

## Indonesia-Japan Cooperation During Covid-19

### Kerja Sama Indonesia-Jepang Selama Covid-19

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#### Abstract

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus from the coronavirus family responsible for SARS and MERS, originated in Wuhan and quickly spread globally. International collaboration has been pivotal in the fight to achieve endemic control. Every nation has strived to acquire Covid-19 vaccines to safeguard their populations. For example, Indonesia forged a bilateral partnership with Japan to secure Covid-19 vaccines. Japan holds a strategic position as one of Indonesia's top five investors. Throughout the pandemic, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintained close communication with its Japanese counterpart to request support in obtaining the Covid-19 vaccine. This collaboration was made possible by Indonesia's independent and proactive foreign policy, which created extensive opportunities for cooperation during the pandemic. This study aims to present the outcomes of the Indonesia-Japan collaboration in procuring Covid-19 vaccines for Indonesia, showcasing the implementation of an independent and proactive foreign policy that can yield substantial benefits.

## INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) which is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Chaplin, 2020). SARS-CoV-2 is included in the coronavirus which also causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in 2012 there were only differences in viruses. Covid-19 is declared as a Global pandemic which was declared on March 11, 2020, by WHO (WHO, 2020). Covid-19 continues to develop until it brings in various types of variants which begin to attack gradually and have different strengths. Starting from the Beta variant which comes from South Africa, the Alpha variant which comes from England, and the Delta variant which comes from India. As of October 4, 2022, there were 6,437,570 positive cases of Covid-19 in Indonesia. In 2022, Indonesia will be in 4th place with the largest total population in the world, reaching 276 million people (CNN Indonesia, 2022). Apart from that, Japan was confirmed to have had its first Covid-19 case on January 15, 2020, in the Kanagawa Prefecture area, south of Tokyo (Amengual & Atsumi, 2020). Then on February 13, 2020, Japan declared its first death due to Covid-19 followed by a delay of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games and implementation of the "3Cs" viz closed spaces, crowded places, and close contact settings (Shimizu et al., 2020).

As a result of the addition of positive cases per day which is starting to cause world concern, it has caused various institutions and countries in the world to take the initiative to conduct research and create a vaccine that can stop the spread of the virus. Vaccines work to trigger the formation of the immune system which contains the weak parts of certain organisms to provide an effective response (WHO, 2020). The aim of procuring vaccines is to increase the body's immunity in fighting viruses to create antibodies or herd immunity. Then, in order to break the chain of mutation or spread of Covid-19 in the world and justice for all countries in the world, World Health Organization (WHO) established Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) which is led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, and the World Health Organization (WHO) to ensure an

equitable vaccine production and development process (Gomez & Harry, n.d.). Mrs. Retno L.P Marsudi as Minister of Foreign Affairs the Republic of Indonesia is trusted to be the leader of COVAX-AMC EG as Indonesia's representative from the 184 countries that are members of the program Covax Advanced Market Commitment Engagement Group (Covax-AMC EG) received the most votes from a total of 92 countries with a percentage of 41%. Apart from the COVAX program which is classified as multilateral cooperation, Indonesia is also carrying out bilateral cooperation with various countries to fulfill the Covid-19 vaccine, Indonesia is establishing bilateral cooperation with Japan.

The Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japanese Embassy in Jakarta entered into an agreement marked by signing exchange of note in order to collaborate in dealing with Covid-19 between the two countries on June 29 2021, Japan agreed to send 2.1 million doses of vaccine to Indonesia which will be sent in 2 stages (Indonesian Ministry of Health, 2021). The cooperation that existed with Japan during the Covid-19 pandemic again shows the closeness of relations between Indonesia and Japan to break the chain of spread of Covid-19 between the two nations. The Japanese government has also established a vaccination policy by providing relief to Indonesian citizens (WNI) to get vaccines in Japan even though the Indonesian citizen's official residence permit is no longer valid or the holder of a special residence permit (Designated Activities) in accordance with the requirements set by the Japanese government.

Japan is one of Indonesia's strategic partners. Apart from that, the vaccine diplomacy carried out by Japan towards Indonesia when the Covid-19 pandemic hit was proof of the strong friendship between the two countries. The collaboration between Japan and Indonesia regarding vaccines is not the first collaboration between the two countries. Indonesia has carried out cooperation related to the economy called IJEPA. Each country, both Indonesia and Japan, has an interest in establishing cooperation. Indonesia, like the IJEPA collaboration, has interests in that Japan is a trading partner and one of Indonesia's largest investors, so that Indonesia utilizes and optimizes further cooperative relations in various fields with the hope that Japan will continue to invest in Indonesia. Then apart from that, Japan also has an interest, namely in ensuring the Japanese market in Indonesia and expanding Japan's power over countries in Asia.

Cooperation in international relations is called International Cooperation which has various national interests that are not fulfilled and resolved by the country itself" (Perwira & Yani, 2006). International cooperation was established due to the existence of interdependence and human complexity in international relations which is based on national understanding, the same goals and direction, then supported by international conditions that require each other based on the common interests of each country which aims to fulfill the interests of each country (Nainggolan et al., 2019). There are several forms of international cooperation, one of which is bilateral cooperation which can be interpreted as a situation where there is a relationship that influences each other or there is a reciprocal relationship between two parties (Rizkia, 2021).

In carrying national interests, there is instrument called diplomacy, namely as a mixture of science and art in conducting negotiations to achieve state interests in various fields. Then, negotiations in diplomacy experienced development and adaptation to suit the needs of each country to achieve national interests (Kissinger, 2016). In diplomacy, there are several types of diplomacy, one of which is vaccine diplomacy. Vaccine diplomacy is part of health diplomacy. Vaccine diplomacy was introduced in 1789, which was used by countries such as Russia, Turkey, Spain and America in using vaccines. Therefore, vaccine diplomacy existed before the Covid-19 pandemic. Vaccine diplomacy is diplomacy carried out by countries to use or send vaccines to combat international problems related to health that threaten the international world (Sugianti & Anwar, 2021). Vaccine diplomacy requires cooperation, accommodation, and opposition (Muhaimin et al., 2021). Vaccine diplomacy can also be interpreted as a branch of global health diplomacy which relies on vaccine use and vaccine delivery (Hotez, 2014). Vaccine diplomacy aims to help countries that have difficulty securing and accessing vaccines for their country with assistance from other countries. In the Covid-19 pandemic, the role of vaccine diplomacy is really needed to ensure countries that lack vaccination can also use vaccines from other countries. Japan's vaccine diplomacy towards Indonesia is one of

the crucial things for Indonesia. Through Indonesia-Japan cooperation, Indonesia received vaccine supplies from the Japanese government which were provided to ensure the vaccination program in Indonesia.

Therefore, this research will conduct an analysis regarding Indonesia-Japan cooperation during the Covid-19 pandemic through bilateral cooperation and vaccine diplomacy.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this research is a qualitative method. According to Creswell (Habsy, 2017), qualitative research can be used to understand human and social phenomena, where researchers can create images, words and reports from respondents. The aim of qualitative research is to understand a particular event or event.

Researchers obtained data directly from sources through interviews. In general, interviews in qualitative research can be divided into three forms, namely unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and structured interviews (Herdiansyah, 2014). The interviews used in this research were semi-structured interviews. The purpose of interviews is to obtain data related to phenomena that are in accordance with the research topic in more depth and to find problems that are more open but still have limitations.

The research was carried out by conducting interviews with three sources, namely Baskara from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yanuar as an Intermediate Diplomat, East Asia Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, and Teuku Rezasyah as a Lecturer at Padjadjaran University and an observer of International Relations. Apart from that, as a complement, researchers used secondary data obtained through existing documents. The data that has been obtained will then be checked for reliability using triangulation techniques and data analysis based on Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2018).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This bilateral cooperation is quite broad and covers many fields, such as trade, investment, technology, infrastructure, energy, security, etc. In 2020, trade between Indonesia and Japan reached 28.7 billion US dollars, while Japanese investment in Indonesia reached 4.1 billion US dollars. Apart from that, Indonesia and Japan also have many cooperation programs in the fields of education, science and technology, arts and culture, and security (Setiawan et al., 2022). In 2020, Indonesia and Japan signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoU) between the Indonesian Ministry of Health and the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in the health sector which has 7 focuses signed on October 19, 2020, virtually. This collaboration is motivated by national priorities to strengthen the public health system against pandemics. The MOU may also include determining the number of vaccines to be donated or purchased, determining affordable prices, vaccine distribution agreements, as well as cooperation in research and development of new vaccines. However, every collaboration in the field of health and vaccine diplomacy has different agreements and regulations depending on the countries involved.

Indonesia collaborates with Japan, which is considered a strategic partner. On quarter 4 2022, it is known that Japan is the fourth largest foreign investment country in Indonesia amounting to US\$3,563 million (KBRI TOKYO, 2023). Baskara said that Japan has technological strength, and nothing is too different in terms of culture, manners and politics, so Indonesia feels comfortable working with Japan. Indonesia has carried out various collaborations with Japan, including the ASEAN-Japan partnership, APEC, RCEP, and Japan appreciates the achievements of Indonesia and ASEAN in creating a zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality.

The capability to achieve state goals through bilateral cooperation in procuring the Covid-19 vaccine means that Indonesia has the desire to achieve vaccination sovereignty, namely the ability to produce the COVID-19 vaccine independently. In this case, Indonesia has developed vaccine production capabilities through collaboration with other parties, including Japan, to increase domestic vaccine production capacity. Indonesia has a foreign policy that encourages cooperation

with other countries, including Japan, in various fields including health. In the context of procuring the COVID-19 vaccine, Indonesia is taking advantage of bilateral relations with Japan to obtain support in terms of vaccine production, distribution and access. Although Indonesia faces challenges in health infrastructure, the country has made efforts to increase the capacity and accessibility of the health system. In collaboration with Japan, Indonesia can obtain technical support and knowledge in strengthening health infrastructure related to the procurement and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Yanuar said that Indonesia had already collaborated in the health sector with Japan before the pandemic, which was involved in the research sector. Starting from research on microbes, research on medicine, but research on medicine in a bilateral context is sometimes hampered by certification because certification in each country is different, even though international standards have been met. Indonesia is collaborating with Japan to look for antiviral medication, including AVIGAN which is produced by Toyama Chemical, a subsidiary of Fujifilm. This collaboration involves intense communication between the Indonesian Embassy in Tokyo, the Ministry, and medicine companies in Indonesia such as Kimia Farna, Indofarma, and Dexa Medica. The aim is to ensure the supply of medicines needed to treat the Covid-19 virus. Baskara also stated that the AVIGAN medicines contain favipiravir. AVIGAN is only used if other antiviral medicines are not effective in treating influenza or if there is a new influenza virus outbreak. Cooperation between the two countries is also inseparable from their respective capabilities.

Baskara said that Japan has advantages in technology and capabilities in terms of medicines. Indonesia has difficulty making medicines due to a lack of research and raw materials. In the context of procuring the COVID-19 vaccine, Indonesia is taking advantage of bilateral relations with Japan to obtain support in terms of vaccine production, distribution, and access. Based on the results of interviews, it was found that it was difficult for Indonesia at that time to ensure the availability of vaccines for all Indonesian people, even ensuring that medicines were also difficult. Therefore, Indonesia needs supplies from abroad or other countries which means Indonesia must be able to make trade deals. With Indonesia's vast area and high population, this could be a threat for Indonesia to ensure that all people can get vaccines. Yanuar said that Indonesia has quite a large dependency because without assistance from other countries, meeting vaccine needs will be late, not to mention distribution, considering Indonesia's geographical conditions, is quite difficult, and must have a number of vaccines equivalent to Indonesia's population. This was also supported by Teuku who said that there was a strong need for international cooperation in the pharmacology, medical and hospital industries which were experiencing limitations and could even be said to be experiencing a crisis at that time.

Teuku said that the cooperation between Indonesia and Japan during the Covid-19 pandemic gave the impression that Indonesia was being helped, but they were helping each other because Japan, after all, needed a market for its products in the future and for this reason, cooperation with Indonesia could indirectly secure its market later. How great the Japanese industry is, it also needs a market. With goals with Indonesia, it also easily targets other developing countries. This is a win-win collaboration, then the results are good, so first Indonesia gets supervision but then biopharma can synergize with pharmacology companies, Indonesian companies in Japan.

Indonesia-Japan cooperation in the COVID-19 vaccination program also aims to maintain regional and global stability. Through this goal, COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy cooperation between Indonesia and Japan can bring benefits to both countries and the global community in efforts to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen bilateral relations between Indonesia and Japan. Yanuar said that all countries carry out what is called vaccine diplomacy but only different in size. Vaccine diplomacy is often compared to the amount of assistance that a country provides to other countries. In this context, Japan, as a country that is quite well-known for providing a lot of assistance through development agencies, uses health cooperation or vaccination assistance as part of vaccine diplomacy.

Based on a written notification issued by the PPID Ministry of Foreign Affairs on April 25, 2023, with application number 040/03/2023/FPI, Japan and Indonesia have several forms of cooperation in providing the COVID-19 vaccine, namely in April 2021, Japan provided assistance amounting to 1.1 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine to Indonesia to help speed up the vaccination program in Indonesia. Japan has aided with 6,875,080 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine for Indonesia, with details of 2,161,240 doses, received on 1 and 15 July 2021. Then 1,990,910 doses, received on 19-22 October 2021. Finally, 2,722,930 doses, received on January 15-19 2022. Then there are several further collaborations. Collaboration on Covid-19 virus research between ITB and RIMD Osaka University as a follow-up to the MoC in the Health sector. This collaboration aims to accelerate the production and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. Several Japanese companies have also expressed interest in collaborating with Indonesia in the health sector, including Shionogi with plans to collaborate on vaccine clinical trials, including technology transfer and production. Mitsui with investment plans to develop the health tourism sector in Bali.

Kyosei submitted an investment plan to develop health centers, hospitals, and diagnostic clinics in Indonesia. Apart from vaccines, Japan also provided assistance in the form of medical equipment, including AEON Group with 5 Oxygen Generator units worth 50 million Yen (Rp. 6.5 billion) for various facilities and health in Indonesia. UNOPS provided 2800 Oxygen Concentrators worth USD 5.6 million. Vaccine diplomacy requires cooperation and accommodation (Muhamin et al., 2021, p. 147). Indonesia and Japan have quite close bilateral relations, and one of the basic principles of this relationship is reciprocal cooperation. This is reflected in cooperation in the COVID-19 vaccination program where the two countries help each other, both in providing vaccines, technical support, and increasing vaccine production capacity. Indonesia and Japan have established a strategic partnership since 2006, which aims to increase cooperation in various fields. In terms of the COVID-19 vaccination program, this strategic partnership is reflected in Japan's support in providing vaccines and helping increase domestic vaccine production capacity. Friendship between Indonesia and Japan is also an important value in establishing bilateral relations.

Despite threats such as the spread of the virus and new variants, limitations in vaccine production and access, as well as economic and social uncertainty, cooperation between Indonesia and Japan can overcome these challenges. By sharing information, technology transfer, vaccine assistance, cooperation in vaccine production, research and development, and economic partnerships, the two countries can work together to control the spread of the virus, accelerate vaccine production and distribution, and restore the economy. This cooperation is based on the principle of mutual benefit and joint problem solving. Indonesia and Japan support each other in achieving their goals regarding independent vaccination, health, and economic recovery, and increasing capacity in dealing with the global health crisis.

Through this collaboration, Indonesia and Japan hope to accelerate the vaccination program in Indonesia and strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries.

## CONCLUSION

Vaccine diplomacy between Indonesia and Japan is a concrete example of bilateral cooperation in efforts to obtain and supply the Covid-19 vaccine. Through this collaboration, the two countries share resources and support each other to achieve a common goal, namely ensuring the availability of vaccines for the community. Vaccine diplomacy between Indonesia and Japan is a clear example of the application of bilateral cooperation and vaccine diplomacy. Through bilateral cooperation, the two countries seek to fulfill national and humanitarian interests by using vaccine diplomacy as an instrument in achieving common goals.

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