

## Advancements in Diplomatic Efforts of Indonesia in Combating COVID-19 Compared to ASEAN Countries in Achieving National Pandemic Resilience

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**Abstract:** Indonesia's Diplomatic Resilience is an interesting subject to discuss, in this study the authors attempted to conduct a comparative study between Indonesia's national resilience compared to countries in ASEAN. The author takes 3 samples of countries through countries in ASEAN, namely countries with the highest GDP in ASEAN, middle, and low. This disaggregation of GDP per capita will have an impact on economic and military data which will be combined to become an important variable in the influence of Indonesian Diplomacy in realizing National Defense. The author tries to describe how Indonesia's diplomacy works to achieve national resilience, an example is how Indonesia can become a country among the G20, whereas if you look at the poverty in Indonesia, it is not as low as countries like Singapore or Malaysia. The theory that will be used in this research is the rational choice theory to explain the tendency of interaction between one country and another. In particular, the concept of rational choice theory will depart from economic, geopolitical, and military capital as well as the position of the state in the region to determine the strategic policy of a state.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to provide novelty to the study of National Resilience which rarely influences diplomacy in realizing Indonesia's national resilience.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** This research will use a literature study approach which will also be explored

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through case studies and comparisons of key variables from countries in ASEAN in determining the influence of diplomacy.

**Findings:** There is strong power in the formulation of foreign policy to solve a problem. The instruments to carry it out are not only military and economic power, but many other factors such as territory and bargaining position as well as diplomacy. The existence of diplomacy is very important to provide further communication of national interests which can be rationalized through the power of appeal. Therefore, Indonesia can make a lot of progress in getting through the Covid-19 pandemic, especially compared to other ASEAN countries. Of course, Indonesia only lost the power of vaccine diplomacy with Singapore, which had obtained Pfizer and Moderna first. However, when compared to other countries such as Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, Indonesia has stronger diplomatic powers.

**Originality/Value:** This research will become a new milestone in the study of national security, especially in the sphere of diplomatic resilience which is rarely used as the main variable in national security. The research indicator that will be used by the first author is the success index of diplomatic efforts both within the military and economic frameworks. This data can be obtained from the ministry of foreign affairs or related agencies of the Indonesian government. The second indicator is the national interest of the Indonesian government or the priority of negotiation and diplomacy, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Third, an indicator that needs to be considered is Indonesia's bargaining power compared to other countries, including diplomatic partners in obtaining its national interests.

**Keywords:** ASEAN; Economy; Diplomacy; National Resilience; Rational Choice Theory

**Paper Type:** Journal Article

## Introduction

The military and the economy are the two major sectors in the paradigm for the study of national resilience. Discussion When defining regional resilience, national resilience, and even regional

resilience inside a country, military or economic terms are always used. A case in point is the measurement tool used in Mrs. Margaretha Hanita's book's case study on the conflict between Israel and the Arab Gulf States, which involved the alliance of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar. The examination of the conflict between these nations' national security calculations began with indicators of the overall population and military strength of friendly and adversarial nations with land borders in the conflict area (Supan, 1922 dalam Hanita 2021). One of the first generations to talk about national security is this researcher. According to Alexander Georg Supan's theoretical framework, Israel should be soon annihilated in its conflict with the Gulf Coalition nations because the index that was released was the contrary, in favor of the Arab nations. It is very evident from Supan's reasoning that he is analyzing national security from a military and economic perspective.

The next generation is still debating the military and the economy, and Karl Hermann Hohn's 2011 paper on national security has given rise to fresh optimism. Because population indices and the quantity of military weapons are no longer the exclusive ways to measure national security. Alexander Georg Supan's assertion was refuted by Hohn by including an index of the advancement of military technology, nominal GDP, life expectancy, education, integrity, energy, and nuclear capability. In Hanita 2021, Hohn (2011) provides numerous improvements that specifically address national resilience. Regarding the National Resilience Study and its measurement, the authors, however, hold contrasting opinions. There should be a conversation regarding a country's diplomatic ability when the logic of thought is predicated on the premise that the military and economic are the initial capital for gauging national resilience. According to the author, when a nation possesses great military, economic, and diplomatic capabilities but falls short in these areas, neither a problem nor a loss occurs because it is obvious that this nation does not require cross-border money and resources. Meanwhile, when we see Indonesia as a middle-power country, the role of diplomacy will probably be one of the most important instruments in its national resilience.

Indonesia's diplomatic resilience is the subject of the author's research for a good reason—many times, Indonesian diplomacy is expressed in economic terms, such as when Indonesia joined the G20. Many Southeast Asian nations, especially Malaysia, are envious of Indonesia's admission to the G20. Even if Malaysia and Indonesia are comparable in terms of GDP per capita, there may be other factors at play, which could be one of the reasons why Indonesia is one of the top 20 economic superpowers in the world. The authors make the assumption that when discussing accomplishing national goals, diplomacy is the most significant indication. Not to mention the recent example of buying fighter aircraft, Indonesia received two significant offers from the US for 36 F 15 purchases in 2022 (Planasari 2022). Despite placing a Sukhoi SU 35 deal with Russia, Indonesia ultimately decided not to purchase from that country. The authors make the assumption that Indonesia's diplomatic strategy and negotiating power have had a substantial impact on these important countries through this case study of the purchase of fighter aircraft.

The question that remains is whether Indonesia's diplomatic resilience precisely satisfies the research criteria set forth by the National Defense Study. The author believes that the paradigm of Indonesian foreign policy up to this point has been extremely unique by presenting the argument "Free to Active" without any binding interest from any actor in the study of international relations. In terms of calculating the approach to international relations between nations, this idea actually cannot be calculated. Imagine that when Indonesia and the Netherlands were at odds over West Irian in the years 1945–1950, Ir. Soekarno made every effort to capitalize on the Cold War tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States. Sukarno kept close relations with the Soviet Union in order to gain access to defense equipment for military operations, one of which was the KRI Irian. Only Indonesia in Southeast Asia held the KRI Irian cruiser, which was outfitted with the most cutting-edge weapons available at the time. On the other side, Soekarno also built diplomatic relationships with the United States and Britain through other parties, especially Canada and Australia, who supported Indonesia in the West Irian dispute. The author thinks that a

distinct gatra, namely diplomacy, must be used to assess the peculiarity of the term "Free to Active" in terms of national security.

It will be simpler for us to identify possibilities to advance national security and Indonesia's national interests if Indonesia can track the evolution of its diplomatic toughness year after year. According to the views of current geopolitical specialists like Fukuyama, Gerry Kerns, and others, the author genuinely seeks to link the emergence of a new world where the military and violence in international affairs are no longer widely accepted. However, this argument was quite ineffectual in the author's Master's Study research plan given the phenomena of war between Russia and Ukraine. Numerous more positive effects will result from an investigation of the measurement and phenomena of Indonesia's diplomatic resilience, and it will be simpler for other scholars to encourage innovation in this area.

This study also intends to advance the conversation about diplomacy's contribution to Indonesia's national resilience. The author uses examples to show how, without diplomacy, the military and economy—the two main weapons of national security—will not function effectively. A specific illustration is what occurred in North Korea, a nation that has nuclear warheads, the most vital weapon in its arsenal. However, I do not believe that this tool will be effective in addressing other national issues, such as basic needs and so forth, aside from Chinese support. The reality is that North Korea has a high poverty index and is one of the most erratic nations. Because of this knowledge, North Korea's diplomatic tools did not function well, isolating them from nations other than China that have the finest economic capabilities in the world. Contrary to Indonesia, which lacks high-explosive weapons, this nation can engage in diplomacy with other nations to meet its national security demands, including its military and economic ones. In reality, if Indonesia doesn't think about its Free and Active diplomacy, it might concurrently purchase SU 35 from Russia and F-35 from the United States.

Case studies from the academic literature and official declarations from the Indonesian government will be the author's research methods. To examine Indonesia's attitudes and influence

in the area, researchers will also examine rational choice theory in international relations. Additionally, the author will take into account comparisons between ASEAN nations like Malaysia, Brunei, and others. Because this research will need information on the economy, the military, and foreign policy to be completed, a multidisciplinary method will be used to carry it out. This study will set a new standard for national security research, particularly in the area of diplomatic resilience, which is infrequently employed as a key factor in national security. The success index of diplomatic efforts inside the military and economic frameworks will be the research indicator that the first author uses. You can receive this information from the Indonesian government's associated agencies or the ministry of foreign affairs. The second factor, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, is the Indonesian government's national interest or the importance given to diplomacy and negotiation. Third, Indonesia's ability to negotiate on behalf of its national interests with other nations, particularly diplomatic allies, needs to be taken into account. For instance, if the United States receives economic aid from two nations, like Indonesia and Malaysia, it is important to consider whether the United States will give Indonesia or Malaysia priority based on its own interests. In order to acquire comparisons that are reasonably close to the validity of the data the authors require to conduct this research, this study will also include geopolitics in the ASEAN region.

### **Methods**

To support hypotheses and find solutions, this study combines a qualitative data analysis methodology with a literature study method on cases and diplomatic strategies of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines. Because analyzing causal linkages necessitates a thorough qualitative interpretation, Kleining (1982) allegedly employs this qualitative data analysis approach (Flick 2009). Data generated from 2020–2022 will be examined through qualitative interpretation in order to address the existing problem formulation. In addition, the author will outline the preferences of interests and relations of a country to offer help or reject carried out diplomacy using the rational choice theory approach.

## **Discussion and Findings**

### **Rational Choice Theory**

This rational theory makes use of causal relational tools from international nations. Shared desires and the relationship between social phenomena and behavior can be connected through a policy of mutual aid as the determining variables. Relationships between nations are rife with presumptions and historical incidents that will have a significant impact on their dynamics both now and in the future. Clear and consistent preferences are necessary for a state to practice rational choice (Kroneberg dan Kalter 2012).

### **Singapore's COVID-19 Diplomacy Strategy**

This nation, which has a lion as its national emblem, has considerable economic resilience in times of epidemic. Additionally, because of its role as a link between the east and west, this nation is crucial to trade as well as to the distribution of products. As a result, in international negotiations, our nation is in a strong negotiating position. Due of this, this nation is the first to have the Pfizer vaccine from the US (Amul et al. 2022). Politically speaking, it is also quite similar to western nations like England because Singapore is a member of the Commonwealth, which is the top dog among western nations.

The way Singapore handled the previous occurrences of SARS and Avian Flu illustrates the country's proficiency in handling pandemics. The government's response is to impose a partial lockdown in areas with a high caseload. On April 7, the Singaporean government placed labor limitations on individuals who were not absolutely necessary, while the important sectors carried on as normal. Then, gathering and religious activities were restricted, which may have contributed to the increase in the Covid-19 number. Additionally, this nation imposes travel restrictions on nations around the globe, including Hong Kong and Vietnam, where cases exceed 1,000 per day (Amul et al. 2022).

As was already said, this nation is significant because it received the first Pfizer vaccination in Southeast Asia, demonstrating the country's strong diplomatic ties and central position both domestically and internationally. Then Singapore became the first nation to obtain Sinovac and Moderna vaccines. The vaccination process moved quickly, with the first phase

targeting productive workers, the second phase targeting the elderly, and the third phase covering everyone in Singapore, including foreign workers.

#### **Philippines COVID-19 Diplomacy Strategy**

One of several Southeast Asian nations that is unprepared to handle COVID-19 is the Philippines. The first outbreak started in January 2020, and the solution was to restrict travel from nations including Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, and Macau that had the initial cases. It turns out, though, that the Philippine government is worried about urbanization, the overpopulation of Manila, and the nation's willingness to welcome foreign laborers and tourists. It will be difficult to shut down the tourism industry swiftly because it represents one of the main revenue sources for the Philippine economy.

The Philippines was listed as a nation with health issues or subpar handling of COVID-19 in March. So that Bayanihan's legal regulations, such as those requiring the wearing of masks and the closure of crowd areas and schools, could be carried out. Only in 2021, a year after the initial Covid-19 transmission, will the nation receive a vaccination. With the Sinovac program, which began in March 2021, China was the first nation to send vaccines to the Philippines. The Asia Development Bank (ADB) and COVAX both donated vaccines to the Philippines ("ADB Provides \$25 Million to Help Philippines Procure COVID-19 Vaccines" 2021; Nguyen 2021).

#### **Malaysia's COVID-19 Diplomacy Strategy**

In January 2020, Covid-19 infection in Malaysia began; this nation also reported the initial infection status. The following occurrence was the existence of 14,000 religious events, which represented the first opportunity for the largest spread after January. The State of Malaysia finally agreed to implement a Movement Control Order (MCO) policy in March, banning large-scale meetings and activities with big numbers, as well as limiting travel and other rules swiftly (AMUL, 2021). The population of Malaysia is estimated to be 32 million people, with a middle class income level of 11,414.20 US dollars, according to data from the Japan Center for Economic Research. Furthermore, the number of hospital beds (per 1000 people) was 1.86 in 2015, and health



spending statistics reached \$427.22. According to the data, one of the practical options for Malaysia's Covid-19 pandemic readiness is still not strong enough to call for outside help (picture 1).

Once the cases started to decline in May and religious activities started to be permitted, a new cluster started to form in July, which led to the policy being tightened once more. After the general election to select the prime minister, cases thereafter started to increase in September 2020. The Covid-19 case in Malaysia was finally given top priority when the king finally declared a state of emergency in January 2021 (Amul et al. 2022). Based on its foreign policy, Malaysia engages in vaccine diplomacy utilizing two strategies: dealing with vaccine manufacturers and international organizations, such as Vaccine Global Access, in the context of vaccine distribution (Amul et al. 2022). Sehingga pada bulan Januari 2021 Malaysia membeli sekitar 18.4 juta dosis vaksin dari Rusia dan Tiongkok (Sputnik dan Sinovac). Malaysia thus ordered over 18.4 million doses of vaccinations from Russia and China (Sputnik and Sinovac) in January 2021. In the first phase, the vaccine is given away free to front-line employees whose infection transmission is high, while in the second phase, it is directed at vulnerable populations like young children and the elderly. The third phase is when Malaysia concentrates on productive populations like young and middle-aged employees.

Country's characteristics <sup>†,‡</sup>	Malaysia	The Philippines	Singapore	Vietnam
Population	32 million	108 million	5.7 million	96 million
Income	Middle-income	Lower middle-income	High income	Lower middle-income
GDP per capita (2019)	\$11,414.20	\$3485.10	\$65,233.30	\$2715.30
Health expenditure per capita, USD (2018)	\$427.22	\$136.54	\$2823.64	\$151.69
Domestic general government health expenditure (as % of current health expenditure, 2018)	51.18%	32.65%	50.35%	45.56%
Hospital beds (per 1000 people)	1.86 (2015)	0.99 (2014)	2.40 (2015)	2.60 (2014)
Physicians (per 1000 people)	1.54 (2015)	0.6 (2017)	2.29 (2016)	0.83 (2016)
Death rate, crude (per 1000 people, 2019)	5.17	5.92	5	6.38
Age dependency ratio (2020)	44.16	55.17	34.50	45.05

<sup>†</sup>World Bank Open Data (n.d.).  
<sup>‡</sup>Our World in Data (n.d.).  
GDP, gross domestic product.

picture 1 Karakteristik Ekonomi Malaysia Source: Japan Center for Economic Research

### Indonesia's COVID-19 Diplomacy Strategy

To safeguard its citizens, the Indonesian government is engaging in vaccination diplomacy. The efforts made by the Indonesian government to guarantee the availability and supply of vaccinations for the nation through bilateral and international cooperation are known as "vaccine diplomacy" (Kementerian Luar Negeri 2021). Indonesia engages in vaccine diplomacy because it lacks the capacity to create vaccines on its own and needs aid and collaboration from other nations to do so. Indonesia seeks bilateral collaboration with China, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom in the purchase of vaccines. The Sinovac firm and the Chinese government have been working together on vaccine research since the middle of 2020 (Hakim 2020). Due to bilateral cooperation between the two nations, Indonesia will get three million doses of the Sinovac vaccine in 2020 (Herawan 2021). Sementara itu, G24 bekerja sama dengan Sinopharm bekerja sama

dengan Uni Emirat Arab. Selain itu, AstraZeneca bekerja sama dengan Inggris (SD 2020). In the meantime, G24 is collaborating with Sinopharm and the United Arab Emirates. AstraZeneca is also collaborating with the UK (Aluanza, 2020). As a result of bilateral diplomacy, Sinovac, Astrazeneca, and Sinopharm have collectively produced more than 75 million doses of vaccinations for Indonesia (Rauf 2021).

The GAVI COVAX Facility (CEPI) program is something that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is a member of the Epidemic Preparedness Innovation Coalition, hopes to participate in. The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) developed the COVAX Method as a means of procuring vaccines in order to lower mortality rates, protect health systems, and preserve vital services. This strategy results in the free distribution of vaccines (Gugus Tugas Penanganan Covid-19, 2021). Contrary to GAVI COVAX, CEPI is a multilateral tool for collaboration in the development of vaccines that gives access to the most recent data and knowledge in the area (Kementerian Luar Negeri 2020). As a forum for international and multilateral cooperation, the Alliance for Multilateralism (AoM) Ministerial Meeting provided Indonesia with an opportunity to emphasize the value of WHO in ensuring the supply of essential medical supplies, personal protective equipment, and vaccinations (Kementerian Luar Negeri 2020). Indonesia's active involvement in boosting the provision of vaccines that are efficient, affordable, and accessible to impoverished countries is also stressed through the International Coordination Group conference on COVID-19 (Kementerian Luar Negeri 2020).

Given what Indonesia accomplished in 2020, it is obvious that this nation practices intermediate diplomacy. This is evident in Indonesia's efforts and endeavors as a catalyst, facilitator, and manager in a multilateral framework, where Indonesia strives to play a proactive role as a good global citizen by making a contribution at the multilateral level by building bridges between nations and regions. Indonesia uses multilateral diplomacy to advance international accords, channel the aspirations of human values, and communicate its own national aspirations (niche diplomacy), particularly in the fields of protecting citizens,

strengthening the national health system, and reviving the economy. In other words, Indonesia wants to use its resources, particularly in a multilateral way, to engage in global challenges.

**The Covid-19 Pandemic and the Positive Effects of Indonesian Health Diplomacy**

Although there isn't a single definition for what a middle power is, its groups are based on strength, capability, and influence that are neither too great nor too small in the context of international relations and tend to promote the stability of the global system (Jordaan 2003). Middle-income nations also play a significant role in fostering international cooperation, acting as catalysts for world issues, and overseeing the creation of international organizations and standards, among other things. In recent years, the term "middle-powermanship," which refers to states' propensity to use multilateral cooperation to resolve international conflicts, make concessions in international disputes, and engage in diplomatic activities based on the idea of good international citizenship, has gained popularity. Middle-power nations frequently make similar diplomatic efforts because they uphold global norms and customs. In the international sphere, they are furthermore assertive, reformist, and honest, which makes the direction of their policies predictable. The following are some other traits of diplomatic activity among medium power countries: First, middle power nations favor multilateral diplomacy over bilateral diplomacy, particularly when it comes to resolving disputes or other global issues. Through multilateral initiatives, middle power countries will have more bargaining clout in negotiations, preventing big powers from exercising unilateral control and making decisions. (Cooper, Higgott, dan Nossal 1993).

Bilateral collaboration is hence typically avoided (Lee, dkk 2015). Additionally, they will decide to keep the existing international organizations in place and, in some situations, to create new international alliances and institutions to deal with global problems. According to multilateral diplomacy is a cooperative effort in which more than two nations or individuals come up with diplomatic answers to world issues (Mahbubani 2013). The aims of multilateral efforts themselves are varied. The

first is as a forum for all nations to declare their objectives. The second is to establish aspirational goals for humanity, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are currently required by the world. The third objective focuses on creating universal standards to improve the globe. Multilateral initiatives further serve as attempts to reach international agreements (Mahbubani 2013).

Then, middle-power nations are frequently linked to their function as a bridge between powerful and weaker nations, a strategy known as intermediary diplomacy (Lee, dkk 2015). Middle-power nations will function as mediators to open channels of dialogue when nations have divergent viewpoints. Middle-power nations are able to accomplish this because of the interdependence that results from their shared reliance on one another, particularly in order to strengthen one another's deficiencies. These elements, such as resources, investments, technology transfer, or expertise, typically have an economic impact. The last component is niche diplomacy, or "concentrating resources in a particular area where they are most likely to produce useful results" (Lee, dkk 2015). In other words, middle power countries will frequently focus their efforts on participating in international circumstances that are viewed as being most beneficial.

This illustrates the challenges faced by middle-income nations who still rely on other nations. On the other hand, middle power nations must continue to participate in world politics. Middle-income nations must therefore continue to safeguard and make use of their special resources. Middle-power nations also employ special diplomacy to advance their foreign-policy objectives. By serving as a regional leader, a spokesperson for developing nations, a promoter of democracy, and a focal point for global issues, Indonesia hopes to fulfill its role as a middle power (Karim 2018). This study is predicated on the supposition that Indonesia is one of the middle powers actively pursuing the traits listed, i.e., advancing multilateral diplomacy, particularly in resolving global issues, forging alliances with other nations, and utilizing its "niche" to achieve national objectives. The long-standing free and active foreign policy of Indonesia also served as

an impetus for these activities. A foreign policy that is "freely active" is one that is not neutral but has the freedom to choose attitudes and policies toward global challenges, according to Law on Foreign Relations of the Republic of Indonesia No. 37 of 1999. Furthermore, this concept emphasizes how Indonesia actively engages in conflict situations and other concerns rather than tying itself to one particular force. This was done only for Indonesia's national interests, as stated in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution (Undang-Undang Nomor 37 Tahun 1999 tentang Hubungan Luar Negeri). This non-aligned mindset also affects Indonesia's belief that it shouldn't become a political football in the world. The Indonesian people, on the other hand, are aware of the necessity of keeping positive connections with the rest of the globe in order to further their nation's growth. As a result of the nation's diplomatic and foreign policy decisions, Indonesia's involvement in bilateral and multilateral relations is logicala (Anwar 2001).

### **Conclusion**

The writers get the conclusion that the formulation of foreign policy has a significant influence on how a problem is resolved through the discussion above. It can be carried out through a variety of resources, including territory, bargaining position, and diplomacy, in addition to military and economic might. The existence of diplomacy is crucial for providing additional communication of national interests, which can be justified through the appeals process. Therefore, Indonesia can advance significantly in combating the Covid-19 epidemic, especially when compared to other ASEAN nations. Of course, Singapore, who had acquired Pfizer and Moderna first, was Indonesia's lone opponent in the diplomatic power of vaccines. However, Indonesia has more robust diplomatic capabilities when compared to other nations like Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. This is because Indonesia has the largest population in the region as well as a central location in the region. Additionally, Indonesia serves as both the G20's host nation and one of its members, both of which have a significant impact on the stability of the global economy.

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