

## Scrutinizing the Political and Economic Dynamics of China's

### Distribution of Vaccines in Securitizing Health

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*In the previous Pandemic of the H5N1 virus, the world is facing an uneven distribution of the vaccine. The irony is that developed countries get more access to vaccines compared to the country with more cases especially the global south countries. Today, the world is facing another pandemic which is The Covid-19 Pandemic. The vaccine has been developed, but after the vaccine is successfully produced, there is no assurance that the vaccine will evenly be distributed as mandated by WHO. Based on these considerations, the researcher aimed to project the possibilities of vaccine distribution from China to Global South countries. Researchers want to analyze the influence of a country's economic capacity and international politics on vaccine distribution, especially with China by using analytic qualitative research. We will compare the political and economic situation during the H5N1 pandemic and the political and economic situation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Countries used for comparison are Kenya, Yemen, the Philippines, and Indonesia. These four countries were chosen because they could represent different conditions of political and economic relations. The main finding is how North countries tend to prioritize South countries with a stronger political and economic bond to be the destination of its Covid-19 vaccine distribution.*

**Keywords:** *Vaccine Distribution; Healthcare Security; Political and Economic Condition*

#### **Introduction**

The Pandemic of the H5N1 virus has exposed the uneven distribution of the vaccine. It is rather ironic that developed countries have more access to vaccines compared to other countries with more confirmed cases, especially in the Global South. In 2020, the world is facing another pandemic called The Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Covid-19 vaccine was initially discovered by Russia, despite the lack of international trust. But on the other hand, China has the most potential to produce a

vaccine to combat the pandemic. However, after the vaccine is successfully produced, there is no assurance that the vaccine will evenly be distributed as mandated by WHO (Mellen, 2020). In the previous outbreak of the H5N1 virus, some developing countries cannot afford access to vaccines due to the insufficient mechanism to ensure the availability of the vaccine. In 2009, when the H1N1 virus dispersed across state borders, the US has pre-ordered approximately 30% to 60% of the world's projected production of vaccines even before it was declared as a pandemic.

Based on these considerations, the researchers aimed to project the possible scenario of vaccine distribution from China to Global South countries. This is important as the vaccine distribution draws a great concern over the south countries, considering its high impacts on the domestic economy. The authors would like to analyze the influence of a country's economic capacity and international politics on vaccine distribution, especially with China. To achieve this objective, we will examine the political and economic situation during the Covid-19 pandemic while looking at several aspects and conditions in the distribution of vaccines during the H5N1 pandemic. To understand comprehensively the political and economic aspects of the vaccine distribution, we would like to provide the readers with several concepts such as health diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, bilateral and multilateral cooperation, health securities, as well as global north and south cooperation. These factors would cover the political and economic variables of the vaccine distribution.

### **Health Diplomacy**

Diplomacy is an important political activity that acts as a major instrument of force and plays a significant role in the distribution of the vaccine. Sharp defines diplomacy as a synonym for statecraft, foreign policy, and international relations, as well as the making of foreign policy by practitioners (Sharp, 2003).

Magalhaes sees diplomacy as defined through four prisms: (1) foreign policy instrument, foreign policy, international negotiations, and the activity of diplomat (Hart & Siniver, 2021). Diplomacy usually begins with communication

between the authorities who promote each other's foreign policy interests through formal cooperation or tacit understanding. However, diplomacy is not always carried out by professional diplomats. Diplomatic activities can also be carried out by other authorities or private individuals under the direction of an official or leader (Gurgu, 2016). Together with the Balance of Power, which is reflected and strengthened, diplomacy is one of the most important institutions in a society. Bilateral and multilateral agreements are tools of diplomacy. Diplomatic relations between countries can cover all sectors such as economy, health, security, environment, education, and others. It depends on the agreement between the parties involved on what sector or theme to discuss. The focus of diplomacy in this paper is health diplomacy. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the main objectives of health diplomacy are; 1) Better health and public health security, 2) improving relations between countries and the commitment of various actors to work together and improve health quality, and 3) achievement of the proceeds from the proceeds will be used to support the goals of reducing poverty and increasing equity (World Health Organization, n.d.). Health diplomacy can cover many things such as cooperation on public health, health security, health facilities, collaborative research and development of new vaccines, improving the quality of health human resources, and so on.

### **Multilateral Cooperation**

Multilateralism is a well-known term in the context of diplomacy. This is also a tool used by several countries to help them provide

themselves with vaccines. To make a clear context on this paper, we take the definition of multilateralism from John Rugie (1992). He defines multilateralism as an idea of “an architectural form” as well as an organizing principle of international life. Multilateralism is considered as a principal organizing organization that involves cooperative activity between many countries. Multilateral cooperation is a form of cooperation between countries, ranging from three to an unspecified number of countries. Not all cooperation is multilateral, but all multilateral activities require cooperation.

The urgency of this type of cooperation was motivated by the fact that some of the problems that the world is facing cannot simply be solved alone. Pandemics, natural disasters, development problems, and climate change are some of the problems that need cooperation between countries to solve. These problems and challenges demand collective action as they only can be defeated if no one is left behind. This is what underlies why multilateralism plays a significant role in this unprecedented era. We cooperate to combat our common problem as well as cross-border threat.

### **Bilateral Cooperation**

Interactions between countries can take the form of bilateral and multilateral relations. These interactions made vaccine distribution possible. Bilateral cooperation itself is cooperation between two countries. Bilateral cooperation is a cooperative activity that is directly supported by one country to another and vice versa. Kishan S. Rana (2002) argues that in bilateral diplomacy the main concept used is

that a country will pursue its national interests to obtain maximum benefits and the only way to achieve this goal is to establish good and sustainable relations between countries.

In bilateral cooperation, the issue of cooperation discussed is an issue that is shared by the two countries. In international relations, the process of bilateral cooperation between two countries can be determined through three main motives, namely: 1) maintaining national interests, 2) maintaining peace and, 3) improving people's welfare. Cooperation between the two countries can cover various types of sectors such as economic, environmental, social, security, and health (Chinatsu, 2018).

Bilateral cooperation will be carried out if the cooperation has the potential to generate benefits that can be used to achieve national interests. This cooperation usually begins with a discussion of what cooperation to undertake and culminates in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and then enters the implementation stage. Subsequently, a supervisory team from the two countries will be formed to work together to monitor and evaluate the processes and outputs of the cooperation that has been carried out.

### **Health Securities**

Security is a fundamental element that determines the survival of an individual, community, organization, and state. This is a concept that is strongly linked to vaccine distribution as the health securities are one of the core elements that the world leaders are attempting to protect by providing the vaccine. When we talk about security, it is difficult to come up with a universal definition that is

accepted by everyone. However, security can be said as a condition that is free from threats. Barry Buzan (1991) states that security is a powerful tool for a political power to get the attention that is the interest of a country or a certain group in the competition for government attention. At present, the focus on security issues has shifted from high political issues, such as war, toward low political. The authors pivot on health security issues.

Health becomes a security issue as a result of the shifting focus of security from military threats to long-term threats that are more widespread and visible after the Cold War. Other factors that make the health sector become a security issue because the health sector is universal global importance beyond political, cultural, and social interests. There are various definitions of health safety. In 1994, UNDP issued a Human Development Report and mentioned health safety in the report. In this report, health safety is aimed at ensuring protection from diseases and an unhealthy lifestyle. In the Global South countries or developing countries, the main cause of death is infection.

The Commission on Human Security (CHS) in its 2003 report said that health is not only free from disease, but also a complete mental, physical, and social state, with good health as the foundation of human security because security is about protecting human life (Commission on Human Security, 2003). Common themes that fall into the scope of health security are: 1) new diseases such as Covid-19, 2) infectious diseases, 3) deliberate use of chemicals and biology, 4) violence, conflict, and humanitarian emergencies, 5) environmental change and natural disasters, 6)

chemical disasters and radiation hazards. 7) lack of food supply and, 8) poverty (Chiu et al., 2009) however, do not share a common definition of health security. This article aims to characterize the notions of health security in order to clarify what constitutes the nexus of health and security. The concept of health security has evolved over time so that it encompasses many entities. Analyzing the health reports of four multilateral organizations (the United Nations, World Health Organization, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and the European Union. According to WHO, the biggest threats to world health security are pandemics, health emergencies, and a weak health system which not only threaten human lives but have a far greater impact (World Health Organization, 2018).

### **Global North and South Cooperation**

To reach health security, several south countries establish cooperation with north countries. The term Global North and the Global South itself are used to describe and differentiate two types of countries namely the industrialized and rich countries in the North and the less industrialized and poor countries, mainly in the Southern hemisphere of the earth. Despite the geographical location, several North countries with a high level of industrialization located in the Southern hemisphere. This also applies to some of the less industrialized countries in the northern hemisphere.

This division uses some parameters such as productivity, life expectancy, unemployment, and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head. Political reasoning also contributes to the division of North and South countries. The Global South countries tend to form a coalition

since the developing countries mainly have a common history of colonization.

Both North and South countries held cooperation. We can see clear cooperation between North and South countries after World War II where the east and west block was trying to influence the newly independent countries. Countries like the USA and the Soviet Union gave aid to countries in the Global South since these Global South countries gained attention amid the cold war.

In the present day, cooperation between the North and the South is also driven by political and economic interests. This cooperation generates dependency of the Global South countries on the Global North countries (Pollins, 1985). On the other hand, this cooperation also helps the modernization of the Global South countries. This kind of cooperation is still essential since every country, regardless of the North or the South country, holds a certain interest of other countries, not only for charity reasons.

### **Precedent Vaccine Distribution**

The Covid-19 pandemic is not the first pandemic in the modern era. Previously, the world was facing the H5N1 pandemic. In 2008, the H5N1 virus outbreak spread across the world, especially in Asia, Europe, and some parts of Africa. Due to the insufficient mechanism to ensure the availability of the vaccine, some developing countries could not afford access to vaccines. Some developed countries had purchased the vaccine in advance and left the developing countries like Indonesia, which had one of the largest amounts of a confirmed case, nothing to purchase (Kamradt-Scott, 2020).

### **Current Vaccine Inventors and Distribution Plan during Covid-19**

Before the vaccines were authorized to be distributed, the Covid-19 vaccine candidates must pass several steps of development (Corum et al, 2020). First, vaccine candidates should be tested in animals to see the effect on animals' immunities. After a successful test on animals, scientists will proceed to the next step which is the Phase 1 Safety Trials. In this phase, scientists will test the vaccine on a small group of people to measure the dosage, safety, and level of effectiveness of these vaccine candidates to stimulate the immune system. The third step will be the Phase 2 Expanded Trials. This phase similar to the previous phase. The Phase 2 Expanded Trials aims to test the vaccine's safety and effectiveness, but the test subjects are hundreds of people split into groups of age to see how it affects people of different ages. The last step before early approval is the Phase 3 Efficacy Trials. This trial uses larger groups of tests. It can involve thousands of volunteers to see how many become infected. This trial will also reveal rare side effects that might not be found in previous trials.

After series of tests, the vaccine candidate will be eligible for approval. This approval splits into two types. First, the early or limited approval. This approval is given to the vaccine candidates that are still waiting for the Phase 3 test result but due to the urgent need, it will be distributed for limited use only. The second type is Approval which is granted to the vaccine candidates that have already passed the whole step of the vaccine test. Currently, China and Russia are the leading countries in the development of the Covid-19 vaccine. Russia

is the first country to register its Covid-19 vaccine, namely the Sputnik V. Foreign scientists remain skeptical on the vaccine since there is no evidence from a large scale of tests, or in other words, Russia skipped the Phase 3 Trials (Ellyatt, 2020). Meanwhile China, as a country where Covid-19 was first reported, is also leading the development of the vaccine.

Several vaccines have already been granted limited approval from the government. These vaccine candidates are on the Phase 3 Trials in several countries. China tested the vaccine candidates in some South countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Indonesia. These countries are not leading on developing the vaccine, but in great need of vaccine since they have a worsening case of Covid-19. The country that volunteered to be tested for the vaccine candidates will get more access to the vaccine. This is how cooperation can work and benefit both parties. Indonesia has already dealt with China's pharmaceutical companies like Cansino and Sinopharm which will provide vaccines in Indonesia starting in November 2020.

The United Arab Emirates government has approved Sinopharm's vaccine for emergency use in health care workers by September 2020. In conclusion, the Russian vaccine development is faster than the development of vaccines by China in terms of vaccine registration and permit. While in the other hand, the Russian vaccine obtains less trust from scientists.

**Political and Economic Relationship Between Countries (Kenya, Yemen, Indonesia, the Philippines, with China)**

The political relations seen here are

the political relations between China and Kenya, Yemen, Indonesia, and the Philippines as Global South countries which are used as examples in this paper.

The reason these four countries were chosen to represent the global south country in cooperation with China is that these four countries have various economic and political relations and interests with China at different levels. In addition, the four countries have different economic and political powers which will influence China's willingness to cooperate with them.

But first, we need to see how big the economic strength of each country is. We can see the economic strength of each country from the GDP annual growth rate from 2018 to 2020.

- China

**Figure 2.2.** China's GDP Annual Growth Rate from 2018-2021 (Trading Economics, n.d.)



Source: Tradingeconomics.com

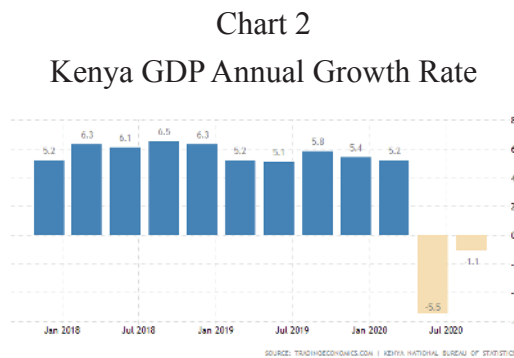
In 2019, China's GDP is 14.34 trillion USD. The Chinese economy advanced 6.5 percent year-on-year in the December quarter, after a 4.9 percent growth in the third quarter and above market consensus of 6.1 percent. The latest reading pointed to pre-pandemic

growth rates, with industrial output rising the most in 3-1/2 years in December. For full 2020, the country's GDP expanded 2.3 percent, the slowest pace in more than four decades. Still, China is likely to be the only major economy to avoid contraction due to the COVID-19 shocks (Trading Economics, 2020).

In 2020, the primary sector went up 3 percent, with live pig inventory surging 31 percent. Industry advanced 2.6 percent, with manufacturing rising 3.4 percent, utilities 2 percent, and mining 0.5 percent. The tertiary sector expanded by 2.1 percent. Also, real estate investment grew 7 percent, with residential rising 7.6 percent and office building 5.4 percent.

- Kenya

**Figure 3.3.** Kenya's GDP Annual Growth Rate from 2018-2021 (Trading Economics, n.d.)



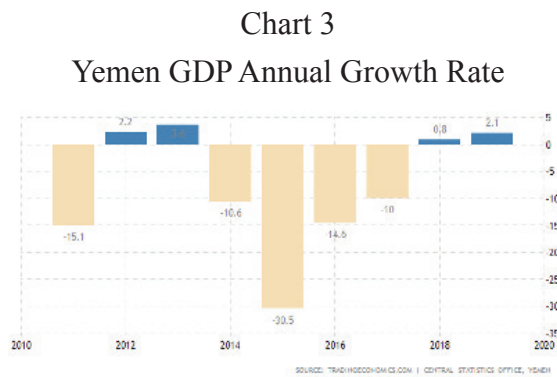
Source: Tradingeconomics.com

In 2019, Kenya's GDP is 95.5 billion USD. Kenya's economy shrank 1.1% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2020, following a downwardly revised 5.5% plunge in the previous period. It marks the first country's recession in nearly two decades, as the adverse effects of containment measures to curb COVID-19 infections continued to be felt.

Accommodation and food service activity which includes the all-important tourism sector remained severely affected (-57.9% vs -83.2% in Q2), followed by education (-41.9% vs -56.2%) and professional, administrative activities (-12.3% vs -15.3%). Meanwhile, strong growth was recorded in agriculture (6.3% vs 7.3%); construction (16.2% vs 3.9%); mining & quarrying (18.2% vs 10%) and information & communication (7.3% vs 4.6%) (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

- Yemen

**Figure 4.4.** Yemen's GDP Annual Growth Rate from 2018-2021 (Trading Economics, n.d.)



Source: Tradingeconomics.com

In 2019, Yemen's GDP is 22.58 billion USD. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Yemen expanded 2.10 percent in 2019 from the previous year. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world. Its economy depends on foreign aid and remittances from workers in neighboring golf states.

The most important sector of the economy is dwindling oil extraction, it accounts for around 70 percent of government revenue and 25 percent of GDP. Agriculture is also very important as it employs over 50 percent of the

population. In recent years, the government has engaged in efforts to diversify the economy from dependency on oil.

As a result, there was a surge of investment in the development of infrastructure for natural gas extraction. Yet, the political instability in 2011 has undermined development efforts, resulted in damage to infrastructure, rising unemployment, and high inflation (Trading Economics, 2020)

- Indonesia

**Figure 5.5.** Indonesia's GDP Annual Growth Rate from 2018-2021 (Trading Economics, n.d.)



Source: Tradingeconomics.co

In 2019, Indonesia's GDP is 1.119 trillion USD. Indonesia's economy unexpectedly contracted 0.42% QoQ in Q4 2020, a missing market consensus of a 0.7% growth and reversing from a record expansion of 5.05% in Q3, amid COVID-19 pandemic, with authorities imposing a second round of mobility curbs in capital Jakarta during September and October 2020 (Trading Economic, n.d.)

External demand contributed negatively to the GDP, as exports rose by 2.41% (vs 12.14% in Q3) while imports grew much faster by 16.28% (vs -0.08%). Besides,

private consumption was somewhat sluggish (0.49% vs 4.7 in Q3), with fixed investment slowing sharply (4.19% vs 8.45%). Meantime, government spending growth accelerated strongly (27.15% vs 16.93%).

On the production side, activity fell for agriculture, forestry and fisheries (-20.15% vs 1.01%), manufacturing (-0.38 vs 5.25%), and wholesale trade, retail (-0.87% vs -5.68%). In addition, output growth eased for mining (1.65% vs 1.72%), construction (3.48% vs 5.72%), and transportation and warehouse (5.08% vs 24.28%) (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020)

- The Philippines

**Figure 6.6.** Philippines' GDP Annual Growth Rate from 2018-2021 (Trading Economics, n.d.)



Source: Tradingeconomics.com

In 2019, the Philippines's GDP is 376.8 billion USD. The Philippines economy shrank 8.3% YoY in Q4 of 2020, following a marginally revised 11.4 plunge in the previous quarter and compared with market expectations of an 8.5% fall. This was the fourth straight quarter of contraction in the economy, and the smallest contraction since Q1, as the economy continued to recover from the COVID-19



shocks (Trading Economics, n.d.)

Private consumption (-7.2% vs -9.2% in Q2) and fixed investment (-28.6% vs -37.1%) contracted less. Also, net external demand contributed negatively to GDP, as exports dropped by 10.5%, while imports fell faster (-18.8%).

Meanwhile, government spending growth eased (4.4% vs 5.8%). On the production side, activity contracted mainly for mining and quarrying (-18.8%), manufacturing (-4.3%), construction (-25.3%); transportation and storage (-21.3%), wholesale and retail trade (-4.1%). Considering the full year of 2020, the economy shrank by 9.5% YoY, the steepest contraction since the series began in 1946, reversing from a 5.9% growth in 2019.

#### Relations between Kenya and China

As the fourth country to recognize Kenya's independence, political relations between Kenya and China began when Kenya just declared its independence, on December 12, 1963. On December 14, 1963, China immediately established political relations with Kenya. Political relations between China and Kenya started on an unsettled basis. After 1965, relations between the two countries became tense and were lowered to the level of charge *d'affaires* (Tunai Mulati, 2019).

The unfavorable relationship between China and Kenya during the Jomo Kenyatta regime (1963-1978) was influenced by the Cold War which took place when the western bloc led by the United States tried to spread its liberalism ideology and the eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union with its ideology of communism (Tunai Mulati, 2019).

In 1978, when President Daniel Arap Moi came to power, diplomatic relations between the two countries developed rapidly. When President Moi stepped down as president in 2002, he and his government had successfully established close ties with China. The era of President Moi provided a basis for enhancing cooperation between the two countries and smoothing investment flows. Diplomatic and political relations between Kenya and China have been well established until now. One of the two countries' cooperation is in the fields of economy, trade, and technology. Projects to improve the welfare of the Kenyan people such as the Moi International Sports Center, a generator-generating pit, the expansion project of Eldret hospital, and the Gambogi-Serem Highway are shreds of evidence that the political relations between Kenya and China are well-established after the Kenyatta regime.

#### Relations between Yemen and China

The political relations between Yemen and China go back a long time. China's foreign policy vis-a-vis Yemen from October 1949 to the end of 1980 was influenced by the United States and the Soviet Union (Hinnebusch, 2003).

The financial and economic assistance from China to Yemen was so substantial that it exceeded the assistance offered by the Soviet Union so that the two countries became rivals with each other and the political relations between China and the Soviet Union were fractured. In the 1980s, China reduced its aid and presence in South Yemen due to the Soviet Union's increasingly intense presence in South Yemen.

In the 1990s, China became a strong

supporter of the merger of South Yemen and North Yemen into the Republic of Yemen. In this period, the relationship between China and Yemen was based on economic and political interests. China's interest is increasing, and Yemen becomes one of the main suppliers of oil commodities to China. Currently, Yemen is facing a civil war and the UN has determined that the civil war in Yemen is the worst humanitarian crisis in history.

China plays a role in supporting political stability in Yemen. On July 13, 2017, the Chinese government successfully delivered humanitarian assistance worth the US \$ 22.5 million containing food and medical supplies through the Southern Yemeni port city of Aden (Ramani, 2017). The political relationship between Yemen and China has been influenced by a variety of phenomena ranging from the Cold War to the current conflict in Yemen. However, China's role in Yemen has remained real over time.

#### Relations between Indonesia and China

Political relations between Indonesia and China have had their ups and downs. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were first established on April 13, 1950 (Jie, 1994). President Soekarno's foreign policy which was very anti-neocolonialism and imperialism made Indonesia look for other "friends" besides Britain and the United States.

The close relationship between the two countries led to the formation of the Jakarta-Beijing axis. Diplomatic relations between Indonesia and China were cut off as a result of the September 30 Movement when China was suspected of supporting the Communist

Party of Indonesia to take power. The New Order government led by Soeharto suspended diplomatic relations with China on October 30, 1967, and this continued for more than two decades (Van der Kroef, 1989).

Diplomatic relations between Indonesia and China returned to life on August 8, 1990. The end of the Cold War was one of the factors causing the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The modernization policy that led to China's rapid economic development succeeded in persuading the Soeharto government to return to cooperate with China.

After the 1998 reformation, relations between Jakarta and Beijing were getting better because the Indonesian government saw the goodwill of the Chinese government for Indonesia. China's quick assistance to Indonesia after the Tsunami on 26 December 2004 further increased favorable sentiment towards China. Currently, China is the third-largest investor in Indonesia after Singapore and Japan. The cooperation that has been established covers various sectors, starting from the economy, infrastructure, and health. Since China has numerous investments in Indonesia, China has a huge concern about its production in Indonesia. This underlies the prioritization of vaccine distribution to Indonesia.

#### Relations between the Philippines and China

Diplomatic and political relations between the Philippines and China were formed on June 9, 1975. Since then, the two countries have cooperated to unexpected levels in trade, investment, agriculture, tourism, and others. Since 1975, the two countries have signed

nearly 100 bilateral agreements covering a wide scope - trade, infrastructure development, energy, tourism, culture, sister cities, and others (Clemente, 2017). In 2005, during President Hu Jintao's state visitation to the Philippines, he and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo agreed to establish strategic cooperation to ensure peace and promote development between the Philippines and China. But relations between the Philippines and China have been turbulent, with the presence of some controversy and disagreement.

During the reign of President Benigno Aquino (2011-2016), bilateral relations between the two countries were accompanied by maritime disputes regarding the South China Sea. At a time when the territorial dispute was at its height, the Philippines faced the implementation of stricter trade and commercial rules from the Chinese authorities (Sudan Ravindran, 2012).

When President Duterte came to power, diplomatic and political relations between the Philippines and China began to improve. The "heating up" of bilateral relations after years of "freezing" was influenced by President Duterte's pragmatic policies. President Duterte's policies are considered more lenient and focus more on the economic and trade aspects of the Philippines with China (Damping, 2020). However, the relationship between the Philippines and China is still accompanied by territorial disputes.

### **Health Diplomacy in Manners of Multilateral and Bilateral Cooperation**

Health diplomacy or better known as Global Health Diplomacy affects the process of

vaccine distribution. Health diplomacy is one of the activities carried out by state and non-state actors to improve global health standards. If we talk about vaccine distribution, especially the Covid-19 vaccine, there is currently a myriad of discourse that postulates on the availability of the Covid-19 by 2021.

Parties that are considered to have the potential to produce vaccines are *SINOVAC* (China), *Sinopharm* (Wuhan Institute of Biological Product and Beijing Institute of Biological Product, China), *The ChAdOx1* (University of Oxford, United Kingdom), *Ad5-nCoV* (Cansino Biologics INC, China), *Sputnik V* (Gameleya Research Institute, Russia), *Novavax* (USA), and *BNT-162* (BioNTech, Germany). The names of parties that are considered to have the potential to produce vaccines are already in phase 3, which is the last stage before the vaccine is declared safe for production.

The world health agency, WHO, said that the distribution process of vaccines must be evenly distributed throughout the world at an affordable price and should not be monopolized by any country with its national interests. However, we cannot deny that for the state, national interests are more important than international interests. Currently, vaccine diplomacy activities have been carried out by countries in the world. Vaccine diplomacy is the most subtle form of state efforts to secure the Covid-19 vaccine for itself.

Indonesia itself is one of the countries that has initiated vaccine diplomacy. "The main task of diplomacy is to open roads and access commitments to supply vaccines, both from bilateral and multilateral channels," said

Indonesian Foreign Minister, Retno Marsudi virtually, Thursday (22/10) when delivering a statement regarding Indonesia's diplomacy performance for one year under Jokowi-Ma'ruf Working Cabinet. The Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs explained that Indonesia had obtained several commitments to supply vaccines, both through bilateral and multilateral channels. This commitment comes from three vaccine manufacturers from China, namely *Sinovac*, *Sinopharm*, and *CanSino*.

Indonesia is also working with the G-42 technology company from the United Arab Emirates and with the UK's leading pharmaceutical company, AstraZeneca (The Jakarta Post, 2020). In an interview with *Berita Satu* journalists who were uploaded to YouTube with the title "60 Minutes with Retno Marsudi: Vaccine Diplomacy & Peace in a Pandemic Period", Retno Marsudi stated that the vaccine diplomacy carried out by Indonesia succeeded in securing commitments from the state or vaccine makers of 20 to 30 million doses of vaccine by the end of 2020. And for 2021, 290 to 340 million doses of vaccine have been secured by Indonesia.

Overall, Indonesia has guaranteed cooperation with 120 parties, namely 11 countries, 12 international organizations, and 97 NGOs. As we are facing two choices of approaches in obtaining vaccines, which are the bilateral and multilateral approaches, Indonesia chose both approaches to effectively fulfill the Indonesian needs of Covid-19 Vaccine.

Indonesia is intensively pursuing vaccine diplomacy, especially with China. This is different from Kenya, Yemen, and the Philippines, whose domestic conditions greatly

affect their ability to carry out vaccine diplomacy. As we know, the Covid-19 Pandemic hit the world economy. The lockdown that occurs around the world holds the production and distribution activities that obstruct the global supply chain. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts that Kenya's GDP will fall from 5.6 percent in 2019 to 1.0 percent in 2020. The pandemic handling fund corruption scandal that recently rocked Kenya added to the problems that the country is already facing. Besides, the government is struggling to pay off a sizeable national debt - nearly a third of the budget - leaving little fiscal space for a social safety net program, even if the global economy recovers by 2021.

Vaccine diplomacy carried out by the Philippines with other parties especially China as the country with the most potential to produce vaccines is also not running as effectively as Indonesia. The main obstacle faced by the Philippines is due to the bad sentiment it has towards China due to the territorial conflict that always accompanies the relations between the two countries. Diplomats from the Philippines felt that President Xi Jinping's promise regarding the Philippines to get priority access to the Covid-19 vaccine was one of China's efforts to take over the West Philippine Sea. As President Rodrigo Duterte said in a speech on State of the Nation Address 2020 which was broadcasted on the national television station in July 2020, that there is no such thing as "free lunch". President Duterte said that,

*"Chinese diplomats are not going to say: recognize our claims in exchange for vaccines, but the quid pro quo will*

*be understood,” Poling said. “There’s going to be an expectation that if you want early access to these vaccines, you will avoid certain Chinese red lines. And the South China Sea is one of them.”*

If Kenya is affected by its low economic capability and the Philippines is affected by unfavorable political sentiment towards China as one of the most potential parties to establish vaccine diplomacy, Yemen is well faced with a devastated economy and an unstable domestic political climate due to civil war. Yemen’s internal affairs have not been stable since the civil war erupted in 2015, making it difficult for Yemen to implement its foreign policy. Yemen is one of the countries that desperately need an even and unimpeded distribution of vaccines. However, Yemen can almost completely depend on international assistance regarding the distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine and cannot carry out vaccine diplomacy and ensure the commitment of those who have the potential to produce Covid-19 vaccines such as China.

So that based on the above-mentioned exposure, vaccine diplomacy affects vaccine distribution. The ability of a country to carry out diplomatic vaccines is influenced by domestic factors such as the political and economic power possessed by the country (The Conversation, 2021). Although the UN and WHO stated that vaccine distribution needed to be carried out transparently and equitably, this statement did not regulate the measures to enable states to secure the production of the Covid-19 vaccine for their own countries.

### **Does the Status of Global North and South Countries Affect the Vaccine Distribution Process?**

Currently, the development of Covid-19 vaccines is being led by North countries since it has more advanced technology and science. The status of a country as a South country will intervene in the access of respective countries to the Covid-19 vaccine. These countries have little to zero technology to develop vaccines for themselves. As developing countries with a small income, these countries found difficulty in purchasing vaccines since their high pricing (United Nations, 2021).

On the other hand, North countries with more advanced technology have an interest in the Southern countries in several aspects, namely economy, moral obligation, and politics (Krüger, n.d.). These interests will lead countries to help the South countries to access the Covid-19 vaccine. This condition is related to the international cooperation and economic benefit in the intellectual property right which will be further elaborated in the next part. Indonesia, Yemen, Kenya, and the Philippines are countries that are included in the Global South group although several parties claim that Indonesia and the Philippines are developed countries but there is no unanimous statement regarding the status of the two countries. As has been explained above, the economic and political conditions of the four countries are different. Yemen and Kenya are considered to have the weakest economic and political conditions. Therefore, the domestic problems they experience naturally affect their performance in carrying out health diplomacy activities and securing vaccine production for

the national security of their country as has been done by Indonesia. However, the political relations between Kenya and Yemen, and China are quite good. So, there is a possibility that the two countries will get vaccines from China, as President Xi Jinping said, China promises to distribute vaccine aid to developing countries, especially countries on the African continent (Jingxi, 2020).

The Philippines has better economic and political conditions than Kenya and Yemen. However, the condition of his political relationship with China, which is one of the most potential actors to produce vaccines, is not going well. This of course is influenced by territorial disputes which in the last 5 years, often accompany the relationship between the two countries. President Duterte considered that Xi Jinping's statement stating that he would grant special access to vaccines for the Philippines was China's attempt to use their soft power to claim Philippine territorial waters (Abigail, 2020). On the other hand, there is Indonesia with the best economic and political conditions when compared to the previous three countries.

A large budget and relatively stable domestic political conditions enable Indonesia to carry out its health diplomacy activities to the fullest. This of course makes it easier and if one can say guarantees Indonesia to get the distribution of vaccines quickly and safely.

WHO emphasized to the international community that the distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine needs to be done fairly and transparently. WHO Secretary-General, António Guterres said that "at this critical moment, vaccine equity is the biggest moral

test before the global community"

António Guterres proposed the establishment of an emergency task force by the G20 countries to prepare and help implement the global immunization plan. The task force will have the capacity to mobilize pharmaceutical companies and key industry and logistics actors. This is a WHO commitment so that the distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine can be carried out fairly regardless of the economic and political strength of a country.

### Conclusion

Based on the previous elaborated consideration, we conclude Political and economic relations between countries can influence the distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine. When a country has intense and mutually beneficial political relations with other countries, it is reasonable to establish cooperation, particularly in distributing vaccines. If a North country has a huge interest in a South country, it is more likely for the North country to send vaccines to that particular South country. The next conclusion is that the economic dimension, which consists of investment and intellectual property right plays a significant role in the Covid-19 vaccine distribution. The more intense the foreign direct investment between the two countries or more, the higher the chances of getting a vaccine. Based on these two considerations, we conclude that global South countries access to the Covid-19 vaccine depends on respective political and economic proximity to North countries

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