesian horror-thriller "The Elixir". By showcasing cinema, Indonesia expands its cultural narrative, engaging audiences through storytelling that blends tradition, creativity, and contemporary appeal. Cultural diplomacy also extends to the embodied practices like *Pencak Silat* (traditional martial art) and *Batik* (traditional fabric and textile art), which highlight the balance of strength and grace (@Indonesiain DC 3 October, 2025).

### *Exchange Diplomacy*

An Instagram post on 10 December 2025 reflects the possibility of exchange diplomacy even if it has not yet materialized into a formal program. Ambassador Dwisuryo Indroyono Soesilo's return to his alma mater, the University of Iowa, opened discussions on joint research, higher education cooperation, and cultural exchange, signaling potential pathways for future collaboration. Meeting Indonesian students, alumni, and the broader community further reinforced the idea of academic mobility and people-to-people ties (@IndonesiainDC 10 December, 2025). Another visit to UC Davis represents the strategic potential of exchange diplomacy, even though it remains at the level of talks rather than formalized programs. By focusing on talent mobility in various fields and collaborative research in smart agriculture, aquaculture, livestock, and commodities like coffee and cocoa, the Indonesian delegation positioned UC Davis as a partner for both educational and economic diplomacy (@IndonesiainDC 19 November, 2025a).

The visit demonstrates how symbolic gestures and institutional engagement can lay the groundwork for opportunities such as PhD student mobility to the United States. In Cull's taxonomy, this represents the emerging potential of exchange diplomacy. Without tangible execution, however, such initiatives risk remaining symbolic gestures in the diplomatic sphere, serving more as ceremonial reaffirmations of goodwill than as mechanisms for actual exchange. To move

beyond symbolism, follow-up actions such as formal agreements, scholarship schemes, or structured research collaborations are needed so that the promise of exchange diplomacy translates into real opportunities for Indonesian students and institutions. This type of exchange diplomacy is particularly needed by Indonesian universities, following the requirements to have global research networks and collaborations.

The free online *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language) course offered by the Embassy is a clear example of exchange diplomacy, as they create structured opportunities for U.S. learners of all ages to engage directly with Indonesian language and culture (@IndonesiainDC 2 November 2025). Another example of exchange diplomacy would be the Embassy engagement with Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) fellows. This YSEALI program is a tangible case of exchange diplomacy, because it goes beyond symbolic gestures and creates a structured platform for mutual learning among selected ASEAN youth in the U.S. (@IndonesiainDC 30 October 2025, 2025). Building on earlier examples of exchange diplomacy such as the YSEALI program and the free *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language) courses, the Young Asian Diplomats Program hosted at the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, D.C. further illustrates how Indonesia fosters reciprocal learning and relationship-building. By welcoming participants from across Asia and the Pacific, the Embassy created a platform for emerging diplomats to share perspectives on leadership and cooperation while gaining exposure to developments in D.C. This two-way dialogue strengthens mutual understanding, expands professional networks, and positions Indonesia as an active contributor to regional collaboration and the cultivation of future diplomatic leaders (@IndonesiainDC 10 October, 2025).

### *International Broadcasting*

The Embassy publicly announced and disseminated the appointment of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Prof. Dr. Dwisuryo Indroyono Soesilo through Instagram as one of its digital platforms. This marks the beginning of Ambassador Soesilo's duties in the U.S. As noted in this paper's background, this is particularly significant since the position of Indonesian Ambassador to the U.S. had been vacant for two years following July 2023 (Sutrisna & Setuningsih, 2025). This initiative can be framed under international broadcasting. Moreover, by sharing the message of renewed energy for the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and highlighting Indonesia's and the U.S.' shared vision for peace, prosperity, and progress, the Embassy communicates directly to international audiences (@IndonesiainDC 19 September, 2025). Such broadcasting not only informs but also reinforces Indonesia's image as a proactive and optimistic partner, using official channels to project credibility, unity, and diplomatic commitment on the global stage.

A sample of international broadcasting from @IndonesiainDC illustrates how diplomatic actors use social media to disseminate practical information. The post, published during the Christmas period, conveys seasonal greetings while announcing the Embassy's closure dates (25–26 December 2025) and providing a 24-hour emergency hotline for urgent matters (@IndonesiainDC 24 December, 2025). Although this content does not fall under the news category in the strict journalistic sense, it nonetheless represents a form of broadcasting. It demonstrates how the Embassy employs digital platforms to maintain transparency, ensure accessibility, and reinforce trust among foreign publics.

Another post from @IndonesiainDC illustrates how international broadcasting can be used to frame diplomatic milestones in a constructive and forward-looking way. The account reported on Ambassador Indroyono Soesilo's credential presentation to President Donald Trump at the White House, followed by a reception that brought together ambassadors, partners, and U.S. officials, including Congressman Rudy Yakym. This content does not simply announce an event, rather, it frames the occasion as a "meaningful moment" and a "new chapter" in Indonesia–U.S. relations. By emphasizing themes of strength, continuity, and partnership, the post projects optimism and reinforces the narrative of a bilateral relationship built on mutual respect and shared goals. In this way, international broadcasting through Instagram becomes a tool not only for information dissemination but also for shaping perceptions of diplomatic ties in a positive and hopeful

manner (@IndonesiainDC 20 December, 2025). Furthermore, another broadcasting is presented on Instagram to support Indonesia's sovereign wealth institutions called *Danantara* (@IndonesiainDC 26 November, 2025b) and economic-driven cooperation through the U.S.–ASEAN Business Council (@IndonesiainDC 14 November, 2025).

The Embassy uses digital platforms to disseminate practical information about Indonesia's new "All Indonesia" arrival app. This initiative can be framed under international broadcasting because by promoting the app's features, including streamlined immigration, customs, health, and quarantine checks, the Embassy communicates directly to global audiences, ensuring travelers receive clear, accessible guidance before entering Indonesia (@IndonesiainDC 24 September, 2025). This paper argues that, importantly, sharing such practical updates enhances the credibility of the Embassy's Instagram account as a reliable reference point for foreigners arriving in Indonesia, positioning it not only as a cultural showcase but also as a trusted source of essential information.

After presenting a discussion of five elements in Cull's public diplomacy, this paper would emphasize the correlation among each element. The different elements of Cull's taxonomy in this study are closely connected and reinforce one another rather than standing alone. Listening gives the Embassy a sense of how both diaspora and U.S. publics respond to Indonesia. It might help the Embassy to shape its priorities by listening to the concern and impressions given by the public. These insights then feed into advocacy, where Indonesia's policy interests and values are projected more deliberately to targeted audiences. Advocacy then finds reinforcement in cultural diplomacy, where policy ideas are translated into everyday cultural expressions that resonate more widely. Exchange diplomacy builds on this foundation by turning symbolic gestures into structured opportunities for collaboration and learning. Finally, international broadcasting ties the whole structure together by ensuring that milestones, announcements, and practical information reach wider publics with consistency and credibility. Taken together, this paper finds that the content shared by @IndonesiainDC is not confined to Cull's five categories but often extends beyond them, serving the direct interests of Indonesian people through webinars, information sessions, and other initiatives that will be discussed in the following section.

### *Beyond Cull's Taxonomy of Public Diplomacy*

Beyond five components mentioned above, this paper also finds several insights of the Embassy's Instagram posts that do not fall under those five categories according to Cull (2009). Rather than solely connecting with foreign audiences, this paper finds that @IndonesiainDC also addresses Indonesian publics directly through webinars and collaborations designed to benefit them. Such initiatives fall outside Cull's five categories of public diplomacy, yet they are consistently present on the Embassy's Instagram account. For example, the post on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Webinar Series, which gathered more than 100 participants to learn about compliance and export opportunities for Indonesian cosmetics and skincare products, illustrates how the Embassy provides practical guidance to domestic stakeholders (@IndonesiainDC 21 November, 2025b). While not part of Cull's taxonomy, this activity demonstrates a hybrid function: using the embassy's digital presence to empower Indonesian producers with knowledge and tools to succeed internationally. This additional finding suggests that Embassy social media can serve dual purposes, both projecting Indonesia abroad and supporting domestic communities in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the webinar with Prof. Herry S. Utomo (Louisiana State University) illustrates an important dimension of Indonesia's international engagement that does not fall neatly under Cull's taxonomy of public diplomacy. While Cull emphasizes categories like exchange, advocacy, and cultural diplomacy, this initiative highlights knowledge diplomacy or science diplomacy, the use of academic expertise and research collaboration to advance global problem-solving (@IndonesiainDC 6 October, 2025). An additional finding that lies outside Cull's taxonomy but reflects an essential protocol function is the Embassy's role during high-level visits, such as Ambassador Indroyono's duties at the 80<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly. Welcoming President Prabowo Subianto upon arrival, accompanying him during his historic address, and bidding him

farewell are ceremonial responsibilities that ensure Indonesia's dignified presence on the world stage (@IndonesiainDC 26 September, 2025).

## Conclusion

The analysis of @IndonesiainDC through Cull's taxonomy demonstrates that the Embassy's Instagram account actively embodies the five elements of public diplomacy: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting. Posts ranging from diaspora engagement and cultural showcases to policy advocacy and practical information dissemination illustrate how digital platforms allow Indonesia to project its identity, values, and priorities directly to foreign publics. This confirms Cull's framework as a useful lens for understanding how traditional diplomatic functions are adapted into digital narratives, reinforcing Indonesia's credibility and visibility in the US.

Listening is highlighted through diaspora engagement and informal community events that provide insights into perceptions abroad. Advocacy is evident in posts promoting Indonesia's positions on critical minerals, palm oil and sustainability issues, as well as gender equality. Cultural diplomacy is showcased through language programs, performing arts, gastrodiplomacy, and museum collaborations that project Indonesia's diverse identity. Exchange diplomacy emerges in symbolic gestures like university visits and structured programs such as YSEALI and free *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language) courses, fostering reciprocal learning. International broadcasting is reflected in announcements of ambassadorial appointments, embassy closures, and diplomatic milestones, projecting credibility and transparency. Beyond these, hybrid practices such as webinars for Indonesian producers, knowledge diplomacy through academic collaboration, and ceremonial protocol functions illustrate how @IndonesiainDC expands the scope of digital diplomacy to serve both foreign and domestic audiences. Yet, while these elements are interconnected, each carries its own limitations, namely: i) listening risks becoming only a formality if feedback is not captured systematically; (ii) advocacy often reaches narrow policy circles rather than broader publics; (iii) cultural diplomacy tends to highlight only certain traditions, leaving Indonesia's diversity underrepresented; (iv) exchange diplomacy can remain symbolic without formal programs; and (v) broadcasting may reduce complex diplomacy to simplified announcements.

This paper also offers several suggestions. Future initiatives could strengthen @IndonesiainDC's impact by strategically expanding cultural representation to showcase the diverse heritage in Indonesia, formalizing exchange diplomacy programs to move beyond symbolic gestures, and systematically capturing audience feedback to enhance listening practices. Additionally, integrating hybrid functions such as knowledge diplomacy and domestic stakeholder support into a more explicit framework would help clarify their role within Indonesia's broader public diplomacy strategy. By refining these areas, the Embassy can maximize the effectiveness of its digital presence, ensuring that @IndonesiainDC continues to serve as both a trusted source of information and a dynamic instrument of Indonesia's soft power.

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