

# Public Diplomacy Activities of Korean Cultural Center in Contemporary Theory Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on activities of Korean Cultural Center Indonesia (KCCI) through the analysis of Korean government policies regarding public diplomacy by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). KCC is affiliated organization under the Korean Culture and Information Service (KOCIS) under Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST). KCC is established in foreign countries to spread Korean culture and enhance national image through political communication with public. Since the beginning, KCCI has shown contradictory tendencies. On one hand, their mission is to show Korea's strength, but on the other hand, they organize cultural exchange programs that imply equality between the Korean side and its partners. By using a public diplomacy 3.0 theory which is based on cosmopolitanism to evaluate KCCI's practices, this paper finds that practice of public diplomacy by KCCI is still consisted within public diplomacy 2.0 which is focus on enhancement of national image and creation of a favorable diplomatic environment due to holding hegemony in global soft power competition.

**Keywords:** Public Diplomacy 3.0, Korean Cultural Center Indonesia, Hegemony, Soft Power.

## INTRODUCTION

Korean peninsula is geopolitically located surround politically, economically, and militarily powerful countries such as China, Japan, Russia, and it made Korea has a history of aggression. Before Japanese colonial, Joseon dynasty had kept hierarchy diplomatic relationship which is called "*gyorin*"<sup>1</sup> for safety and peace of country. After that Korea was occupied by Japanese colonial for 35 years then be occupied by American Army for 3 years. During these times, position of Korea was in lower part in diplomacy with these powerful countries. Recently South Korea has increased diplomat strategy with soft power for equal diplomacy between powerful countries such as United States America, China, Japan, Russia which have massive economic and military power. Development of media and popularity of Korean wave support South Korean government to gives efforts to diplomacy strategies with soft power in global competition and South Korean government approaches soft power as a positive image through public diplomacy effort (Lee, 2011, p.140). Although South Korea stepped in late in public diplomacy than advanced/developed countries, South Korean government stated 2010 as the first year of Korean public diplomacy and established it as three important diplomacies strategy with government affaire diplomacy and economic diplomacy.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) mentions recent paradigm of diplomacy is international public diplomacy war in The First Korean Master Plan for Public Diplomacy (2017-2021). MOFA argues that establishment amicable international environment is indispensable fact for survive and prosperity due to a rapid increase of public and citizen's effect in extension of democracy, transition of communication, globalization. Therefore, not only government but also central department, local government, public cultivate it and soft power assets such as Hallyu, Korean history, traditions, bond between people and people, also interests and demand of foreign people has rapidly increased about Korea so that need to establish public diplomacy strategies and enhancement of effectualness. Finally South Korean government enacted public diplomacy law in February 2016, and it became effective in August, 2016.

Public diplomacy law defines public diplomacy as a diplomatic activity that enhance understanding and trust about Korea to foreign publics through culture, knowledge, policy with collaborative work with government and publics. In addition, MOFA defines public diplomacy in its website<sup>2</sup> as follows:

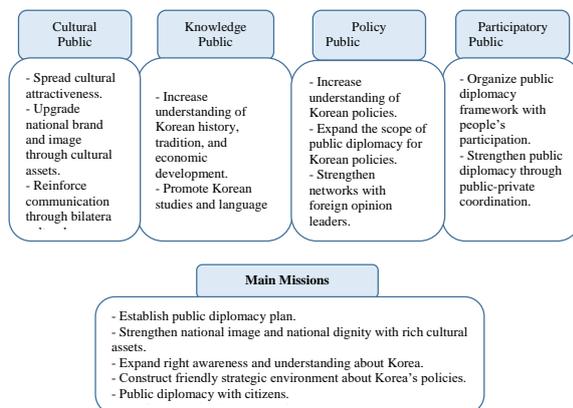
Korea's public diplomacy entails promoting diplomatic relations by sharing out country's history, traditions, culture, arts, values, policies

<sup>1</sup> Vertical diplomatic policy in Imperial China central rule. The concept of this relationship is based on the weak country worships/serves the powerful country.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.mofa.go.kr/www/wpge/m\\_22713/contents.do](https://www.mofa.go.kr/www/wpge/m_22713/contents.do)

and vision through direct communication with foreign nationals. By doing so, we enhance our diplomatic relations and national image by gaining the trust of the international community and increasing our country's global influence...The basic concept of public diplomacy, in contrast to traditional diplomacy, which refers to negotiations and communication among governments, public diplomacy is about approaching directly the foreign public and winning their hearts and minds using various factors of soft power such as culture, art, support, language, media, promotion, etc. (MOFA, translated by Park, 2020, p.323).

MOFA claimed vision of public diplomacy as fascinating Korea, communicating worldwide into the world with people. It states four objects 1) Reinforce enhance national status and national image with rich cultural assets, 2) Proliferate right cognition and understanding about Korea, 3) Construct friendly strategic environment about Korea's policies, 4) Establishment mutual collaborative system and reinforce capability as subject of public diplomacy. To approach these objects, MOFA proposes four strategies as follow:



South Korean government practices public diplomacy through collaborative system with government organizations<sup>3</sup>, local governments to maximize those public diplomacy strategies. These government organizations also contest various support projects for private group and individuals for Korean citizens to exchange culture with foreign citizens. For instance, supporting art performances or seminars. Briefly South Korea's public diplomacy characterize propaganda for establish positive image and understanding about Korea for foreign governments and publics. If beginning of

diplomacy was practiced by government, modern diplomacy is practiced with citizens to approach government's goals. Synthetically public diplomacy is established in the global soft power competition for global hegemony to occupy advantageous position politically, economically, and culturally. One of symbolic institutions to practice public diplomacy is Korean Cultural Center (KCC).

KCC is affiliated organization under the Korean Culture and Information Service (KOCIS) under Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST) and there are 33 KCC in 28 countries (2022). KCC is established in foreign countries to spread Korean culture and enhance national image through political communication with public. KCC is also established in center of Jakarta, Sudirman, in 2011, it practices public diplomacy with Indonesian citizens. However, my observation in ten years in Indonesia, activities of KCCI seems not following new public diplomacy discourse, it more focuses on promotion Korean culture which is based on ethnocentrism. Therefore, this paper will evaluate practices of KCCI with Public Diplomacy 3.0 theory.

### New Public Diplomacy (Public Diplomacy 3.0)

The origins of public diplomacy and the current debate are dominated by the United States experience (Melissen, 2005, p. 6) and it is based on propaganda. The term public diplomacy was first time used by Edmund Gullion in 1965 (as cited in Wolf & Rosen, 2004, p. 3). In the beginning, public diplomacy concept related with propaganda throughout the Cold War. US was infuriated by propaganda of foreign countries then used it to citizens (Schindler, 2018, p. 10), in the end, use of propaganda in 1914-1945 contributed to how American institutional public diplomacy developed (Schindler, 2018, p. 11). Background of public diplomacy appearance is dissolution of Soviet Union because military tension was relaxed then expanded democratization in politics and economic globalization. Following this historical background, the importance of public centered diplomacy had been grown. In addition, development IT technology also became the temporal and technological foundation of appearance of public diplomacy. Berridge (2022) separate good and bad propaganda. Modern public diplomacy named white propaganda which directed chiefly at foreign publics. Fake news about other countries might be bad propaganda in this context. Berridge mentions propaganda acquired a bad reputation in the first half of the

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of The Interior and Safety (MOIS), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST), Ministry of Science and ICT (MSIT), Ministry Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE), Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA), Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF), Ministry

Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF), Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Ministry of Unification (MOU), Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs (MPVA), Municipalities, and publics.

twenty centuries because in World War 1, and especially in the hands of the totalitarian regimes that emerged afterward, it was particularly slippery, strident, and mendacious (Berridge, 2022, p. 215). This white propaganda increased in the following chronological order: the printed word and photo-delivered to increasingly literate populations-short wave radio broadcasting in indigenous languages-TV-social media (Berridge, 2022, p. 218).

Some scholars classify public diplomacy before and after 9.11 in 2001. Because US conscious limitation of hard power, which is based on economic and military power, then started arguing about soft power in public diplomacy. US government about this soft power was based on the premise that more information leads to better communication to prevent misunderstanding (Snow, 2020, p. 9). Snow (2020) stated that soft power is based on intangible or indirect influences such as culture, values, and ideology (p. 4). Snow states this traditional public diplomacy as follow:

Traditional public diplomacy has been about governments talking to global publics and includes those efforts to inform, influence, and engage those publics in support of national objectives and foreign policies. Public diplomacy involves the way in which both government and private individuals and groups influence directly and indirectly those public attitudes and opinions that bear directly on another government’s foreign policy decisions, or increasingly network to network (p. 8).

This traditional public diplomacy which characterizes unilateral from government to government and public has flowed until now in the diplomacy between countries even though there are new developments and arguments.

In the book “Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy” (Snow & Cull, 2020) represents current issue of public diplomacy. Snow (2020) states public diplomacy is often cast as having magical powers to prevent war, build mutual understanding, promote dialogue, and collaboration across country, culture, and sector.

Snow critics this public diplomacy tradition is not enough in the twenty first century because global publics will not allow themselves just to be talked to by governments, corporations, or even NGOs (p. 9). Therefore, Snow argues any public diplomacy research must consider the various publics and diplomacies that are engaging, collaborating, combating, and just bumping into each other beyond the US and UK centric methods and practices. It requires new thinking about 1) what it means to be part of a public, 2) including what it means to be part of that amorphous global public. What Snow emphasizes here is rethinking public diplomacy that relationship and trust building endeavors. They are designed to help people overcome misunderstandings that amplify conflict and lessen mutual understanding (Snow, 2020, pp. 10-11).

In the same book, Park (2020) classifies paradigm of public diplomacy with traditional public diplomacy paradigm and the new cosmopolitan public diplomacy (Public Diplomacy 3.0) as follow Table 1.

In this theory, Park explains the biggest feature of Public Diplomacy 3.0 activities is international contribution. Also, Public Diplomacy 3.0 leaves a deep impression of a country on world citizens beyond national boundaries through participation in external activities to address global issues shared by all people around the world (Park, 2020, p.328). If previous public diplomacy focused on national benefit with publics, Public Diplomacy 3.0 is based on cosmopolitanism with shared purpose such as global contribution.

**METHOD**

This paper adopts qualitative research with critical text analysis. It aims evaluating practices of KCCI with Public Diplomacy 3.0 theory. Therefore, the source of data is all activities that managed by Korean Cultural Center Indonesia (KCCI) which is written on website of Korean Culture and Information Service (KOCIS) under the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST) in 2019. The limitation of data is activities of KCCI in 2019 due to Covid-19, programs, managing

**Table 1.** The evolution of Korea’s public diplomacy (Park, 2020, p.328).

	<b>Public Diplomacy 1.0</b>	<b>Public Diplomacy 2.0</b>	<b>Public Diplomacy 3.0</b>
Actors	Government	Government + People	Government + People
Targets	Foreign public	Foreign public	Foreign public world citizens
Major Means	Media	- Cultural exchange, - Language education, - People-to-people exchange	- Global Contribution - Intellectual leadership - Role of convener
Goals	- Change in the foreign public’s perception - Manipulation public opinion - Publicity	- Enhancement of national image and creation of a favorable diplomatic environment	- Enhancement of national status - International influence - Mobilize support for countries’ foreign policies

and location are fundamentally changed. Therefore, current issue of KCCI practices need to be analyzed in different perspective.

The classification of collected data is general information such as date, title, form, genre, and location. After that it will be analyzed with Public Diplomacy 3.0 theory in the four sections: actor, target, major means, and goal. The first, actor means subject of event. Second, targets mean who is object of event. Third, major means is the form of event in public diplomacy context. And the last, goal means purpose of KCCI's practice through the events.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Korean Cultural Center is officially opened on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2011 and is in Sudirman, which is the center of Jakarta with lots of shopping malls. It is strategical location for public diplomacy because it has floating population and easy to access. KCC facilities a hall for 180 seats therefore it is easy for small performance, seminar, and indoor group activities. Library of KCC equips lots of books, CDs, and DVDs about Korean culture. Also, KCC turns on K-pop stars' performance and music video with high quality 3D TV at IT Show Room. Location of KCC is not only limited at KCC, but also KCC practices in Jakarta and out of Jakarta, however still Jakarta is the main area for KCC practice. Currently during the COVID-19 pandemic, all programs of KCC has practiced online.

There are differences of programs in each KCC in the world because national characters and cultures are reflected to the programs, and KCC targets local publics. Population of Indonesia is 4<sup>th</sup> big in the world and it has the biggest population of Korean popular culture fans. In this background, KCCI progresses various programs for Indonesian publics. Programs by year in 2019 are as follow<sup>4</sup>:

During one year in 2019, all programs by KCCI made by KCCI itself with Indonesian publics. Its form is consisted with KCCI as subject and Indonesian publics as object. KCCI managed all programs and Indonesian publics participate and practice what KCCI made. In 'Sahabat Korea' case, KCCI selected 100 Indonesia people who applied this program, then make them promote activities KCCI. This form is collaboration to promote KCCI and contents of KCCI together. Also, KCCI gives knowledge about Korea such as language, K-pop and traditional art through academy to Indonesian publics. After class, students performed K-pop

dance or traditional music and dance to other Indonesian publics. This form is also collaborative however it is unilateral because Indonesia publics does not produce, but they practice in KCCI's programs. It represents target of Public Diplomacy 2.0, not Public Diplomacy 3.0 because they limit Indonesian publics with their nationality, non-Korean, as object for Korean public diplomacy object in Public Diplomacy 2.0. The target is still not beyond national identity or political border line as world citizens in Public Diplomacy 3.0.

KCCI made various sort of events such as cultural academy, promoting, performance, seminar. Mostly practices of KCCI to promote various Korean culture. Language academy, performance and seminar could be part of promoting Korean culture. Notable event is 'Teko Nang Jawa'. In this event, ambassador of Korea in Indonesia went around Java Island with social media influencer and performing team to promote Korean culture and meet Indonesian publics. In seminar case, Korean and Indonesian scholars shared knowledge about history of colonial by Japan which is homogeneous meaning in colonial history. It represents cultural exchange between public and public under KCCI project. These are based on major meaning of Public Diplomacy 2.0 that government with publics. It is formed with publics therefore these activities already beyond white propaganda in Public Diplomacy 1.0, however still not approach Public Diplomacy 3.0 it is omitted meanings such as global contribution, intellectual leadership, and role of convener.

In overall, events of KCCI focuses on Public Diplomacy 2.0's goal to promote Korean culture, enhancement of Korean national and cultural images, and creating of a favorable diplomatic environment. In all events of KCCI in 2019, contents are mostly about K-pop, Hanbok, foods and film which are popular Korean culture. It is difficult to find unfamiliar Korean culture in the representation of KCCI. This goal is overlap with MOFA's main mission of public diplomacy. The goal of Public Diplomacy 3.0 is more focused on global goals such as peace-making, supporting others than one nation's soft power as Public Diplomacy 1.0 and 2.0. Activities of KCCI represents their goal is still far from Public Diplomacy 3.0.

Then, why MOFA keep this Public Diplomacy 2.0 strategy in diplomacy with other countries? As mentioned in introduction, MOFA regards recent paradigm of diplomacy is international public diplomacy war. It means struggle for hegemony in the

<sup>4</sup> KCCI also participates programs by other government organizations or supports public programs. In this data, only programs which made by KCCI are used to understand intention of KCCI.

**Table 2.** Activities of KCCI in 2019.

M/D	Title	Form	Genre	Location
1/4	'K-Concert Movie Screening (Wanna One)'	Screening	K-pop	KCCI
1/9	'Sahabat Korea'	Event	Promotion	KCCI
1/11	'K-Concert Movie Screening (Day six)'	Screening	K-pop	KCCI
1/18	'K-Concert Movie Screening (SM Town)'	Screening	K-pop	KCCI
1/25	'K-Concert Movie Screening (BTS)'	Screening	K-pop	KCCI
1/30	'Mini Museum'	Experience event	Traditional Culture	KCCI
2/2	'Seollal <sup>5</sup> Experience 2019'	Experience event	Traditional Culture	KCCI
2/9	'Opening Ceremony King Sejong Institute'	Academy	Language	Jakarta
2/15	'K-Movie Screening'	Screening	Film	KCCI
2/16-17	'KCCI Berkunjung ke Yogyakarta, Audisi Bintangnya Bintang'	Visited event	Promotion, K-pop	Yogyakarta
2/22-23	'KCCI Berkunjung ke Yogyakarta, Audisi Bintangnya Bintang 2019'	Visited event	Promotion, K-pop	Makassar
2/23	'K-Movie Screening'	Screening	Film	Bandung
2/28	'Penyerahan Penghargaan Pemenang "Kompetisi Poster & Ilustrasi 100 Tahun Gerakan 1 Maret & Pemerintahan Sementara Korea'	Event, Awards ceremony	Historical Knowledge	KCCI
2/28	'VR Experience'	Event	Game, K-pop	Jakarta
3/4	'Festival peringatan 100 tahun pergerakan 1 Maret & Pemerintahan Sementara Korea Seminar'	Seminar	Historical Knowledge	Jakarta
3/15-16	'Back to 1919: Gerakan Perjuangan Kemerdekaan Pertama di Korea pada 1 Maret 1919 dan Pembentukan Pemerintahan Sementara Korea'	Event	Historical Knowledge	KCCI
3/21	'New Brand of BIBAP CHEF'	Performance	Modern Art, K-pop	Jakarta
3/23-34	'New Brand of BIBAP CHEF', 'KCCI Berkunjung ke Yogyakarta', 'Audisi Bintangnya Bintang 2019'	Performance, Visited event	Modern Art, K-pop	Semarang
3/29	'Piknik Musim Semi di Korea'	Event	General Culture	KCCI
4/6	'The Land of Morning Calm-A Journey of Hundred Years'	Performance	Traditional Arts	Jakarta
4/21	'2019 K-pop Cover Dance Festival', 'Penyerahan Penghargaan Pemenang "Kompetisi Poster & Ilustrasi 100 Tahun Gerakan 1 Maret & Pemerintahan Sementara Korea'	Event	K-pop, Historical Knowledge	Bandung
4/28	'Screening Film'	Screening	Film	Jakarta
4/30	'Dessert-Making Performance with Pastry Chef Justin Lee'	Event	Food	KCCI
5/5	'The Introduction Ceremony For the 8th Korea.Net Honorary Reporter'	Event	Promotion	KCCI
5/10	'Screening Film'	Screening	Film	KCCI
5/15-17	'Pameran Karya Kelas Melukis Semester 1 2019'	Gallery	Art	KCCI
5/24	'Screening Film'	Screening	Film	KCCI
5/28	'Family Game Day'	Event	Traditional game	KCCI
6/12-15	'Kelas Pansori <sup>5</sup> '	Academy	Traditional Music	KCCI
6/16	'Penutupan Institusi Sejong semester 1, 2019'	Academy	Language	KCCI
6/24-7/20	'Korea's DMZ: In Search for the Land of Peace and Life Photographic Exhibition of Choi Byung Kwan'	Gallery	Historical Knowledge	Jakarta
6/27	'Explore the Splendid Indonesia-Korea Cultures'	Visited event	Promotion	Jakarta
6/29	'Modern Dance Performance'	Performance	Modern Art	Jakarta
7/5	'Screening Film'	Screening	Film	KCCI
7/9-14	'Kelas Alat Musik Tradisional Korea'	Academy	Traditional Music	KCCI
7/21	'Run Together Korea-Indonesia'	Sports	Sports	Jakarta
7/28	'2019 Changwon K-pop World Festival Indonesia Final'	Event	K-pop	Jakarta
8/16	'Screening Film'	Screening	Film	KCCI
8/25	'Konser Mini: Peserta Kelas K-pop Academy & Musik Tradisional Korea'	Performance	K-pop, Traditional Music	Jakarta
8/26-9/7	'K-pop Academy'	Academy	K-pop	Jakarta
8/30-9/7	'Teman Korea (TEKO) Nang Jawa'	Visited event	Promotion, K-pop, Traditional Arts	Jakarta, Cirebon, Berebes, Solo, Surabaya
8/24-9/7	'K-pop Academy Yogyakarta'	Academy	K-pop	Yogyakarta
9/13	'Festival Chuseok <sup>1</sup> '	Event	Traditional Culture	KCCI
9/28	'K-Concert Screening (IU)'	Screening	K-pop	KCCI

<sup>5</sup> Korean harvest festival.

M/D	Title	Form	Genre	Location
10/3-6	'Pengalaman Mengenakan Hanbok' <sup>6</sup>	Event	Traditional Costume	Jakarta
10/10-12/14	'Kelas Budaya dan Seni Tradisional 2019'	Academy	Tradisional Music	KCCI
10/9	'Play with Hangeul'	Event	Language	KCCI
10/9-13	'Korea-Indonesia Film Festival'	Screening	Film	Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Medan, Surabaya
10/16-17	'Flying'	Performance	Modern Dance	Jakarta
10/31	'Peresmian Korea Corner Universitas Bina Nusantara'	Establish	Promotion	Jakarta
11/12	'Kunjungan KCC: Pengalaman Kebudayaan Korea'	Visited event	Promotion	Bali
11/27	'Korean Street Food'	Event	Food	Jakarta
12/14	'1000 Years of Sound and Movement'	Performance	Traditional Music	Surabaya
12/23	'Pengalaman Membuat Kimchi'	Event	Food	Jakarta
12/24	'Kunjungan KCC: Pengalaman Kebudayaan Korea'	Visited event	Promotion	Bandung

global soft power competition. Antonio Gramsci (1992) in his book "*Prison Notebooks*" argued war of position that fight in culture and education in long term is more necessary in advanced country. This theory is about building a strongpoint of communism in whole field of society in long fight to make communization. Gramsci described that dominated condition through war of position is dominate hegemony. In the concept of common sense, hegemony had to consider with mass quotidian common sense. What we consider common sense is general knowledge, however in Foucault's (1980) theory, it is discourse. It has been changed in the stream of times.

Public Diplomacy is appeared in this context in previous explanation of traditional public diplomacy. One of practice is branding. Branding is one of marketing methods to introduce products or company with image. In globalization context, importance economic, political, social and cultural promotion and image of a country emerged (Pasquier, 2008, p.79). Melissen (2005) argues fundamental difference of public diplomacy from branding is promoting and maintaining smooth international relationships (Melissen, 2005, p.21). This nation branding in public diplomacy makes specific feeling and image beyond marketing. However, this practice is still based on global competition with other nations for benefits such as increasing foreign visitors or export local products. In Barthes' (1972) theory, national image is myth. In Korea case, K-brandings such as K-pop, K-culture, K-food, K-style denote positive and reliable image with successful Korea wave (*Hallyu*) phenomena, whereas using these images in public diplomacy connotes to get the advantageous position in global competition and in publics in foreign countries.

What KCCI shows is popular culture that Indonesian people prefer and superior Korean culture. Gramsci also argued in communism context, communists

should pretend to appear intelligent and morally superior. This is about national image for hegemony in common sense. Fundamentally, public diplomacy significant all practices that induce government policy advantageously through influencing foreign governments and publics. It characterizes intentional effort to give a positive image to foreign governments and publics. In fact, the subject of public diplomacy is different with traditional diplomacy. Traditional diplomacy was officially enacted between government and government, public diplomacy includes publics. However, they efforts for the same object to realize profit of nation therefore both are essentially same.

## CONCLUSION

According to programs of KCCI, public diplomacy by KCCI is practiced with previous paradigm which is white propaganda to make positive image and promote Korean cultures and policies. These activities are positive in the context that giving positive image and to understand about other culture in global society. This is still far from Public Diplomacy 3.0 in cosmopolitanism. KCCI gives limited knowledges. Most of all contents focus on what public interests or already likes such as K-pop, Korean language, wearing *Hanbok*. Some other contents show developed or beautiful Korean culture. Means KCCI focuses on to promote superior contents with limited objects. Therefore, it is inevitable cultural imperialism discourse that make Indonesian public consume and assimilate with Korean culture. Due to it has not transgressed from traditional public diplomacy paradigm which its object is national benefit in global competition context. This activities damage Korea too because only these limited popular objects are represented to Indonesian publics even though Korea has more cultural objects. To be result, these representational activities marginalize other objects even though it has same historical, social, esthetic value.

MOFA tries bilateral public diplomacy beyond the traditional public diplomacy paradigm. Therefore,

<sup>6</sup> Traditional musical storytelling performance.

KCCI made events that Indonesian publics participate and practice. Paradoxically bilateral concept is not enough yet because even though Indonesian publics act as agent however still Korean government is subject and Indonesian publics are object. Indonesians just participate what KCCI made. According to this analyze, I suggest new public diplomacy which pursues Korean and Indonesian publics work together with contents that both can share as global citizens. If they effort to find agreement together, public diplomacy will be able to approach peace and co-existence beyond appreciate or understand other culture.

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