

# Indonesia's foreign policy and the war on terror

[Politics](#), [International Relations](#)



I. Introduction Indonesia's foreign policy is actually a part of overall government policy aimed at achieving national interests. In carrying out its foreign policy, the Indonesian government firmly holds on to the principles of free and active (prinsip bebas aktif) based on Pancasila and Undang-undang Dasar 1945, of which ideas are dedicated to the country's national interests. In other words, Indonesia's foreign policy is virtually a component of national political policy inseparable from the actual condition of the country. The principles free and active foreign policy was initially conveyed by Vice President Mohammad Hatta in 1948, when the realm of international relations was bustling by a rivalry between two blocks of ideologies; democratic-liberal bloc led by the United States and socialist-communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. To be elaborate, free and active foreign policy, by principal, does not mean a passively neutral, equidistance, or "taking-neither-side" politics. Neither does it refer to a politics which is indifferent of or keeps away from the world's development and affairs. The term ' free' refers to the freedom in determining our own stance and judgment towards various world affairs and free from the attraction to either bloc along with its military alliance. While the term ' active' means actively and constructively tries to contribute to the achievement of peace, justice, friendship and mutual cooperation among nations all in the world. After the cold war, changes in globalization occur, such as changes in the aspect of economy, politics, social, and culture, with regards to interstate relations. These changes cover bilateral, regional, and multilateral, to contemporary issues such as environment, human rights, democratization, liberalization of trade, and others. The order of current international relations is also bustling with

the rise new non-governmental actors which are actually influential to the political aspect of a state, such as NGOs, scholars, business; mass media even individuals who has great impact in the international world. These external changes are also accompanied by changes in the interiors, specifically the reform process that rests on democratization, law enforcement, and human rights. To respond to those changes, the government imposed a foreign policy cited into five points of Program Kerja Kabinet Gotong Royong, which are: " to carry out free and active foreign policy, to recover the dignity of the nation and the state, and to recover the dignity with regards to loan publishers and investors towards the government. Specifically, the framework of Indonesia's foreign policy has been elaborated into several priorities, as follows: 1. To protect the sovereignty and integrity of the Republic of Indonesia 2. To support the acceleration of national economy recovery 3. The improvement of the country's good image 4. To provide public service and protection to Indonesian citizens. Globalization and reform have rendered public roles " disignorable" in decision making processes related to the efforts to keep the country running, including in carrying out foreign policy. Moreover, the role of these publics should be developed as diplomatic actors in the informal channels, considering diplomacy can no longer be carried out by diplomats in mere formal context. The support from publics in international politics also determines the success of diplomacy. Furthermore, public diplomacy will be explained in Theory and Concept. II. Theory and Concept It is relevant to say that the term " public diplomacy" was first initiated by the government of the United States of which meaning slightly differs from the meaning cited as the

primary task and function of the Directorate of Public Diplomacy of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Public diplomacy refers to government-sponsored programs intended to inform or influence public opinion in other countries; its chief instruments are publications, motion pictures, cultural exchanges, radio and television." Public diplomacy seeks to promote the national interest and the national security of the respective country through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between the citizens and institutions of the respective country and their counterparts abroad. The Murrow Center, in one of its earlier brochures, described public diplomacy as follows : " Public diplomacy . . . deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with those of another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as between diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the processes of intercultural communications. It is also possible to define public diplomacy by contrasting it to traditional (first-track) diplomacy. Public diplomacy differs from traditional diplomacy in that public diplomacy deals not only with governments but primarily with non-governmental individuals and organizations. Furthermore, public diplomacy activities often present many differing views as represented by private individuals of the respective country and organizations in addition to official government views. Furthermore, traditional diplomacy actively engages one government with

another government. In traditional diplomacy, Indonesia Embassy officials represent the Indonesia Government in a host country primarily by maintaining relations and conducting official governmental business with the officials of the host government whereas public diplomacy primarily engages many diverse non-government elements of a society. The aim of public diplomacy is to gain larger support out of the international community. It is considered to be one important measure that the government can take, by making use of a variety of non-governmental channels. Public diplomacy comes from the assumption that the armed forces, politics, and the military are not the only ways a government can take in its efforts towards solving certain affairs . It also requires the tight and strong cooperation between the government actors and international mass media. Traditional means of diplomacy and military instruments can no longer solve politics- and security-related issues. The success of a policy also demands the support of the people and leaders of other countries. Diplomats must succeed in mobilizing a wide range of support for the sake of their policies, including determining public pressures abroad . We can, therefore, conclude that public diplomacy uses--both national and international—public in implementing a country's foreign policy. It is a way to fulfill national interests through the use of non-governmental means and channels. Thanks to the advancement in information technology, statements conveyed by diplomats can be made public in a virtually instantaneous manner. Therefore, explanations on their policies should be consistent and also persuasive to the people in both domestic and international level. " Selling" an image of the country is also part of public diplomacy. However, this effort must also be

entailed with continuous efforts to 'dress up' internal affairs. Since diplomacy is a representation of internal conditions, diplomatic failures that Indonesia suffered during the new order was due to, among many others, the strong and distinctive military role, which was a reflection of the political system and culture at that time. The dominant role of the military generated an image that Indonesia was a military-based, authoritarian, and centralistic, state. Both issues were against the ideas of democratization which demanded a larger portion of public participation in policy-formulation and decision-making processes. In a seminar to memorize Dr. Mohammad Hatta, a prominent figure in the history of Indonesia's diplomacy, on July 23rd, 2002, Hassan Wirajuda—Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic Of Indonesia—stated that public diplomacy is relevant to today's situation, especially in the process towards globalization which tends to spawn non-government actors in the international relations realm. Based on the facts mentioned above, it is approvable to infer that public diplomacy is actually a result of both technological advancement and globalization. We must also be aware that interactions among non-governmental actors in this so-called globalization have been increasing from time to time, making these actors the most promising means in achieving diplomatic purposes as mentioned earlier.

III. Case Study In this section, we will try to relate the concepts and theories with the facts in the real world. To be more specific, we will try to see—or perhaps explain—whether or not the public diplomacy has been applied and to what extent it has been implemented. Like it or not, we must admit that public diplomacy is a new term in international relations, specifically in the field of diplomacy. Therefore, getting and inferring relevant

data are two difficult things to accomplish, in this case. Hence, the discussions in this section will be a little bit blurry, to say the least. As mentioned in the introduction, there are several aims that the Department of Foreign Affairs set related to its framework in carrying out Indonesia's foreign policy, these aims are: 1. To protect the sovereignty and integrity of the Republic of Indonesia 2. To support the acceleration of national economy recovery 3. The improvement of the country's good image 4. To provide public service and protection to Indonesian citizens. Hence, we must always keep in mind that public (second-track) diplomacy basically has the same aims as traditional (first-track) diplomacy do. The difference is, once again, at the channels used by these two distinctive types of diplomacy. In public diplomacy, the primary channels used are non-governmental, such as mass medias, NGOs, and others. While in traditional diplomacy, the government plays an important and foremost role in carrying out the foreign policy. The discussions in this section are limited to two issues, which include the labor force, and territorial issues. We will try to see the implementation of public diplomacy in these two field of issues only. a. Labor Force Indonesia has been one of the biggest suppliers of international labor force in the world since decades ago. These labor forces are sent to several countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Korea, and several other developed countries. They embark on those countries as either illegal or legal immigrant workers. Generally, legal immigrant workers do not cause trouble or problem in the host country that require the involvement of the Indonesian government. This is true if we talk about the case of Indonesian immigrant workers in Malaysia. In this case, Indonesian government still

focuses on government-to-government contacts to deal with issues related to Indonesian immigrant workers. In other words, the government still relies mostly on first-track (traditional/formal) diplomacy instead of on second track (public) diplomacy. We can infer this by realizing the fact that it is very difficult and rare to get information regarding contacts made by non-governmental elements of both countries. Most of the information covers governmental visits and talks to address these kinds of issues. We can consider that the Indonesian government has been quite successful in implementing public diplomacy if we take one of the important elements required in implementing it into account, though. This important element is the availability and openness of information made public. We can find abundant amount of publications covering these issues related to Indonesian Immigrant workers, either they are in traditional (printed) or in new, high-tech (digital) form.

b. Territory There are several issues regarding this territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia which has been wavering around since the last decade. Among them, the most prominent ones are the separation of East Timor and the similar efforts carried out by NLFAS (The National Liberation Front of Aceh Sumatra) to disintegrate Aceh from the Indonesian administration. Not to mention the latest dispute over the Ambalat Bloc that has increased tension in Indonesia-Malaysia diplomatic relations. In these two cases—East Timor and Aceh, we can infer that Indonesian government has failed to accomplish its first and primary aim, which is to protect the sovereignty and integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. Its failure in keeping East Timor intact is perhaps one of the most notable aspects, in this case. Furthermore, this failure is due to its inability to



empower public roles in diplomatic purposes. In other words, we consider the Indonesian government to have failed in making use of public diplomacy. To be more specific, this failure rests on the fact that the government could not really manage information well. According to Diamond and McDonald, one out of ten channels that can be used in carrying out public diplomacy (as part of multi-track diplomacy) is information, in which the key factors are public voices/votes. To this extent, the government failed to surpass negative coverage of the international media that generally informed misconducts of the Indonesian military and brought to surface separatist activists. In the case of Aceh, the government is likely to make the same mistake. It relies too much on military mobilization instead of on public mobilization. Yet, it also tends to minimize access for the media and NGOs. To relate to the main topic, it is quite reasonable to say that the government is half-hearted in implementing public diplomacy towards the accomplishment of its foreign policy. As mentioned earlier, one of the aims the government sets in its foreign policy is to improve or recover the image of the Republic in the international community. Unfortunately, by considering the case mentioned above, this is going to be very difficult to achieve if the government still insists on making use of traditional means of diplomacy—military, in this case. This ignorance towards empowerment of the public in diplomatic purposes will only put the government, and the country, into a more disadvantageous position in international environment.