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# The Influence Of Jalal Al-Din Rumi's Thoughts In Rumi Diplomacy

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## Abstract

This study discusses the thoughts of renowned Sufi poet Jalal Al-din Rumi behind Rumi Diplomacy, rolled out by Fadjoel Rachman, Indonesian Ambassador to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Rumi Diplomacy takes place in a way that the ambassador uses Rumi's works to enhance bilateral ties with Tajikistan. Rumi Diplomacy implies that the ambassador considers Rumi's thoughts soft power in his foreign policy. This study uses a qualitative method, with the theory of foreign-policy analysis by Harold and Margaret Sprout in place. This theory enables the author to find that Rumi's thoughts on religious moderation, universal love, and universal faith influenced Rachman's psychological environment to perceive such thoughts as soft power to reach Indonesia's national interests in Tajikistan. It means that he considers the development of Rumi's influence in Indonesia as the operational environment in making his foreign policy. To identify and understand his psychological and operational environments, the author interviewed the ambassador, read Rumi's works, and reviewed the literature. This study, which is the first to research Rumi Diplomacy, contributes to shedding light that in international politics, literature work should not be overlooked because it can also affect the decision-making process and help a country reach national interests without coercion.

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy, Literature, Rumi, Rumi Diplomacy, Soft Power.

## 1. Introduction

Jalal Al-din Rumi has made a name for himself as one of the most important Sufis in history, with many of the finest Sufi poems under his belt. Well-known for their esotericism, Rumi's poems revolve around tawhid, the Oneness of God, and individuals longing

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to be reunited with God (Mitha, 2019). Among his masterpiece works is Masnavi, which has received global recognition as the greatest Sufi poem. In 1207, Rumi came from the Balkh between Afghanistan and Tajikistan (J. d. Rumi, 2004). When visiting house-museum Jalal Al-din Balkhi in Tajikistan on September 26, 2022, Indonesian Ambassador to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan Fadjroel Rachman gave the museum the Indonesian translation of Masnavi. Rachman expected the bilateral relationship between Indonesia and Tajikistan to develop and the friendship between Indonesians and Tajiks to strengthen through Rumi's works. He called his move Rumi Diplomacy (*kedubesri\_kazakhstan*, 2018). In this context, Rumi Diplomacy means using Rumi's works to communicate and manage relationships between Indonesia and Tajikistan (Rachman, interview, Dec. 14, 2022).

In Rumi Diplomacy, the ambassador uses Rumi's literature works in his communication with his counterparts and people in Tajikistan to strengthen the partnership between Indonesia and Tajikistan and deepen the people-to-people relationship between the two countries. With Rumi Diplomacy in place, he attracts Indonesians to study Rumi's thoughts in universities across Tajikistan and Tajiks to study in Indonesia. The ambassador believes that education can give people of the two countries a more robust mutual understanding, thanks to Rumi Diplomacy (Rachman, interview, Dec. 14, 2022). During his visit to the house museum Jalal Al-din Balkhi, he not only introduced the Indonesian translation of Masnavi but also read some lines from the book to describe the close friendship between Indonesia and Tajikistan since 1994. For Rachman, the relationship between Indonesia and Tajikistan resembles the story of two lovers written by Rumi in his poem:

*Hati kekasih akan mencari para pecinta,  
Seluruh kekasih akan menawan para pecinta.  
Jika kau lihat seorang pecinta, ketahuilah dia juga seorang kekasih.  
Orang itu adalah pecinta sekaligus kekasih.  
Jika orang-orang dahaga mencari air, air pun mencari orang-orang dahaga.*

Aware that more people in Indonesia know about Rumi, read his works, and understand his thoughts, Rachman believed that Rumi Diplomacy could lead to a stronger friendship between the two countries (ibid.). His statements implied that the ambassador saw Rumi's thoughts in his poems as soft power. According to Joseph Nye, soft power means getting others to want the outcomes we want. He further defined soft power as achieving goals through attraction rather than coercion (Gomichon, n.d.). The use of attraction makes soft power different from hard power. Hard power means the ability to get others to act in ways that are contrary to their initial preferences and strategies. Hard power includes threats and inducements to coerce others to do what we want, though it is against their will. Nye underlines that soft power is a matter of seduction. Therefore, soft power requires attraction, instead of arrogance, to influence others. However, Nye stresses that hard power still matters, saying it is as essential as soft power (ibid.).

The beauty in Rumi's poems is an attraction. They have inspired many amid the ebb and flow of life. Rumi's poems might be hundreds of years old, but remain relevant today. They are not only beautifully written, but also inspiring. That's why Rumi made a name for himself as a prominent Islamic philosopher (J. d. Rumi, 2004). Masnavi, which has 25,000 verses or 50,000 lines in total, comprises six books of poetry. The verses make

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Masnavi one of the longest mystical poems by a single author from any religious tradition (J. A.-D. Rumi, 2007). Regarded as the greatest mystical poem in world literature, Masnavi has been translated into at least 26 languages, from English, French, to Spanish. The first and second books have been translated into Bahasa Indonesia by Muhammad Nur Jabir, the director of Rumi Institute and lecturer at Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Islam (STFI) Sadra. The Indonesian version of Masnavi was entitled Matsnawi Maknawi. Today Jabir works on translating the third book, which has around 4,400 verses.

Rumi Diplomacy used by Rachman came from the ambassador's mind that Rumi's thoughts could become soft power in his diplomacy for a stronger friendship between Indonesia and Tajikistan. This paper, therefore, aims to research Rumi's thoughts influencing the ambassador to launch Rumi Diplomacy. Diplomacy is an instrument for the government to implement foreign policy. According to Harold and Margaret Sprout, the mind of a foreign policymaker is influenced by a societal context. Innumerable factors shape this societal context, from ideologies, demographics, culture, history, economics, and political institutions. Therefore, a decision maker's mind cannot be seen as a *tabula rasa* because it contains complex information and patterns, from emotions, attitudes, values, beliefs, experiences, to conceptions of self and nation (Hudson and Vore, 1995). Therefore, this research tried to research Rumi's thoughts on Rachman's mind and understand the societal context behind his decision to roll out Rumi Diplomacy for the stronger friendship between Indonesia and Tajikistan.

The fact that this is the first research to explain Rumi Diplomacy serves as its novelty. Previous research merely discussed the values of Rumi's thoughts in art and religious or moral subjects. They did not explain how the thoughts could influence the decision-making process in Indonesian foreign policy and diplomacy. HAKIM, 2019, for example, explained Rumi's thoughts in Sama dance performances carried out by Tari Sufi Nusantara communities to promote inclusive and peaceful Islam. AMINRAZAVI, 2011 gave a philosophical analysis of Rumi's thoughts on tolerance, highlighting the poet's criticisms on an absolutist version of truth. For Rumi, an absolutist version of truth can lead to intolerance. As such, he wrote Masnavi to counter the absolutist interpretation of truth and subvert the legitimacy and authority used by certain individuals and classes to dictate their version of Islam as the only truth (*ibid.*). Meanwhile, m. e. m., 2013 exposed the power of love in Rumi's universal faith to end ignorance, which the renowned poet considered as the cause of religious conflicts.

Rumi's thoughts in his poetry were also discussed in el-Badri's research. Using a hermeneutic approach, el-Badri explained that Rumi did not mean to justify all religions. For Rumi, a true Muslim should not force others to follow their version of truth. Rumi believes that a true Muslim is an individual who fully loves God and obeys His orders (Muhammad, 2015). The absolutist version of truth is called a dogmatic, absolutist, and authoritative worldview in Moshiri's research. Moshiri (2014) explained that Rumi did not forsake Shariah, but encouraged individuals to find the true path toward the truth and look beyond dogma. Rumi saw spirituality as something above the petty rulings of jurists (Moshiri, 2014).

The fact that the previous research did not explain the influence of Rumi's thoughts on Indonesian foreign policy and diplomacy is a research gap that the author tried to fill. This research, therefore, focuses on explaining Rumi's thoughts in Rumi Diplomacy launched by Fadjoel Rachman, the Indonesian Ambassador to Kazakhstan and Tajik-

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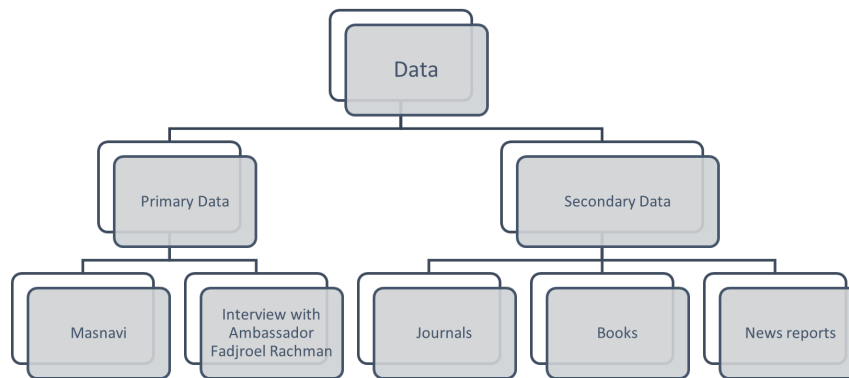
istan. Using a qualitative method and the theory of foreign policy analysis by Harold and Margaret Sprout, this research found that the ambassador rolled out Rumi Diplomacy because of Rumi's thoughts on religious moderation, universal faith, and universal love in poetry. In a psychological environment, Rachman perceived the three values as soft power to give Indonesians and Tajiks better mutual understanding and make the two countries have stronger bilateral relations. As this research aims to explain how Rumi's teachings influenced Fadjroel Rachman to launch Rumi Diplomacy, it has four parts in the discussion section. First, the author explained Rumi's thoughts. Second, the author explained how the ambassador perceived the thoughts as soft power. Third, the author identified his psychological and operational environments to explain how Rumi's thoughts could motivate him to launch Rumi Diplomacy. Fourth, the author described the position of Rumi Diplomacy in Multi-Track Diplomacy. With those four sections in place, this research has three contributions. First, it enriches literature on Rumi's thoughts and Indonesian foreign policy and diplomacy. Second, it sheds light that in international politics, literature works should not be overlooked because it can also affect the decision-making process and help a country reach national interests without coercion. Third, it shows that literature works have the potential to strengthen bilateral relations.

## 2. Methods

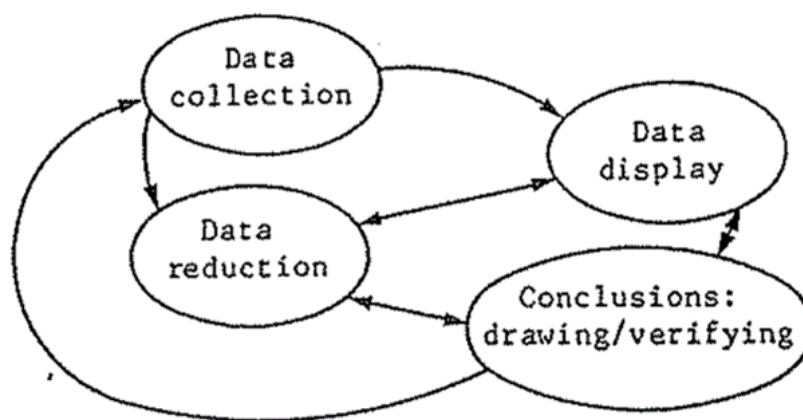
This research used a qualitative method to identify and explain the societal context behind Rumi Diplomacy towards Tajikistan. The qualitative method aims to seek a contextualized understanding of phenomena, explain beliefs and behavior, identify processes, and understand the context of people's experiences (Hennink, 2023). With the qualitative method in place, observation, content analysis, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussion can be conducted to examine people's experiences in detail (Ulung and Monica, 2023). As such, the qualitative method will be carried out to discuss Rumi's thoughts and explain how the thoughts influenced Fadjroel Rachman to launch Rumi Diplomacy. The author reviewed literature for this research and collected and analyzed data from journals, books, reports, interviews, and news reports. The author also interviewed Fadjroel Rachman, the Indonesian Ambassador to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. The interview occurred during a public lecture entitled "The Dynamic of Indonesian Foreign Policy and Diplomacy towards Kazakhstan and Tajikistan" held by International Relations Department, Universitas Satya Negara Indonesia, on December 14, 2022, in Jakarta. This technique enriched the author's knowledge of Rumi's works and thoughts.

The primary data used in this research derived from Rumi's masterpiece work, *Masnavi*, and the author's interview with Fadjroel Rachman. The author supported this primary data with secondary data from journals, books, and news reports. After collecting primary and secondary data, the author conducted data reduction. Reducing data is important to ensure that data presented by the author suited the objective of this research: explaining and discussing Rumi's thoughts behind Rumi Diplomacy. Afterward, the author presented and narrated the selected data. The author then verified the data to get research findings. For this research, the author followed the three stages of data analysis by Miles and Huberman, 1994 data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification.

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**Figure 1.** Primary and Secondary Data



**Figure 2.** Data Analysis by A. Michael Huberman & Matthew B. Miles  
Source: (Miles and Huberman, 1994)

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Results

This research found that Rumi's thoughts on religious moderation, universal faith and universal love motivated Rachman to launch Rumi Diplomacy to strengthen the bilateral relations between Indonesia and Tajikistan. He was aware that people in the two countries embraced the thoughts. He used the embrace to strengthen mutual understanding and increase bilateral ties between Indonesia and Tajikistan in various sectors. In the education sector, for example, the ambassador uses Rumi's thoughts as soft power to encourage more Indonesians to go to Tajikistan to study in Tajik universities as well as more Tajik people to go to Indonesia to study in Indonesian universities. He utilizes Rumi's thoughts because he is aware that Rumi is a respected figure in Tajikistan and the Sufi poet has more followers in Indonesia. He also facilitates Indonesian and Tajik universities to collaborate for internship, student exchange, joint research, visiting lecturers, and information exchange. Therefore, Rumi Diplomacy can be categorized as soft power diplomacy because the ambassador uses soft power in his diplomacy to reach Indonesian national interest in Tajikistan. The author will explain and discuss this result in detail below.

### 3.2. Discussion

To discuss the result, the author will explain four things. First, the author will explain Rumi's thoughts on religious moderation, universal faith, and universal love in his book, *Masnavi*. Second, the author will explain how Rachman perceived Rumi's thoughts as soft power. Third, the author will explain the societal context that motivated Rachman to use Rumi's thoughts as the foundation to create and use Rumi Diplomacy to strengthen the ties between Indonesia and Tajikistan. In explaining the societal context, the author used the foreign policy analysis theory by Harold and Margaret Sprout because diplomacy is theoretically an instrument used by a government to implement its foreign policies and reach its national interests in other countries. Fourth, the author will explain the position of Rumi Diplomacy in Multi-Track Diplomacy.

#### 3.2.1. Understanding Rumi's thoughts in *Masnavi*

*Masnavi* is Rumi's masterpiece work. It has been globally recognized as the greatest Sufi poem and translated into more than 26 languages, including Bahasa Indonesia. In Indonesia, *Masnavi* was translated by Rumi Institute director Muhammad Nur Jabir, who is also a lecturer at Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Islam (STFI) Sadra. *Masnavi* manages to entice Indonesians because it promotes religious moderation. They see it as a key to building tolerance and maintaining harmony. Religious moderation matters to address differences in spiritual life in Indonesia, which happened to be a multireligious and pluralistic nation-state. It has two standing points, namely balance, and fairness. Fairness means siding with truth, while balance means siding with justice, humanity, and equality. When implementing the two standing points, individuals will have a moderate, fair, and balanced mentality in dealing with differences (Kemenag, 2019).

In *Masnavi* Volume II, Rumi wrote an anecdote that taught us to be tolerant of others. The anecdote revolved around the story between Prophet Moses and a shepherd in Mt. Sinai. It began with the shepherd hoping to see God and get closer to Him. He wailed, saying that he would do anything as long as God was by his side. He said he was fully ready to serve God, from washing his clothes to cleaning his bed. This wail made Moses angry because the shepherd should not equate God with a human. Aware of Moses's anger, God rebuked him;

*"You have parted my servant from me. Did you come (as prophet) to unite, or did you come to serve? So far as you can't, do not set us in separation; of all things the most hateful to me is divorce. I look not at the tongue and the speech, I look at the inward (spirit) and the state (of feeling)." (Fakhriati, 2020)*

That story conveyed that the only thing that matters in this life is the heart because it can make a person good or bad. In the heart, the highest love, which is love for God, can emerge. To get God's love is not determined by words, but by heart. In Sufism, people might have different languages, but the heart could unite them in a universal space (ibid.).

Rumi said the heart also controlled five internal spiritual and five external physical senses. The ten senses completed each other and allowed humans to attain a superior suprasensory of knowledge (AMINRAZAVI, 2011). For him, heart is like a mirror. In *Masnavi*, he said that a purified heart had a higher position than heavens because impurities that had tainted the heart had been cleansed (Rustom, 2013). He said;

*"Once the mirror of your heart becomes pure and clear, you will see pictures from beyond the domain of water and clay. Not only pictures, but also the Painter, not only the carpet of good fortune, but also the Carpet-spreader."(Rustom, 2013)*

For Rumi, the highest love is love to God, and this love should be a foundation for any soul because it can lead people to live in tolerance and harmony. In Masnavi Volume I, he wrote:

*"Only the one who's had his shirt torn by love is completely cured of greed and all imperfections. We salute you, O Love, for you bring benefit to us all. You're the physician for all our ills-the cure for arrogance and pride. You're our Plato and our Galen at the same time (Fakhriati, 2020)"*

Rumi also taught his children religious moderation, advising them to live in harmony with people of different faiths, maintain inter-religious harmony, and avoid conflicts for a better life hereafter. He called for love and peace, regardless of different faiths and ethnicities. He said;

*"Bahaeddin! If you want to be in heaven be friends with everyone. Do not have a grudge in your heart against anyone. Do not want too much and do not surpass anyone! Be like an ointment and candle, not like needle. If you do not want to be harmed by others, do not talk bad, teach bad, and think bad. You will always be in joy if you mention others with friendliness, and that joy is the heaven itself." (ibid.)*

For the author, religious moderation promoted by Rumi in Masnavi is a universal value. Other values that Rumi stressed in the manuscript are universal faith and universal love. Universal love here refers to love of God, which means love for God or love by God. Love is one of the important components of Sufism (Mitha, 2019). For Rumi, love for God is a key to peace because it can overcome "the root problem of one's sense of existence, rather than asceticism and piety." Rumi's poems underlined the power of love to transcend the world and dismiss literal-mindedness and worldly reputation (J. d. Rumi, 2004). In Masnavi, Rumi stressed that point in a poem titled 'The Poor Bedouin and his Wife'. Rumi wrote;

*"The lover of this world is like someone who loves a wall on which sunlight shines and makes no effort to understand that this radiance and splendor do not come from the wall but from the sun in the fourth heaven. Consequently, he sets his heart on the wall completely, and, when the rays of sunshine move with the sun he is left deprived forever: 'A gulf is fixed between them and what they desire'." (ibid.)*

Rumi's thoughts center on love and beauty. Therefore, many consider that his view about religion is the religion of love. As such, Sayyed Hossein called him 'a rare human being who had sensual intelligence to see spiritual beauty.' Rumi is one of the important figures who understood the relationship between God, nature, and humans through the perspective of love instead of intelligence (Fakhriati, 2020). As such, Rumi wrote poetry to convey that life will be nothing without love. If people live without love, they will not have a peaceful life. They will live in fear. For Rumi, it requires sacrifice to fill this world

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with love. There will be no love without sacrifice. Therefore, Rumi's poetry reflects his love for God (Muhammad, 2015).

Rumi was a sincere Muslim, but his works, including *Masnavi*, demonstrated that he envisioned a universal faith. He believed in a type of faith that universally embodied and belonged to all religions (m. e. m., 2013). Like religious moderation, universal faith can also lead to harmony, according to Rumi. In *Masnavi*, he told a parable about someone who gave a dirham to four persons of different nationalities. Each of them wished to buy grapes, but their different languages made them end up in a fight. Rumi wondered that the fight or disagreement would not happen if there were a man of a hundred languages. This parable expressed his hope for the unity of religions (ibid.). For Rumi, the spiritual relationship between man and God is love. He saw love as a spiritual ladder. Love could answer an unlimited number of questions. Love was the motive of every visible and invisible movement in the universe as it was the astrolabe of God's mysteries (ibid.). Rumi believes that love is the teaching of Islam. Therefore, Islam teaches its followers to love and understand each other (Muhammad, 2015).

Rumi often used the philosophy and scholastic language of Islamic theology to describe man's relationship with God. He described God as an Absolute Being. For him, humans were non-beings. They merely imagined that they existed independently. Humans urged themselves to recognize their non-existence and strive to become effaced in God (J. d. Rumi, 2004). Rumi wrote poetry not only to convey his ideas and express his imagination, but also to share his interpretation of the meaning of the Koran to influence his readers. As such, his poetry contains the essence of the Koran as a major source of Islamic teachings (Muhammad, 2015).

### **3.2.2. Perceiving Rumi's thoughts as soft power**

The author argued that Rumi Diplomacy launched by Fadjoel Rachman showed that the ambassador perceived the poet's works, including *Masnavi*, and his thoughts on religious moderation, universal faith, and universal love as soft power. In the concept of soft power by Joseph Nye, cultural products, including literature, can become soft power if they have universal values (Nye, 2020). The universality in the religious moderation conveyed by Rumi makes *Masnavi* attractive as soft power. This attractiveness matters because, according to Nye's theory, it will lead to acquiescence.

According to Joseph Nye, soft power means the ability to get others to want the outcomes that we want. His definition implies that soft power revolves around indirect ways to make people adopt our ideas or policies without coercion (Ulung and Monica, 2023). Therefore, soft power aims to co-opt people, instead of coercing them. In world politics, soft power enables a country to make other countries admire its values, emulate its example, and aspire to its level of openness and prosperity until the country gets its desired outcomes. In another word, a country makes other countries want to follow it through soft power (Nye, 2020;Ulung and Monica, 2023).

To make others do and follow what we want requires attraction, an important element in soft power. The power of attraction stressed by Nye distinguishes soft power from hard powers, such as military power and economic sanctions. Unlike hard power, soft power does not rest on inducements ("carrots") or threats ("sticks"). When soft power takes place, we do not use inducements or threats, but attraction and seduction to shape the preference of others (Nye, 2020). The ability to persuade and move people is an important

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part of soft power. Still, according to Nye, soft power is more than just persuasion because it includes the ability to attract. He said that attraction led to acquiescence. As such, he saw soft power as attractive power and called assets that produce such attraction as soft-power resources (Nye, 2020).

Nye said soft power rested primarily on three sources: culture, political values, and foreign policies. Culture can become soft power when others see it as attractive. Political values can become soft power when they live up to others at home and abroad. Foreign policies, meanwhile, can become soft power when others deem the policies to have legitimation and moral authority (ibid.).

Nye defines culture as the set of meaningful values and practices for society. They manifest and express their culture through many forms, from art, literature, education, to popular culture. They can become soft power and help a country increase the probability of getting desired outcomes if they contain universal values and promote values and interests that other countries also share. The universality, shared values, and interests create attraction and duty (ibid.).

Using Nye's explanation, the author argued that the universal values behind Rumi's *Masnavi* motivated Rachman to see and use the masterpiece as soft power to reach two desired outcomes. First, he wanted to enhance the friendship between Indonesia and Tajikistan. He believed that Rumi's *Masnavi* could lead to the two countries' stronger friendship because he saw that the people of the two countries respected and followed the values taught by Rumi in *Masnavi*. Second, he used Rumi's *Masnavi* to attract Tajikistan to observe, learn, and follow religious moderation in Indonesia. Rachman wanted Tajikistan to see Indonesia as a role model in building and maintaining tolerance amid different faiths, races, and ethnicities.

The author, therefore, argued that Rumi Diplomacy aimed to establish a good image of Indonesia in Tajikistan. The ambassador's target is not only the government of Tajikistan, but also its people. He wanted to win their hearts and minds. Because he sought to influence the Tajik people, he used soft power like Rumi's *Masnavi*. One of his diplomacy maneuvers was that he gave the Jalal Al-din Rumi Museum the Indonesian translation of Rumi's *Masnavi*. He used the gift to inform people in Tajikistan that Indonesia considered Rumi and his works important. He sought to entice the Tajik public through Rumi Diplomacy.

As Rumi Diplomacy targeted the Tajik people, the author argued that Rumi Diplomacy was part of public diplomacy. According to Jan Mellisen, public diplomacy means efforts conducted by a country to influence organizations and people in other countries in a positive way in a bid to change their points of view and create a good image. Jay Wang, meanwhile, saw that public diplomacy aims to increase the quality of communication between the country and its people. Therefore, public diplomacy seeks to understand, inform, and influence foreign audiences (Alexandra and Mujiono, 2019). Public diplomacy carefully engages them to support strategic goals set up by the government (Ross, 2023).

### **3.2.3. Identifying Rachman's psychological and operational environments**

To explain the reasons why Fadjoel Rachman used Rumi's thoughts in his diplomacy maneuvers, the author used the foreign policy analysis theory by Harold and Margaret Sprout. In the making of foreign policy, Sprout mentioned environmental factors. They called the factors milieu. Milieu here does not necessarily mean natural conditions

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and resources, but it also includes historical development, geographic position, social patterns, etc. A milieu can also be a psychological environment where decisions are made. It shows that milieu has many forms. The most determining milieu in decision-making depends on agents in a country (HARA, 2021). This means that the relationship between the milieu and agents or man determines foreign policy.

Sprout underlined that environmental factors would influence attitudes and decisions only if they were apperceived and considered by agents in the policy-forming circle. Hypotheses about how the policy-making process apperceived environmental factors could contribute fruitful linkages between behavioral and ecological approaches to international politics. Sprout, therefore, called analysis of state power as analysis of state capabilities, which essentially consists of calculating opportunities and limitations in the milieu of the state (Sprout, 2016).

A person perceives and interprets his milieu through experience. This experience influences how an individual makes decisions over choices that they have defined in a psychological environment. Sprout distinguishes the psychological environment from the operational environment. Unlike the psychological environment, the operational environment revolves around the execution of the decision, according to Sprout. He explained that in the decision-making process, the most important principle is not the milieu, but the decision-maker's capacity to imagine how the milieu will be. Therefore, linking environmental factors to decisions requires some hypothesis about the decision maker's environmental knowledge and how he will use it (ibid.).

The author argued that Fadjroel Rachman rolled out Rumi Diplomacy because, in his psychological environment, he saw that Rumi's thoughts could become soft power to reach Indonesia's national interests in Tajikistan. This view came from his observation of the operational environment that, in Indonesia, Rumi had more followers, and his book, *Masnavi*, had more readers. Rachman expected that Rumi's bigger number of followers and readers in Indonesia could help him reach Indonesia's national interest in Tajikistan. His expectation showed that he took Rumi's masterpiece work and his thoughts and teachings into account in policy-making.

In the policy-making analysis, according to Sprout, how the policymaker imagines the milieu is more important than the milieu itself. As such, in the operational environment, Rumi's *Masnavi* and his Indonesian readers were milieus, which Rachman imagined could become his soft power to get people in Tajikistan to want the outcomes that he wanted. Linking environmental factors to policy decisions required a deep understanding of how Rumi's teachings drew Indonesian people's attention, and they could welcome his book, *Masnavi*. The author found that Rumi's thoughts on religious moderation in *Masnavi* and his dance, *Sama*, introduced by his Indonesian followers in the country, played a part in prompting Rachman to conceive the milieu to become Indonesia's potential soft power. The two are environmental data that the ambassador recognized as relevant and considered in his decision.

Created by Rumi, *Sama* dance promotes his thoughts and teachings on religious moderation (Kristina, 2019). In Indonesia, his followers practice the dance in some cities, from Jakarta, Semarang and Pekalongan in Central Java to Surabaya in East Java. In Kebayoran Baru, Jakarta, for example, Rumi Café facilitates Sufis to gather and discuss Rumi's thoughts and learn about his legacies, including *Sama* (Fakhriati, 2020). Meanwhile, in Pekalongan, *Sama* is practiced and developed by community Dervhise Pekalon-

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gan (Nugroho, 2021)

Sama, which means listening, is not just an art performance. For Sufis, it is a form of worship. When performing Sama, they sing, dance, and pray. Wearing symbolic attire, they also play instruments and recite poetry. As such, they see Sama as a medium for meditating and praying (Kristina, 2019; Nugroho, 2021; Opsantini, 2014). Sufis consider meditation the most important principle of Sufism because it develops their soul to receive God and overcome all material and physical aspects (Mitha, 2019, p. 3). In Indonesia, Sama adjusted to local culture, but its core teachings, particularly religious moderation, remain (Fakhriati, 2020). In Magetan, East Java, Islamic high school MAN 1 sets Sama dance as an extracurricular and performs it in art festivals and special events, such as wedding ceremonies (ibid.).

When performing Sama, dancers spin their bodies in repetitive circles. This move requires the dancers to stay balanced, reminding the audience of the point of balance in religious moderation taught by Rumi. For him, balanced movements resemble the importance of balance in life (Nugroho, 2021; Opsantini, 2014). He taught us to make decisions in a balanced state of mind. The balance here means that we do not lean too much to the left or the right. Sufis consider Sama the highest way to get closer to God and reach His universal love (Fakhriati, 2020; Nugroho, 2021).

At the Islamic school Al-Ishlah in Semarang, Central Java, students do not have to undergo *tasawwuf* or become a Sufi to learn the Sama dance. However, before practicing, they must do *dhikr* or repeatedly chant prayers to God (Adib and Amaruli, 2023). For Sufis, *dhikr* is a way to connect oneself to God. They can do it silently (*dhikr al-khafiy*) or openly (*dhikr al-jaliy*). Open recitations allow devotees to gather and perform the *dhikr* openly and collectively (Mitha, 2019). The school does not oblige its students to learn about Sama, but expects them to have the ability to perform any dance (HAKIM, 2019).

Sama develops in the country, particularly in Central Java and East Java, because, among other reasons, the dance promotes religious moderation. The dance manages to attract Indonesian people because they see that it suits the diversity of Indonesian people. To deliver this message, Amin does not always perform Sama at Muslim communities' events. In 2015, for example, he danced at Cathedral Church in Semarang to strengthen the friendship between Muslims and Christians and to mark his friendship with the church's cleric, Romo Aloysius Budi Purnomo. In 2017, an event invited them to collaborate. Aloysius performed the song *Amazing Grace* for Amin's Sama performance (Malau, 2017).

Sufis believe that Muhammad is the first Sufi (Mitha, 2019). Therefore, *salawat*, an Islamic salutation upon Prophet Muhammad, is recited during Sama performance. Amin sometimes plays *gamelan* and performs Javanese songs, such as *ilir-ilir*, *caping gunung*, and *tombo ati*. He combines preaching with art and culture because he believes that art is a beauty God gives to the earth. Art can help humans draw closer to God (Adib and Amaruli, 2023). Amin's use of art to build a closer connection with God helps him attract more people to study Sama and Rumi's teachings and thoughts. Students from various Islamic boarding schools often visit his house and his school, Al-Ishlah, to that end (HAKIM, 2019, Opsantini, 2014).

Every year, his community, Tari Sufi Nusantara, commemorates the birthday of Rumi and strengthen kinship at Al-Ishlah. This event also invites people of different faiths to boost interreligious harmony and strengthen brotherhood in humanity or *ukhuwah*

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basariyah (HAKIM, 2019). The sequence of moves in Sama has rich meanings. When the dance starts, the dancers position their palms on their chest to praise Allah as the Creator of all things. Afterward, they position right palm upwards to symbolize their readiness to receive His mercy (hablu minallah). Their left palms, meanwhile, face downwards to stress the importance of having good relationships with others (hablu minannas). This dance emphasizes that having a good vertical relationship with God is insufficient. Establishing a good horizontal relationship with others is also important (ibid.; Nugroho, 2021;Opsantini, 2014).

The fact that Sama's main moves are swirling makes learners easy to remember. The moves philosophically resemble tawaf, an anti-clockwise movement performed by pilgrims for the Hajj and Umrah. As tawaf is an act of devotion to bring the pilgrims closer to Allah, swirling moves in Sama aim to remind humans of Allah (Adib and Amaruli, 2023; HAKIM, 2019,Opsantini, 2014). During the moves, left foot steps on the ground and two hands form a symbol of love. The position of the left foot symbolizes the omission of egocentrism, while the symbol of love symbolizes love for God implemented in the form of doing good to others (Adib and Amaruli, 2023).

The fact that Rumi has more followers in Indonesia and his works also manage to have more readers in the country motivated Fadjoel Rachman to use Rumi's thoughts in his diplomacy (Rachman, interview, Dec. 14, 2022). The idea of turning Rumi's works into Rumi Diplomacy crossed his mind when he realized that the Tajik government and people commemorated his birthday every year. The National Library of Tajikistan, for example, held an annual international conference about the poet to study and discuss his teachings (Rachman, interview, Dec. 14, 2022). This event then showed him that he could utilize Rumi's works as an entrance to establish a stronger connection between Indonesia and Tajikistan and strengthen mutual understanding between the people of the two countries. He said:

*"I see it as an opportunity to introduce Indonesia through Rumi's work. We use it to strengthen cultural diplomacy. We use Rumi as an attraction point... Rumi Diplomacy aims to widen cultural relationship between Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan (Rachman, interview, Dec. 14, 2022)."*

On September 27, 2022, the National Library of Tajikistan raised the theme "Mavlana-The Leader of Unity and the Dialogue of Civilizations" for the international conference. The library invited Rachman and other Indonesians in Tajikistan to speak during the meeting. This event, the ambassador said, motivated him to hold similar events about Rumi in Tajikistan and Indonesia. He said:

*"That is an entry point to implement Rumi Diplomacy (Rachman, interview, Dec. 14, 2022)."*

Rachman hoped that Rumi Diplomacy would prompt more people in Indonesia to go to Tajikistan and Kazakhstan to study Rumi's teachings in universities across Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. Rumi Diplomacy would leverage more cooperation initiatives between Indonesian universities and Tajik and Kazakhstan universities. The cooperation ranged from student exchange, visiting lecturers, joint research, to internship. Rumi Diplomacy also included initiatives to facilitate exchange and dialogues between Indonesian ulema and their counterparts in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. He recently invited Yahya Cholil

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Staquf, chairman of Indonesia's largest grassroots Muslim organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), to participate in dialogues in Tajikistan. He believed that those programs would lead to a broader public understanding of Rumi's teachings, particularly the importance of religious moderation and interreligious tolerance (Rachman, interview, Dec. 14, 2022).

### 3.2.4. Identifying Rumi Diplomacy in Multi-Track Diplomacy

Using Sprout's foreign policy analysis theory, this research found that Fadjoel Rachman's Rumi Diplomacy came from his psychological environment that Rumi's thoughts could become a potential soft power to help the government reach its national interests. He perceived the masterpiece work as soft power because of the greater influence of Rumi in Indonesia. In Sprout's theory, Rumi's influence in Indonesia can be considered as an operational environment around the ambassador. Religious moderation written by Rumi in *Masnavi* has enabled Rumi to have more followers and get more readers in Indonesia. Aware that Rumi is a respected figure in Tajikistan, Rachman then used the increasing number of Rumi's readers and followers in Indonesia as an attraction element in his diplomacy maneuver to draw the attention of the Tajik people and government and get them to want the outcomes that he wanted.

Foreign policy is an essence in diplomatic relations, while diplomacy is a process through which the foreign policy is implemented (Saiman, 2022). Diplomacy is the art of maintaining the relations between countries (Alexandra and Mujiono, 2019). Countries use diplomacy not only to communicate and make partnerships, but also to preserve and expand their partnerships and make peace (ibid.). Therefore, communication is an essential aspect of diplomacy (Jansson). When Rachman used Rumi's works in his communication with the Tajik people and government to make Indonesia and Tajikistan have a stronger partnership, he implemented Rumi Diplomacy. When visiting the National Library of Tajikistan in September 2022, for example, the ambassador gave the head of the library, Faizalizoda Jumakhan Khol, the Indonesian translation of *Masnavi*. By introducing the translated book, Rachman sought to foster the Indonesia-Tajikistan people-to-people relationship. Aware of the importance of Rumi's works, he also attended an international conference titled "Mavlana-The Leader of Unity and the Dialogue of Civilizations". His visit to the conference was also part of his Rumi Diplomacy to maintain relationship between Indonesia and Tajikistan.

Rachman also implements Rumi Diplomacy in a way that he uses Rumi's works to lure and motivate Indonesians to continue their higher education to universities in Tajikistan and encourage Tajik people to study in Indonesia. He offers various scholarships to Tajik people, such as Darmasiswa Scholarship, Art and Culture Scholarship, and Scholarship for Developing Countries. According to the ambassador, 71 Tajik people study in Indonesia today (**kedubesrikazakhstan 2018**). He also facilitates Indonesian and Tajik universities to collaborate for internship, student exchange, joint research, visiting lecturers, and information exchange (Rachman, interview, Dec. 14, 2022)

A state might remain a main actor in international politics today. However, Rumi Diplomacy shows how a state actor begins to see a non-state figure like Rumi as a role model to get desired outcomes without coercion. Though Rumi was a Sufi poet, he managed to influence people from different nations to follow his thoughts through *Masnavi*. He used *Masnavi* to make people from different religions, ethnicities, and nationalities aware of religious moderation to build peace and interreligious harmony. This fact shows

that Rumi was way ahead of his time in recognizing literature as soft power. As such, Rachman tried to learn from him

Rumi Diplomacy illustrates track one in Multi-Track Diplomacy. The track one refers to diplomacy carried out by the government. In the track one, the government seek to achieve national interests through diplomacy and negotiations (ibid.). Implementing negotiations requires a bureaucratic and political process. They, therefore, have formal and top-down characteristics (Chrismas, 2015). This means that the track one belongs to all official, governmental diplomacy bilateral and multilaterally (Kaye, 2007).

Rumi probably had not recognized the word 'diplomacy' because this word might not have existed yet during his time. However, according to the author's observation, his efforts to promote religious moderation constituted the track seven in Multi-Track Diplomacy. The track seven refers to diplomacy carried out by religious leaders in solving conflict and building peace (Alexandra and Mujiono, 2019). In Multi-Track Diplomacy, they stand on the front line of creating world peace through religious precepts. They believe that religions lead to peace and can prevent conflicts because they bring peace to human souls. Religion-related conflicts, meanwhile, happen because of the failure to understand religion completely. Such conflicts discredit religions themselves (ibid.).

To speak up for tolerance, Rumi used Masnavi to criticize classes or individuals who dictated their version of truth. In Islam, he was aware of people who forced others to accept their version of Islam as the only truth. In response to their force, Rumi subverted the authority and legitimacy they used as the basis of what they claimed as the only truth. Through Masnavi, he combatted the authoritarianism of an exclusivist legalistic vision of religion. In Masnavi, Rumi offered a kind of epistemological humility to open the door to tolerance and to counter the claim of the individuals or classes who adhered to an absolutist version of the truth. In Masnavi, he ridiculed such people, calling them those who walked on wobbly stilts (AMINRAZAVI, 2011). He said;

*"Rationalists' legs are just like stilts.  
How unfixed and stolid are feet of wood! "*

The way Rumi implemented the seventh track in Multi-Track Diplomacy inspired his students and followers, including his eldest son, Baha al-Din Muhammad-I Walad. Known as Sultan Walad, he followed in his father's footsteps. Through literature, he disseminated Rumi's thoughts and teachings on love, peace, humanity, spirituality, and tolerance. His works included Intiha Namah, Diwan Sulthan Walad, Rabab Namah, and Ibtida Namah (Fakhriati, 2020)

Today, Rumi's followers share his thoughts and teachings by creating various events, including international conferences. On September 27, 2022, for example, the National Library of Tajikistan organized an international conference titled "Mavlana-The Leader of Unity and the Dialogue of Civilizations." Its participants followed how Rumi promoted religious moderation to realize interreligious tolerance and harmony. Among them was Mushtaque Ahmad, chairman of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). During the conference, he presented a paper titled "Maulana Jalaluddin Balkhi: A Great Sufi of Human Cognition."

In Indonesia, Rumi's followers also promote peace and call for interreligious tolerance. Among them are cleric Amin Maulana Budi Harjono from Islamic boarding school Al-Ishlah in Semarang, Central Java and cleric Gus Muhammad from Islamic boarding

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school Nailun Najah in Jepara, Central Java. At Al-Ishlah, Amin teaches Sama dance and propagates Rumi's teachings through various events. Once a year, for example, Amin, who is also the founder of the Tari Sufi Nusantara community, holds a large-scale recitation to commemorate Rumi as the creator of Sama dance, keep the unity of its members, and strengthen the brotherhood of the nation. This event, therefore, invites Muslims and people from different faiths. During these events, Amin and other Sufis echo Rumi's teachings to call for tolerance and religious moderation (HAKIM, 2019).

### 3.3. Conclusion

Rumi Diplomacy conducted by the Indonesian Ambassador to Kazakhstan dan Tajikistan, Fadjoel Rachman, illustrates Indonesian public diplomacy in Tajikistan to strengthen the partnership of the two countries. However, Rumi Diplomacy can be also categorized as a soft power diplomacy because the ambassador uses soft power like Jalal Al-din Rumi's teachings and thoughts to enhance the ties of the two countries. This research found that Rumi Diplomacy came from Rachman's psychological environment that Jalal Al-din Rumi's teachings could become soft power to reach Indonesian national interests in Tajikistan and strengthen Indonesia-Tajikistan ties. The ambassador saw that Rumi has more Indonesian followers and readers, perceiving the bigger influence of Rumi in Indonesia as potential soft power to win the hearts and minds of the Tajik people because in Tajikistan, they respected Rumi as an influential religious leader. Rachman considered Rumi's influence in Indonesia important and used it as the operational environment in his foreign policies. Religious moderation, tolerance and interfaith harmony promoted by Rumi in his writings and Sama dance were seen as soft power by the ambassador to strengthen the partnership of Indonesia and Tajikistan. This research showed that, in international politics, literature works could become soft power in diplomacy and foreign policy.

Because this is the first paper to research Rumi Diplomacy, the author cannot find prior research articles on this subject. The lack of previous research studies made the author meet with challenges in getting sufficient data and writing a literature review. The fact that Rumi Diplomacy was a recent phenomenon made data about its implementation limited. As such, limitations that the author faced in this research comprised time constraints, lack of available data, and lack of previous research. Therefore, the author suggests continuous observation on the implementation of Rumi Diplomacy for further research. The lack of deep analysis about the implementation of Rumi Diplomacy in this paper can be a gap that other researchers can try to fill in the future.

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