

# Comparative Analysis of Soft Power Governance in Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand

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Recibido: 14/05/2023

Aceptado: 23/09/2024

## ABSTRACT

This research examines the soft power dynamics of Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. Indonesia faces challenges in optimizing its cultural potential due to decentralized governance and bureaucratic complexities. In contrast, South Korea efficiently integrates soft power through directed bureaucracy and technology. Taiwan strategically promotes its culinary identity, particularly boba tea, internationally, resulting in tangible soft power impacts in Indonesia. Thailand recognizes the importance of global soft power and the creative economy but tends towards private-sector dominance in its governance.

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The study offers concise insights into the soft power strategies of these nations, providing implications for policy makers, scholars, and practitioners in the realm of culture, governance, and international relations.

**Keywords:** Soft Power, Diplomacy, Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia.

## **Análisis comparativo de la gobernanza del poder blando en Indonesia, Corea del Sur, Taiwán y Tailandia**

### **RESUMEN**

Esta investigación examina la dinámica del poder blando de Indonesia, Corea del Sur, Taiwán y Tailandia. Indonesia enfrenta desafíos para optimizar su potencial cultural debido a la gobernanza descentralizada y las complejidades burocráticas. En contraste, Corea del Sur integra eficientemente el poder blando a través de la burocracia y tecnología dirigidas. Taiwán promueve estratégicamente su identidad culinaria, en particular el té de boba, al nivel internacional, lo que genera impactos tangibles de poder blando en Indonesia. Tailandia reconoce la importancia del poder blando global y la economía creativa, pero tiende hacia el dominio del sector privado en su gobernanza. El estudio ofrece ideas concisas sobre las estrategias de poder blando de estas naciones, proporcionando implicaciones para los formuladores de políticas, académicos y profesionales en el ámbito de la cultura, la gobernanza y las relaciones internacionales.

**Palabras clave:** Poder blando, Diplomacia, Tailandia, Corea del Sur, Taiwán, Indonesia.

### **Introduction**

First thing, management refers to the process of organizing and coordinating resources to achieve certain goals. On the other hand, bureaucracy refers to a system of government or organization in which tasks are divided among specialized departments and decisions are made by a hierarchical authority structure. Popular culture soft source diplomacy involves the use of entertainment, media, and other cultural products to promote a country's image and influence in international relations. South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, and Indonesia have different

approaches to management and bureaucracy, as well as the use of popular culture in diplomacy.

South Korea has a highly organized and efficient management system that emphasizes teamwork, discipline, and innovation. In terms of bureaucracy, the country has a hierarchical and centralized structure, with decisions made by senior officials in government agencies and corporations. South Korea has successfully promoted its popular culture, especially through its music and television dramas, which have gained a significant following in Asia and even the world. This has helped raise the country's profile and increase its soft power in international relations.

Thailand has a more relaxed management style, with an emphasis on personal relationships and informal networking. The bureaucracy is notoriously slow and bureaucratic, with the decision-making process often hampered by bureaucracy and corruption. Despite these challenges, Thailand has successfully promoted its popular culture, especially through its food, tourism and music. Thai cuisine is popular around the world, and the country's beaches and historic sites attract millions of visitors each year. Thai music is also growing in popularity, especially in neighboring countries such as Laos and Cambodia.

Taiwan has a more combinative management style, where the government and private sector engage in diplomatic initiatives that demonstrate their strength and values to the world. Through a bureaucratic system of popular culture and coordinated diplomacy, Taiwan successfully promotes its popular culture, especially through culinary and technology that are widely in demand in Asia. It helps raise the country's profile and increase soft power in International relations and build strong relationships with its international partners.

Indonesia has a decentralized management system, with decision-making power handed over to local and local governments. Its bureaucracy is notoriously complex and difficult to navigate, with many regulations and procedures that can hinder business growth and innovation. Despite these challenges, Indonesia has successfully promoted its popular culture, especially through its arts and crafts, traditional dances, and music. The country is also home to several UNESCO World Heritage sites, including Borobudur Temple and Prambanan Temple Complex, which attract thousands of visitors every year. In conclusion, South Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia have different management systems and bureaucracy, which affects their ability to promote their popular culture in international relations.

However, all three countries have managed to leverage their cultural assets to increase their soft power and influence in the world. Therefore,

a comparative analysis of soft resources governance for soft power diplomacy between Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand needs to be carried out. South Korea and Thailand as already known have significant soft power at the regional, even global level. Meanwhile, although Indonesia is not inferior in terms of potential soft power or soft resources owned, it seems to be hampered by the progress of soft power. So, why does Indonesia not have as much influence as South Korea and Thailand from the aspect of soft power even though it has a lot of soft resources? To answer existing research questions, this study will use the theory of behavioralism and the concept of international systems and domestic politics.

## **1. Theory of behavioralism**

The behavioralism approach in political science emphasizes the study of human behavior in political policy, including in soft power governance. In a comparative analysis of soft power governance in Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand, the behavioralism approach can be used to observe how individual countries use soft power in an effort to influence international public opinion and promote national interests. Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand have different approaches to managing soft power. Indonesia tends to utilize local culture, such as art and literature, as well as cultural diplomacy, to promote a positive image internationally.

South Korea, on the other hand, focuses on the entertainment industry, including music and television dramas, as a form of cultural promotion. Meanwhile, Thailand relies more on tourism and food as a form of soft power that can promote a positive image. In the behavioralism approach, we can observe how each country measures the effectiveness of their use of soft power through various indicators, such as international recognition, international media presence, and cultural influence abroad. In addition, this approach can also help identify factors that influence the success or failure of soft power governance, such as changing global trends or political crises. In this regard, Indonesia may be considered relatively less effective in promoting soft power globally, even though the country has a rich range of cultural resources.

South Korea, on the other hand, has managed to achieve international recognition through its successful entertainment industry and is considered one of the world leaders in terms of soft power use. Thailand has also been successful in promoting culture, food, and tourism, although recent political controversies may affect the country's positive image. Overall, the behavioralism approach can help in the

comparative analysis of soft power governance in Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand. In use, this approach can help observe and understand how these countries manage their soft power in an effort to influence international public opinion and promote national interests. International systems and domestic politics International Systems and Domestic Politics is a term that refers to the relationship between the international system or the international world and the domestic politics of a country.

According to Miller and Pang, International Systems and Domestic Politics Chaudoin is a concept that explains the interaction between the international system and domestic politics. This concept states that the international system influences domestic politics and vice versa domestic politics can also affect the international system. In this context, Chaudoin stressed that domestic and international politics should be viewed as part of an inseparable whole. Chaudoin also stressed the importance of foreign policy in influencing a country's domestic politics.

Foreign policy can influence elections, public opinion, and other political decisions at home. Vice versa, domestic politics such as ideological views and economic conditions can affect a country's foreign policy. In the concept of International Systems and Domestic Politics, the international system is seen as an environment that regulates interactions between states. This system includes international rules and norms that affect a country's foreign policy and international relations. The international system can also influence domestic politics through factors such as international trade, globalization, and international pressure on human rights and democracy. So it can be seen that International Systems and Domestic Politics is a concept that explains the interaction between the international system and domestic politics. This concept also posits that domestic and international politics cannot be viewed separately, where foreign policy and factors of the international system play an important role in shaping a country's domestic politics.

## **2. Research methods**

This research is a qualitative case study research with a comparative approach. Case study research designs are used to explore specific phenomena in real-life contexts and are often used when researchers have little control over the context (Yin, 2018). In this case, the context is soft power governance in four different countries – Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. The aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of how soft power governance is

practiced in each of these countries and to compare and contrast their similarities and differences. A qualitative approach was used in this study because it lends itself to exploring complex social phenomena such as soft power governance.

This approach allows researchers to collect rich and in-depth data that can capture the nuances of the phenomenon under investigation. Qualitative data collection methods such as document analysis, surveys, and interviews can be used to collect this research data. Finally, a comparative approach was used in this study to compare soft power governance in the four countries. This approach involves identifying similarities and differences between the cases being studied and can help identify patterns and relationships that may not be apparent if each case is examined separately. Overall, qualitative case studies with a comparative approach are a suitable methodology for exploring soft power governance in many countries. This methodology allows a thorough examination of the phenomena under investigation, including the identification of similarities and differences between cases.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### ***3.1. Management of Indonesian Soft Power***

Indonesia, a country filled with infinite cultural wealth, should be able to be a pioneer in efforts to build a solid foundation for its nation-branding. Despite having an extraordinary cultural heritage, in reality, Indonesia is still behind in soft power governance when compared to several other countries in Asia, such as Thailand and Korea, which have managed to strengthen their positive image at the global level. These countries have managed to build their positive image through creative industries, tourism, and technology.

For example, Thailand with its strategy has succeeded in marketing its natural beauty, cultural and historical wealth, and delicious culinary to the international scene, while Korea through the phenomenon of K-pop and its innovative technology. Both countries have successfully leveraged their soft power to increase their global appeal and enhance nation branding. Indonesia's cultural richness involving diverse ethnicities, languages, traditions, and arts is a valuable asset that should be able to provide global appeal and position the country as a major player in Asia and has a strong nation branding (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021).

However, behind this beauty and diversity, there are significant challenges that need to be overcome so that Indonesia's cultural potential can be effectively optimized. One of the main obstacles that needs to be faced is its decentralized governance management system

in Indonesia. Cultural decisions are often controlled by local and local

The second challenge that requires attention is the bureaucracy that is complex and difficult to navigate. Confusing rules and procedures can hinder investment and business growth that would otherwise emerge from this cultural diversity. Deep reforms in soft power governance are needed to simplify processes, increase transparency, and ensure that cultural property can be accessed and utilized efficiently by all. Soft power in Indonesia itself is divided into three themes, namely: business and trade, governance, and international relations (Link News, 2021). The Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken various initiatives that support the development of soft power diplomacy.

The education and tourism sectors are considered as means that can be used to build a positive image of the country. The historical example of President Nelson Mandela's success in uniting and making South Africa proud is inspiring, showing how important the cultural dimension is in shaping national identity and enriching international perceptions. In this context, cultural and gastronomic diplomacy is also considered a strategic option, which complements the role of sports diplomacy. Indonesia recognizes the power of celebrating cultural diversity and culinary richness as a way to attract the world's attention and build positive networks. Thus, cultural and gastronomic diplomacy is an important element in efforts to expand Indonesia's influence and attractiveness in the international world.

As a concrete step, the development of soft power through football is also a focus, especially with President Jokowi's active participation in the world of football. His presence on the football field not only reflects personal support but is also a clear example of the use of sports as a means to strengthen Indonesia's positive image in the eyes of the world (Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 2017). Through this series of steps, Indonesia is expected to increase its influence in the international world through soft power development. The end goal is to strengthen the country's competitiveness and achieve the desired national agenda in various international forums.

To achieve its tremendous potential in strengthening its global appeal, Indonesia needs to devise a holistic strategy. These measures include creating a forum for cooperation between agencies and local governments, facilitating the exchange of ideas and cultural innovations, and supporting creative industries that can be drivers of economic growth. Through measurable and focused change, Indonesia can take positive steps towards optimal utilization of its cultural property. With

good coordination, transparency, and efficiency in cultural management, Indonesia can transform into a country that not only nurtures its diversity but is also able to export it to the global level, support sustainable economic growth, and strengthen its position as a leader on the Asian stage.

### *3.2 Indo-South Korean Soft Power Management Comparison*

During the administration of President Kim Dae-Jung, starting in 1998 the development of hallyu industry support was carried out by expanding the budget of the cultural industry from 14 million USD in 1998 to 84 million USD in 2001. This is one of the concrete steps taken by the South Korean government to develop its soft power, almost 3 decades after the policy the South Korean film industry received a prestigious award from the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival with a film titled Parasite in 2019, this proves that South Korean cinema has gone global. Seoul began utilizing cultural industries to boost economic growth and began establishing active cultural policies in the 1990s.

South Korea strengthens its soft power by using cultural content such as movies and music. This has even started since the 1990s, the South Korean government continues to support and develop its soft power, during the administration of President Roh Moo-hyun began to increase subsidies for cultural startups. The South Korean government invests in initiatives to improve the cultural industry environment and enacts laws to protect the domestic cultural market, including the Cultural Industry Basic Law of 1999, the establishment of the Culture and Content Agency in 2001, and the Film Promotion Act of 1995 which aims to protect the South Korean film industry (Minsung, 2022; Seung-ho Cha, 2023).

Then from 2008 to 2013, under the government of President Lee Myung-bak there was a change in the direction of cultural policy from a strategy focused on the economy to a national branding and competitiveness strategy. This strategy also carries the concept of «Korean Global» which includes economic, political, ideological and cultural initiatives as South Korea's future-oriented, multicultural and visionary national identity. To keep pace with global and geopolitical changes, South Korea began adopting cultural diplomacy as a pillar in its diplomacy. This has been increasingly seen in the decade of the 2010s until the last few years, with the growing popularity of the Korean wave or hallyu that extends and covers various lines of life, ranging from online games, beauty products, fashion to lifestyle.

In addition to the utilization of culture and the role of the government in supporting South Korea's cultural industry through public policy, the use of technology is undeniably one of the important factors in the success of the Korean Wave or hallyu. The film industry, music industry, fashion industry and so on can achieve wider popularity due to ease of access through technology. Korean-Pop or KPOP, this music increasingly has many fans from various parts of the world, through existing technology makes it easier for fans to interact with their idols. For example ARMY BTS, ARMY is the name of the fan group of BTS, through social media BTS can promote their music as well as share their daily lives with fans, this adds to the curiosity of fans to learn Korean language. Even based on data, the number of applicants for the Korean Language Proficiency Test (TOPIK) continued to increase from 1997 to 2019 and decreased in 2020 due to COVID-19 (Ye-na Cha, 2020) this shows the popularity of hallyu which is increasingly in demand.

Unlike the South Korean government, the Indonesian government maintains and preserves culture by registering national culture with UNESCO, making cultural performances, and granting patents to each culture. As for cultural development, Indonesia began to respond since 2017, with the passing of Law Number 5 of 2017 concerning the promotion of culture. In addition, another concrete step taken by the Government of Indonesia is the budget for culture through the Ministry of Finance since 2020, with the allocation of the Cultural Endowment Fund gradually to reach Rp 3 trillion in 2021 (Koalisi Seni, 2023). However, the role of the Indonesian government in developing and providing a healthy environment in cultural development in Indonesia is still lacking, this can be seen from the lack of policies issued by the government to protect and support various cultural sectors.

The support of the Korean government has an impact on South Korea's soft power and has an effect on increasing global awareness of cultural values and transforming the ecosystem of the domestic cultural sector through public policy, it can be seen that the role of the South Korean government is the main driver in making Korean culture its soft power force. As stated by Seung-ho Cha (2023) that it should be emphasized what kind of culture it has from other Southeast Asian countries and it should also be emphasized that it is a culture with a long history. Thus, Indonesia needs to review holistically to follow the steps taken by the South Korean government, such as providing a safe and healthy environment for cultural development through public policies, nonoverlapping bureaucracy, investment in cultural development and preservation and technology utilization, which will

ultimately encourage Indonesian culture as a tool of soft power in the international arena in diplomacy.

### *3.3. Indo-Taiwan soft power management comparison*

The management of soft power between Indonesia and Taiwan has quite striking differences in terms of approach and strategy. Indonesia, as a country with a large population and rich cultural diversity, tends to use soft power through the promotion of traditional culture, art, and tourism. For example, Indonesia often holds cultural festivals, art exhibitions, and tourism events to introduce its natural beauty and cultural diversity (Misbah, 2018). The Indonesian government also focuses on cultural diplomacy by holding cultural exchanges, art exhibitions, and tourism promotion to improve Indonesia's positive image in the eyes of the world.

On the other hand, Taiwan adopted a more focused and structured soft power strategy, mainly through gastrodiploamacy. Taiwan uses its culinary wealth and traditional beverages, such as boba tea, as instruments to enhance its international image. Through the «All in Good Taste: Savor the Flavors of Taiwan» campaign, Taiwan actively promotes its culinary specialties, including boba tea, as part of its national identity that can be enjoyed internationally (USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2015).

In terms of marketing, Taiwan focuses its efforts on incorporating boba tea into the international market by supporting related domestic businesses, forming special organizations, and opening boba tea shops in overseas Taiwanese communities. Taiwan also has well-known brands such as ChaTime, Gong Cha, and CoCo Fresh that have successfully developed international franchises and expanded to various countries (Bachdar, 2018). In addition, Taiwan holds various specialty food exhibitions and boba tea festivals in various countries to attract foreign nationals and tourists. For example, Taiwan Fest and Bubble Tea Festival are places to introduce Taiwan's cultural richness and create their own attractions by presenting cooking demos, including boba tea making (Hello Taiwan, 2019).

Taiwan actively markets its distinctive culinary products, opens stores overseas, and involves well-known figures in promotions, such as events at SOHO New York involving Taiwanese artists (Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in New York, 2018). Education is also an important part of Taiwan's strategy through training, such as Taiwanese noodle making courses held by the Global Workers Organization (GWO) to train migrant workers in Taiwan (Antara, 2018). In addition, Taiwan builds cooperation with overseas organizations,

engaging non-governmental actors such as celebrity chefs, artists, and the Taiwanese diaspora to support gastrodiploacy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China, 2009).

In view of behavioralism, we can see how Taiwan's economic behavior, such as increased investment and development support, is directed towards achieving specific political goals, including efforts to diversify economic relations and reduce dependence on one major economic partner (China). It reflects strategies adapted to changing global conditions and regional political dynamics. The behavioralism approach focuses on the study of human behavior in the context of political policy, and in this case, it should be noted how Taiwan's economic policy, especially through the «Go South» policy, has influenced economic behavior and bilateral relations with Indonesia (Lin, 2008: 193).

This policy can be interpreted as a strategy tailored to global conditions and regional political dynamics, along with efforts to diversify economic relations and reduce dependence on a single economic partner, namely China. In the context of behavioralism, the impact of Taiwan's soft power in Indonesia can be seen through concrete actions such as increased investment and development assistance. For example, development projects on Morotai Island reflect Taiwan's efforts to create a positive image and support economic development in Indonesia (Ku, 2002). This approach shows the role of real action in building positive influence.

In terms of migrant employment, this approach can help us understand how Taiwan's economic policies create employment opportunities and bilateral relations through the direct involvement of Indonesians in Taiwan's job market. The high number of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan can be seen as a result of economic policies and soft power management efforts to build people-to-people relations. On the Taiwan side, the application of soft power involves a combination of economic diplomacy and non-economic soft power investment. Economic investment, such as foreign direct investment and foreign aid, has been a carrot instrument in Taiwanese diplomacy, despite occasional diplomatic tensions. Nevertheless, Taiwan continues to flow investment and aid to Indonesia (Paramitaningrum, 2013).

In addition, the Taiwanese government is working with non-state actors, including the business community and social associations in Indonesia, to raise public awareness of Taiwan's distinct identity from China's. The concept of International Systems and Domestic Politics is also seen in how Taiwan manages international norms and global regulations, especially related to the «one China» policy. Economic

factors and global influences such as trade and international aid also influence the dynamics of Taiwan's soft power management at the international level. On the Indonesian side, acceptance of Taiwan's soft power involves a positive response to the educational programs and scholarships offered.

Taiwan actively promotes the education system and scientific exchanges as key tools to increase its attractiveness in Indonesia. Scholarships and educational exchange programs are directed not only to ethnic Chinese, but also to the general public, demonstrating Taiwan's efforts to create wider influence (Paramitaningrum, 2013). Diplomacy efforts involve regular meetings between Indonesian and Taiwanese scholars, such as the «Indonesia-Taiwan Dialogue» organized by Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Habibie Center. The event was even expanded to the «Taiwan-ASEAN Dialogue» in 2016, demonstrating Taiwan's efforts to expand the network of cooperation throughout the ASEAN region (Paramitaningrum, 2013: 169).

The concept of International Systems and Domestic Politics is seen in the way Taiwan utilizes regional cooperation with ASEAN to strengthen its position. Cultural diplomacy and education are the main tools in building closeness with neighboring countries. The invitation of Indonesian scholars to various official and unofficial events in Taiwan reflects efforts to shape a positive perception of Taiwan among Indonesian academics. In addition, Taiwan's soft power in Indonesia is also projected through popular culture phenomena, especially in the entertainment industry. The Taiwanese drama series «Meteor Garden» in 2001, which aired on Indonesian TV stations, became a major highlight that successfully increased the popularity of Taiwan and the Mandarin language in Indonesia.

However, this success was not followed by rave reviews for the production of Taiwanese films, TV series, or other musicians in Indonesia. In the context of the concept of International Systems and Domestic Politics, this phenomenon reflects how the dynamics of the international system and domestic factors affect the image and attractiveness of a country. The gap in response to Taiwanese cultural production shows that domestic factors such as market tastes and Indonesian people's preferences play an important role in Taiwan's acceptance of soft power. Although Taiwan actively utilizes regional cooperation and cultural diplomacy, the success of soft power remains dependent on the complex dynamics between the international system and Indonesia's domestic policies.

The comparison of soft power management between Indonesia and Taiwan reflects a different approach. Indonesia focuses more on promoting traditional culture, art, and tourism, using festivals and cultural diplomacy. On the other hand, Taiwan adopts a structured strategy through gastrodiploamacy, highlighting its traditional cuisine, especially boba tea. Taiwan is also active in education diplomacy and regional cooperation, seen in events such as the «Taiwan-ASEAN Dialogue.» Economic factors, trade, and international norms influence the dynamics of soft power both. The gap in response to Taiwanese cultural production shows the role of domestic factors in the acceptance of soft power.

### *3.4. Indo-Thai Soft Power Management Comparison*

Thailand, with its impressive achievements, has recorded a significant surge in Soft Power Governance. According to the Global Soft Power Index 2022 by Brand Finance, Thailand is now ranked 35th out of 120 countries worldwide, rising from 38.7 points in 2021 to 40.2 points (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, 2022). At the Asian level, Thailand occupies the 6th position, following in the footsteps of major countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and India. This provides a clear picture of the growing positive influence in the region, striking an optimistic note regarding Thailand's presence on the international stage. Gibraltar (2023) said Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of Thailand, and local government leaders, have underlined the urgency to promote the country's soft power and creative economy on the global stage.

This is not only considered a strategic move, but also as a golden opportunity to stimulate economic growth in various sectors in Thailand (Creative Economy Agency, 2022). Of the 7 main indicators of soft power, Thailand has emerged as a major player in the fields of Business and Trade, Culture and Tradition, and Society and Traditional Values. This success reflects Thailand's rich culture that has not only gained recognition, but also made a positive impact globally. Creative economy innovation and strong trade relationships have been key drivers of this success. Such art likitwongse (2023) said that, although the government plays a role, currently Thailand's soft power governance process is still dominated by the private sector. The private sector such as television stations have intensively carried out branding to increase Thailand's popularity in the international arena both through music and films, series, or dramas that they pack attractively.

In recent years, Thailand has managed to lift its popularity through various trends that dominate the international entertainment scene.

One of the most popular today is Series Y. Series Y or in Thai commonly written «*Y*» is a series that raises the theme of boys love in its storyline. Ketkaew (2023) said that the series Y phenomenon has not only changed the landscape of Thai cinema but has now become a major force in improving Thailand's nation branding. Within the film industry itself, Thailand's Series Y has achieved remarkable feats, evolving from niche content to a mainstream phenomenon. In the last 2-3 years, Thailand has managed to become the world's leading Y series manufacturer, placing it as no.1 in Asia. Its popularity extends to Taiwan, Indonesia, and the Philippines, with an impressive total market value exceeding 1,000 million baht (Creative Economy Agency, 2022).

However, this success does not only cover the world of cinema. Thailand has shown tremendous strength through its music industry, especially with the T-Pop wave that has rocked global markets. This phenomenon is not limited to boy bands and girl groups, but covers the entire spectrum of Thai music genres. Solo artists such as Ink-Waruntorn Paonil and Danupha Khanatheerakul, known as Milli, have won awards at the 2020 Mnet Asian Music Awards in South Korea. However, this success story doesn't stop there. Sukolwat Phuangsoombat, known by his stage name Sprite, a 15-year-old Thai rapper, has recorded an incredible feat with his song «*1*,» which became the first Thai song to rank on the Billboard Global charts at 89th place. Not only that, the group 4Mix, as the first LGBTQ+ group in Thailand, achieved resounding success by successfully entering the Latin American and European music markets. In fact, they were nominated for the People's Choice Awards at the 36th Korean music show Golden Disc Awards in 2022. All these achievements are concrete evidence of the success of the Thai music industry which has made brilliant achievements on the global stage and indirectly has an impact on improving the country's nation branding.

Thailand, with its courage to embrace new things, has become an inspiring foundation for countries seeking to strengthen their image internationally. One of the keys to Thailand's remarkable success in improving their nation branding is their open attitude towards cultural acculturation. For example for other countries, especially for those with strong indigenous heritage such as Indonesia, the importance of incorporating new elements in local culture is a challenge, but also a great opportunity. The importance of merging tradition with innovation seems increasingly relevant in this era of globalization. Countries with strong eastern customs such as Indonesia may face resistance to change, however, to enter the international stage nimbly, leading steps need to be taken. Refusing to develop and sticking to certain traditions

will only lead to backwardness. Overcoming the stigma associated with cultural acculturation is the first step towards creating a dynamic and compelling identity.

Thailand has shown that allowing new elements into their daily lives not only enriches the local culture but also strengthens their image in the eyes of the world. It is important for other countries to adopt an open and proactive attitude towards change. Not only limited to the national level, collaboration between individuals and countries is also a key element in building diverse creative industries. Thailand, through various forms of cooperation both at domestic and international levels, has succeeded in creating an environment that supports the growth of various sectors of their creative industries. Other countries can explore this model and participate in the exchange of ideas and resources to stimulate new innovations to jointly build their respective nation branding.

Adopting new ways and engaging in collaborative initiatives does not mean abandoning established traditions and values. Rather, it is about combining cultural heritage with fresh and new ideas to create something greater than the sum of its parts. Thus, countries can maintain their cultural roots while exuding broader global appeal. In an era where global competitiveness is becoming increasingly intensified, daring to step out of traditional comfort zones and explore areas of innovation is a step that all countries need to take. Thailand has proven that fearlessness of change can be a valuable asset in strengthening nation branding. Therefore, for other countries committed to appearing on the global stage, adopting Thailand's spirit of embracing new things is a strategic step that cannot be ignored.

### *3.5. Factors and strategies influencing the government in developing and maintaining soft power governance in Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand*

Factors and strategies influencing governments in developing and maintaining soft power governance in Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand can vary and vary. At the first level, political and cultural factors can play an important role in the development and maintenance of soft power governance in such countries. In Indonesia, as a country with rich cultural diversity, the government is taking steps to promote cultural heritage and traditional arts as an important aspect of their soft power (Suryadinata & Arifianto, 2018). On the other hand, South Korea has managed to take advantage of the phenomenon of K-pop and Korean dramas to strengthen their image at the global level (Seo, 2019).

Taiwan, with its unique national identity and complex relationship with China, has emphasized democracy, freedom, and innovation as elements that set them apart and shaped their soft power governance (Liu, 2019). Meanwhile, Thailand has taken steps to promote tourism, art, culture and their traditional culinary as a way to attract international attention (Harpen, 2017). At the second level, economic and technological factors also play a role in influencing soft power governance in these countries. Indonesia, with its large population and strong economic growth, has utilized their economic potential as a tool to strengthen a positive image in the eyes of the world (Santoso, 2017). South Korea has been successful in linking technological innovation with modern and advanced imagery, through global electronics brands such as Samsung and LG (Harris, 2018).

Taiwan, with its strong tech industry and close ties with Silicon Valley, has developed a reputation as an innovation and technology hub in Asia (UMY, 2018). Meanwhile, Thailand has taken advantage of the rapidly growing tourism sector and attracted tourists with their economic appeal (Silaporn & Siriphan, 2020). At the third level, diplomacy and international relations strategies also have a role in the development of soft power governance in these countries. Indonesia, as a country active in regional and global diplomacy, has built strong relationships with neighboring countries and international organizations, which helped strengthen their position as regional leaders (Dahlan, 2018).

South Korea has used cultural diplomacy and educational exchanges to build extensive networks and strengthen relations with other countries (Kim, 2017). Taiwan, with its limited diplomatic recognition, has taken steps to expand economic and cultural cooperation with international partners, as well as utilize non-governmental organizations to promote democratic values and human rights (Chen, 2021). While, Thailand has used tourism diplomacy and regional cooperation to build strong relations with countries in Southeast Asia, as well as hosting various international conferences and sporting events to improve their image in the eyes of the world (Lertputtarak and Samokhin, 2022).

## **Conclusion**

Indonesia, with its abundant cultural diversity, is a potential resource as a tool of soft power. However, behind this beauty and diversity, there are serious challenges related to optimizing cultural potential. One of the main obstacles lies in the governance management system that is still decentralized and controlled by local governments, creating

delays in efforts to build a positive image in the international arena. In addition, the complexity of bureaucratic systems that are difficult to navigate or often overlap also complicates this process. Indonesia's soft power can be grouped into three main themes, involving aspects of business and trade, governance, and international relations.

South Korea has succeeded in making its culture an effective instrument of soft power at the international level, an achievement that is different from Indonesia, despite having diverse cultural richness, but has not fully optimized its impact as a tool of soft power on the international stage. The striking difference between the governments of South Korea and Indonesia lies in the bureaucratic structure, exploitation of cultural potential, and the use of technology. South Korea successfully integrated these elements and implemented them with directed bureaucratic governance, while Indonesia faced challenges in implementing overlapping bureaucracy. Therefore, Indonesia needs to conduct a holistic review to enhance its positive image through cultural expression in the international arena.

These measures include creating a safe and supportive environment for cultural development through public policy, implementing a non-overlapping bureaucracy, investing in cultural development and preservation, and optimizing the use of technology. Taiwan strategically utilizes its rich culinary and traditional beverages, including boba tea, as instruments to enhance its international image. Through the «All in Good Taste: Savor the Flavors of Taiwan» campaign, Taiwan proactively promotes its signature cuisine as an integral part of its national identity that can be enjoyed globally. In marketing efforts, Taiwan focuses on expanding boba tea into international markets by supporting related domestic businesses, forming specialized organizations, and opening outlets in overseas Taiwanese communities.

Involving well-known figures in promotions, such as events at SOHO New York involving Taiwanese artists, is part of this strategy. In the context of behavioralism, the impact of Taiwan's soft power in Indonesia is manifested through concrete actions such as increased investment and development assistance. The Thai government with a quick response has realized the importance of promoting soft power and creative economy globally. Through domestic and international cooperation, they have succeeded in creating an environment that supports the growth of various sectors of the creative industry. Nevertheless, the soft power governance process in Thailand still tends to be dominated by the private sector. This confirms that soft power management in Thailand has been designed and applied within the

framework of cooperation involving the creative industry with various parties, both domestic and private.

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