
**Upholding Multilateralism: Indonesia's Foreign Policy in Responding to
Covid-19 Pandemic**

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JURNAL ILMIAH HUBUNGAN INTERNASIONAL
Parahyangan Centre for International Studies (PACIS)
Parahyangan Catholic University
Bandung

ISSN: 1693-556x

E-ISSN: 2406-8748

VOLUME 18 No. 1

Hal. 29 - 54

<https://doi.org/10.26593/jihi.v18i1.5255.29-54>

Upholding Multilateralism: Indonesia's Foreign Policy in Responding to Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The 2019 Novel Coronavirus disease or Covid-19 has apparently become a new global challenge. Not only did the pandemic drive all actors to make response but it also affected the relations among them. That Indonesia raised multilateralism in the unprecedented situation while more unilateral or populist actions taken by a number of states encouraged this research. This paper attempts to explain Indonesia's foreign policy in upholding multilateralism to respond to the COVID-19 during the first year of the pandemic. Such response was intended to mitigate the impacts caused by the pandemic. This research applied holistic constructivism in understanding the determinants of Indonesia's foreign policy by investigating both domestic and international cause. This research utilized the qualitative method with an explanatory analysis. The findings show that such Indonesia's foreign policy was driven by its identity constructed by both indigenous norm of 'Gotong Royong' and global norm of 'International Health Regulation'. The norm-laden or identity-based foreign policy was leading it to uphold multilateralism which was considered appropriate in order to coordinate, collaborate and cooperate with international communities. In addition, Indonesia maintained its trust on and support to the World Health Organization as the most leading actor in health governance championing fight against the pandemic. This paper argues that the norm factors do matter in Indonesia's foreign policy in facing uncertainties in the vulnerable and interconnected world. Through the case studied, this paper suggests that looking at the domestic actors as well as the state in international system help provide a better understanding on the state behavior in international relations.

Keywords: Gotong royong; International Health Regulation; multilateralism; constructivist.

ABSTRAK

Wabah penyakit Novel Coronavirus 2019 atau Covid-19 telah menjadi tantangan global baru. Pandemi Covid-19 tidak hanya mendorong semua aktor untuk merespon, tetapi juga mempengaruhi hubungan di antara mereka. Bahwa Indonesia mengangkat multilateralisme pada sebuah situasi yang belum pernah terjadi sebelumnya sementara tindakan yang lebih sepihak atau populis dilakukan oleh sejumlah negara lain mendorong penulis untuk melakukan penelitian ini. Tulisan ini menjelaskan kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia dalam mengedepankan multilateralisme untuk merespons COVID-19 selama tahun pertama pandemi tersebut. Respons tersebut dimaksudkan untuk memitigasi dampak yang ditimbulkan oleh pandemi. Penelitian ini menerapkan konstruktivisme holistik dalam memahami determinan politik luar negeri Indonesia dengan menyelidiki faktor domestik dan internasional. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan analisis eksplanatori. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia tersebut didorong oleh identitasnya yang dikonstruksikan oleh norma domestik 'gotong royong' dan norma global 'Peraturan Kesehatan Internasional'. Politik luar negeri yang sarat norma atau berbasis identitas mengarahkannya untuk mengedepankan multilateralisme yang dianggap tepat dalam rangka berkoordinasi, berkolaborasi dan bekerjasama dengan masyarakat internasional. Selain itu, Indonesia mempertahankan kepercayaan dan

dukungannya kepada Organisasi Kesehatan Dunia (WHO) sebagai aktor utama dalam tata kelola kesehatan untuk menghadapi pandemi. Tulisan ini berargumen bahwa faktor norma penting dalam menganalisis kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia menghadapi ketidakpastian di dunia yang rentan dan saling terhubung. Penulis menyarankan bahwa dengan melihat aktor domestik dan juga negara dalam sistem internasional, akan membantu memberikan pemahaman yang lebih baik dan komprehensif tentang perilaku negara dalam hubungan internasional.

Kata Kunci: Gotong royong, Regulasi Kesehatan Internasional, multilateralisme, konstruktivis

Introduction

Hardly do states neglect a disease outbreak somewhere in the globe inasmuch as it can spread beyond borders and turn to a global concern. Therefore, pandemic has been a rising issue either in international politics and security or in foreign policy since the end of Cold War. The international politics of transmissible disease emerges as a challenge in international relations.¹ The challenges are related to how states and other international actors reconfigure their policy and national interests' articulation—in term of health, education, security, politics, and economy—in response to the Covid-19.² According to Christine Riley et al the challenges consist of (1) no single reputable source of information and too much 'noise', (2) a lack of standards for how to measure and report data across countries, (3) variation in the content, implementation, and enforcement of policies, and (4) politics, instead of science, leading the efforts in pandemic management.³ It is urged for all international actors and world leaders to collaborate in a unified mission to decrease the imperative mortality of Covid-19. While Segun Oshewolo and Agaptus Nwozor suggested that pandemic be raising scientific awareness about national security dimensions,⁴ Christopher M. Weible et al.⁵ argued that post-pandemic phenomena are still understudied in policy sciences.

The study in this paper belongs to foreign policy with which state behaviors can be analyzed and foreign policy determinants can be explained. That while a number of states acted unilaterally in order to protect their citizens and save their economy in addition to blaming others and current global health system in the aftermath of Covid-19 outbreak even the United States (U.S.) for example.

Donald Trump was mentioned as “damaged [the] science and it could take decades to recover” by Jeff Tollefson in an article from Nature because his actions which was perceived to have exacerbated the pandemic that killed more than 200,000 people in the U.S., rolled back environment and public-health regulations and undermined science and scientific institutions which some of them could be permanent.⁶ Indonesia was one of the actors rejecting such populist trend. Instead, Indonesia complied with the existing international architecture emphasizing cooperation among states and international communities.

¹ Arry Bainus and Junita Budi Rachman, “Editorial: Pandemi Penyakit Menular (Covid-19) Hubungan Internasional,” *Intermestic: Journal of International Studies; Vol 4 No 2 (2020)* DO - 10.24198/Intermestic.V4n2.1, May 31, 2020, 111, <http://intermestic.unpad.ac.id/index.php/intermestic/article/view?path=>.

² Christine Riley, Bo Xie, and Anjum Khurshid, “Challenges Encountered in Comparing International Policy Responses to COVID-19 and Their Effects,” *Health Research Policy and Systems* 19, no. 1 (2021): 134, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-021-00783-1>.

³ Riley, Xie, and Khurshid.

⁴ Segun Oshewolo and Agaptus Nwozor, “COVID-19: Projecting the National Security Dimensions of Pandemics,” *Strategic Analysis* 44, no. 3 (May 3, 2020): 269, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2020.1767911>.

⁵ C M Weible et al., “COVID-19 and the Policy Sciences: Initial Reactions and Perspectives,” *Policy Sciences* 53, no. 2 (2020): 237, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-020-09381-4>.

⁶ Jeff Tollefson, “How Trump Damaged Science — and Why It Could Take Decades to Recover,” *Nature*, 2020, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02800-9>.

The 2019 Novel Coronavirus disease or so-called Covid-19 which formerly was just a local contagious virus-caused pneumonia was believed to have first emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan in the end December 2019. It was officially reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) of China country office on 7 January 2020⁷ and then characterized as a pandemic by the WHO on 11 March 2020.⁸ By the end of April 2020, the virus was reported to have spread to over 200 states.⁹

State governments in the world had to choose a difficult option between a large number of deaths and economic collapse by whether or not to impose lockdowns.¹⁰ The Covid-19 affected domestic politics and relations among states in addition to disrupting economy globally. The situation could be best displayed by domestic pro-con protests and tight security measures in a number of states, distrust on international regimes and organizations, slowing economic growths and even recession threat either in developed or in developing states. So did the pandemic intensify the ongoing tension between two giants; the U.S. and China¹¹ and their competition for the post-Covid-19 global leadership.¹² Consequently, humanitarian aids during the pandemic were frequently politicized regarding the competitions between the two blocks.¹³

The Indonesian President Joko Widodo officially announced the first two confirmed COVID-19 cases of citizens on 3 March 2020.¹⁴ Criticisms and doubts rose as the Indonesian government could have announced the confirmed cases earlier while the virus was crippling China, Republic of Korea (ROK) and Iran in January and February 2020.¹⁵ Indonesia has been one of the most affected in term of both confirmed cases and deaths in Southeast Asia since then. Indonesia was suffering from the economic loss due to restriction of domestic businesses. So were Indonesian overseas both migrants and students affected as foreign governments issued the temporary, strict policies targeting foreign nationals.

As the Covid-19 was inevitable and all states were hit, Indonesia was actively responding to it. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) predicted that Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous state, would suffer greatly and need longer time to recover.¹⁶ Just like other natural disasters, Klaus Dodds et al. suggested that the pandemic unveil the uneven capacity among states to respond and allow others

⁷ Mayusef Sukmana, Muhammad Aminuddin, and Dwi Nopriyanto, "Indonesian Government Response In COVID-19 Disaster Prevention," *East African Scholars Journal of Medical Sciences* 3, no. 3 (March 15, 2020): 81, <https://doi.org/10.36349/EASMS.2020.v03i03.025>.

⁸ Wasiu Abiodun Balogun and Oluwaseun Soile, "'Pandemic Diplomacy' and The Politics of Paradox: International Cooperation in The Age of Distancing," *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences* 19, no. COVID-19 Special Issue (October 31, 2020): 415, <https://doi.org/10.21547/JSS.780792>.

⁹ Javad Yoosefi Lebni et al., "How the COVID-19 Pandemic Effected Economic, Social, Political, and Cultural Factors: A Lesson from Iran," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 67, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764020939984>.

¹⁰ Damien Bol et al., "The Effect of COVID-19 Lockdowns on Political Support: Some Good News for Democracy?," *European Journal of Political Research* 60, no. 2 (May 1, 2021): 1, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12401>.

¹¹ Seth Schindler, Nicholas Jepson, and Wenxing Cui, "Covid-19, China and the Future of Global Development," *Research in Globalization* 2 (2020): 1, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2020.100020>; J.J. Zhang and V.R. Savage, "The Geopolitical Ramifications of COVID-19: The Taiwanese Exception," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 2020, 465–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2020.1779773>.

¹² Md. Saifullah Akon and Mahfujur Rahman, "Reshaping the Global Order in the Post COVID-19 Era: A Critical Analysis," *Chinese Journal of International Review* 02, no. 01 (June 1, 2020): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1142/S2630531320500067>.

¹³ Michael Dunford and Bing Qi, "Global Reset: COVID-19, Systemic Rivalry and the Global Order," *Research in Globalization* 2 (2020): 6, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2020.100021>.

¹⁴ Shindy Diah Ayu Lestari, "Pandemic Of Covid-19 in Indonesia: Social Politics Perspective (Pandemi Covid-19 Di Indonesia: Perspektif Sosial Politik)," *ETNOREFLIKA: Jurnal Sosial Dan Budaya* 10, no. 1 (February 27, 2021): 40, <https://doi.org/10.33772/ETNOREFLIKA.V10I1.915>.

¹⁵ Marcus Mietzner, "Populist Anti-Scientism, Religious Polarisation, and Institutionalised Corruption: How Indonesia's Democratic Decline Shaped Its COVID-19 Response," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 39, no. 2 (August 1, 2020): 228, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103420935561>.

¹⁶ Riyanti Djalante et al., "Review and Analysis of Current Responses to COVID-19 in Indonesia: Period of January to March 2020," *Progress in Disaster Science* 6 (2020): 2, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pdisas.2020.100091>.

to seek profits from such situation.¹⁷ So did the pandemic expose deep socio-economic inequalities within states especially migrants and lower income communities.¹⁸

On the other hand, Indonesia was upholding multilateralism in its foreign policy which was not only determined by its interests alone. Indonesia commenced to carry out multilateralism as soon as it gained its independence. The involvement in the Non-Alliance Movement could be its best post-colonial experience. The practice of multilateralism was conducted through various leaderships despite differing foreign policy orientations. When the Covid-19 became a global issue, similar policy was still a preference under President Joko Widodo.

At the 2019 annual speech of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Minister Retno L.P. Marsudi explicitly said, "Indonesia will continue to work in multilateral setting in spite of the fact that the value of multilateralism is under pressure."¹⁹ The statement was made in the middle of the pessimistic trend on multilateralism shown by the U.S. in responding to the COVID-19. In addition, there was also increasing questions from rising actors in the Global South on the legitimacy of international architecture which benefitted the U.S. and the West in conserving their influence.²⁰ However, Indonesia was still committed to the track of multilateralism which was invested within its foreign policy. The foreign policy making was driven by ideational instead of material factors such as power and economic capability.

Literature Review

There exists some literature discussing health issues in both regional and international level. Securitizing infectious diseases by states and international organizations was studied by a number of scholars such as Sarah E. Davies, and Melissa G. Curley and Jonathan Herington.²¹ Meanwhile, Sarah E. Davies, Adam Kamradt-Scott and S. Rushton studied the role of norm in international practices regarding health issues.²² The emergence of new health threats led to the implementation of 2005 International Health Regulation (IHR) as a new international norm.²³ The study investigated the role of the WHO's norm entrepreneurship in order to ensure its member states to comply with the new norm.²⁴ In another study, Kamradt-Scott revealed the role of smaller group within the WHO in successfully introducing and preserving the norm of utilizing non-government information sources in

¹⁷ Klaus Dodds et al., "The COVID-19 Pandemic: Territorial, Political and Governance Dimensions of the Crisis," *Territory, Politics, Governance* 8, no. 3 (May 26, 2020): 290, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2020.1771022>.

¹⁸ R Djalante et al., "COVID-19 and ASEAN Responses: Comparative Policy Analysis," *Progress in Disaster Science* 8 (2020): 11, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pdisas.2020.100129>.

¹⁹ Retno LP Marsudi, "Cooperation: The Catalyst for Fighting the COVID-19 Crisis - Opinion - The Jakarta Post," *The Jakarta Post*, March 25, 2020, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2020/03/24/cooperation-the-catalyst-for-fighting-the-covid-19-crisis.html> at Jakarta Post.

²⁰ Jürgen Rüländ, "The Rise of 'Diminished Multilateralism': East Asian and European Forum Shopping in Global Governance," *Asia Europe Journal* 9, no. 2 (2012): 255–70, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-012-0311-9>.

²¹ Sara E Davies, "Securitizing Infectious Disease," *International Affairs* 84, no. 2 (March 1, 2008): 295–313, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2008.00704.x>; Melissa G Curley and Jonathan Herington, "The Securitisation of Avian Influenza: International Discourses and Domestic Politics in Asia," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 1 (2011): 141–66, <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1017/S0260210510000537>.

²² Adam Kamradt-Scott, "The WHO Secretariat, Norm Entrepreneurship, and Global Disease Outbreak Control," *Journal of International Organization Studies* 1 (January 1, 2010); Sara E Davies, Adam Kamradt-Scott, and S Rushton, *Disease Diplomacy: International Norms and Global Health Security* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2015); A Ferhani and S Rushton, "The International Health Regulations, COVID-19, and Bordering Practices: Who Gets in, What Gets out, and Who Gets Rescued?," *Contemporary Security Policy* 41, no. 3 (2020): 458–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2020.1771955>.

²³ Davies, Kamradt-Scott, and Rushton, *Disease Diplomacy: International Norms and Global Health Security*; Kamradt-Scott, "The WHO Secretariat, Norm Entrepreneurship, and Global Disease Outbreak Control"; Ferhani and Rushton, "The International Health Regulations, COVID-19, and Bordering Practices: Who Gets in, What Gets out, and Who Gets Rescued?"

²⁴ Davies, Kamradt-Scott, and Rushton, *Disease Diplomacy: International Norms and Global Health Security*; Kamradt-Scott, "The WHO Secretariat, Norm Entrepreneurship, and Global Disease Outbreak Control"; Ferhani and Rushton, "The International Health Regulations, COVID-19, and Bordering Practices: Who Gets in, What Gets out, and Who Gets Rescued?"

the revised IHR.²⁵ The global cooperation along with the influence of donors was studied by Devi Sridhar and Ngaire Woods.²⁶ The study showed that donors could redirect the international organizations to fight specific diseases.²⁷

The studies on Asian States regarding health issues were conducted by David P. Fidler²⁸, Sarah E. Davies²⁹, Shahar Hameiri (2014) and Clare Wenham³⁰. Fidler suggested that Asian normative ideas encourage their participation and contribution to global health diplomacy and governance.³¹ Davies argued that having hit by previous infectious diseases created a strong will among the Southeast Asia states for cooperation in responding to public health emergencies.³² Further, Davies found a number of East Asian states' compliance with the reporting of the infectious avian influenza despite their sovereignty.³³ Indonesia was included in the study and it was once the state with the highest human infections. However, Indonesia's compliance with the reporting was contrast to its decision over the viral sharing dispute with the WHO. Hameiri argued that Indonesia asserted sovereignty to justify ceasing the virus-sharing was merely domestic actors' struggles to gain their political goals.³⁴ On the other hand, Murray Hiebert noted that Indonesia attempted to play more serious role to step up global health diplomacy and specifically demanded a guarantee from the WHO that international cooperation would benefit lower income states especially in accessing affordable vaccine of the bird flu³⁵. While, Wenham examined Thailand's ambitions to dominate the normative process of disease control in mainland Southeast Asia.³⁶

Indonesia's foreign policy and regional diplomacy by some states towards Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic were studied by a number of scholars such as Asep Setiawan, and Adiasri Putri Purbantina and Renitha Dwi Hapsari respectively.³⁷ While Indonesia's inward looking foreign policy was raised in order to save its citizens and build cooperation regarding the health crisis situation and its effects on economic slowdown,³⁸ the ROK and Japan's health diplomacy towards Indonesia was driven by health and economic recovery interests.³⁹

²⁵ Kamradt-Scott, "The WHO Secretariat, Norm Entrepreneurship, and Global Disease Outbreak Control."

²⁶ Devi Sridhar and Ngaire Woods, "Trojan Multilateralism: Global Cooperation in Health," *Global Policy* 4, no. 4 (November 1, 2013): 325–35, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12066>.

²⁷ Sridhar and Woods.

²⁸ David P Fidler, "Asia's Participation in Global Health Diplomacy and Global Health Governance," *Asian Journal of WTO & International Health Law and Policy* 5, no. 2 (2010), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1729455#references-widget.

²⁹ Sara E Davies, "The International Politics of Disease Reporting: Towards Post-Westphalianism?," *International Politics* 49, no. 5 (2012): 591–613, <https://doi.org/10.1057/ip.2012.19>; Davies, Kamradt-Scott, and Rushton, *Disease Diplomacy: International Norms and Global Health Security*; Sara E Davies, *Containing Contagion: The Politics of Disease Outbreaks in Southeast Asia* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2019).

³⁰ C Wenham, "Regionalizing Health Security: Thailand's Leadership Ambitions in Mainland Southeast Asian Disease Control," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 40, no. 1 (2018): 126–51.

³¹ Fidler, "Asia's Participation in Global Health Diplomacy and Global Health Governance."

³² Davies, *Containing Contagion: The Politics of Disease Outbreaks in Southeast Asia*.

³³ Davies, "The International Politics of Disease Reporting: Towards Post-Westphalianism?"

³⁴ Shahar Hameiri, "Avian Influenza, 'Viral Sovereignty', and the Politics of Health Security in Indonesia," *The Pacific Review* 27, no. 3 (May 27, 2014): 333–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2014.909523>.

³⁵ Murray Hiebert, "Indonesia Steps Up Global Health Diplomacy: Bolsters Role in Addressing International Medical Challenges," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2013, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/indonesia-steps-global-health-diplomacy>.

³⁶ Wenham, "Regionalizing Health Security: Thailand's Leadership Ambitions in Mainland Southeast Asian Disease Control."

³⁷ Asep Setiawan, "Politik Luar Negeri Indonesia Era Covid-19: Penyelamatan dan Kerjasama," *Independen: Jurnal Politik Indonesia Dan Global* 1 (September 1, 2020): 65–74, <https://doi.org/10.24853/independen.1.2.65-74>; Adiasri Putri Purbantina and Renitha Dwi Hapsari, "Diplomasi Kesehatan Di Era Pandemi Global: Analisa Bantuan Penanganan Covid-19 Dari Negara Jepang Dan Korea Selatan Ke Indonesia," *Global and Policy Journal of International Relations* 8, no. 01 (July 9, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.33005/JGP.V8I01.2167>.

³⁸ Setiawan, "Politik Luar Negeri Indonesia Era Covid-19: Penyelamatan dan Kerjasama."

³⁹ Purbantina and Hapsari, "Diplomasi Kesehatan Di Era Pandemi Global: Analisa Bantuan Penanganan Covid-19 Dari Negara Jepang Dan Korea Selatan Ke Indonesia," 10.

The literature confirms that norms have played significant roles in international relations regarding the infectious disease issues affecting actor behaviors in term of either political struggle or cooperation. However, neither of the studies describes nor explains Indonesia's behavior in addressing the Covid-19. Furthermore, the study on Indonesia's foreign policy in addressing the Covid-19 is still rare due to the fact that the pandemic issue is still new and most states are still struggling to deal with it. The study by Asep Setiawan slightly relates to this research describing Indonesia's behavior and policy in responding to the pandemic⁴⁰. However, the study only saw tangible national interest as the only driver of Indonesia's foreign policy. Meanwhile, this paper suggests that such interest be constructed by values, norms, ideas, and identity. We propose that Indonesia's multilateralism in regard to Covid-19 response is constructed by those values, norms, ideas, and identity—which we pack up as 'gotong royong' and the IHR.

This paper would narrow the gap and focus on the role of both domestic and international norms in Indonesia's foreign policy. This paper provides the answer to question "Why did Indonesia raise multilateralism in its foreign policy in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic?" This paper aims to explain Indonesia's foreign policy in upholding multilateralism in responding to the pandemic in addition to the drivers of its multilateralism. This research was limited on the Indonesia's foreign policy during the pandemic in 2020. This paper contributes to understanding Indonesia's foreign policy and behavior during difficult or challenging situations not limited to the pandemic.

Methodology

This research applied the qualitative method with an explanatory analysis. It was a library research in which a range of recorded data such as journal articles, research papers, scholarly commentaries and other relevant online sources were collected. So was this research benefitted from information provided in the institutional website of MoFA as well as officials' statements and writings in explaining Indonesia's foreign policy to respond to the COVID-19. The data were analysed through the Miles and Huberman's interactive model consisting of four steps; collecting data, reducing data, displaying data and drawing conclusion⁴¹. The application of method can be seen as following:

Firstly, collecting data. An amount of information on the COVID-19 and Indonesia's response was collected. Secondly, reducing data. Data were sorted out in order to raise critical questions so that the issue became specific. Meanwhile, the unnecessary data were taken aside. The critical questions led to Indonesia's foreign policy in responding to the pandemic. Thirdly, displaying data. At this stage, pieces of information were organized so that an early conclusion could be drawn. However, collecting and reducing data still continued simultaneously. The last, verification. The conclusion appeared clear and strong after the researchers found meanings in addition to recording regularities, explanatory patterns, configurations, causalities and propositions. This research found that the factor of identity constructed by domestic and global norm drove Indonesia to raise multilateralism in its foreign policy in responding to the Covid-19.

This research applied the holistic constructivist approach of international relations. Ian Hurd⁴² includes several features of constructivism; first, it is an alternative to materialism. Unlike the materialist approach such as neorealism and neoliberalism which believe in military power, strategic resources or other causes of direct outcomes in world politics, the constructivist approach embraces that the world is socially constructed depending on the web of meanings and practices among actors. Second, state interests are constructed. Social relations play important role in shaping actor

⁴⁰ Setiawan, "Politik Luar Negeri Indonesia Era Covid-19: Penyelamatan Dan Kerjasama."

⁴¹ Matthew B Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook, 2nd Ed.* (London: SAGE Publications Inc, 1994).

⁴² "The Ethics of Constructivism," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc, 2008), 300–305.

perceptions and identities which contribute to interest construction. Third, structure and agents are mutually constituted. While state actions affect norm and institution making, they affect to defining, socializing and influencing states and both can be redefined. Fourth, multiple logics of anarchy are present. The anarchic structure is not natural and permanent, it depends on the ideas of actors whether they see others as enemies and rivals or friends instead. The structure changes provided that ideas change.

The constructivist approach emphasizes the role of non-material drivers such as whether they are ideas, norms, cultures and historical legacies which contribute to shaping actor identities and behaviors. In addition, Simon Koschut⁴³ suggests the importance of shared emotion allowing political actors to participate in international politics. The rise of constructivism mainstreams norms as efficacious explanatory variables in analyzing world politics.⁴⁴ Consequently, the foreign policy study recognizes the importance of norms in policy making determining either cooperations or conflicts. Peter J. Katzenstein⁴⁵ defines norms as “collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity.” Norms have both constitutive and regulative function. While the former means that norms act as the rules which determine actions causing ‘relevant others’ recognize their peculiar identities, the latter means that norms act as the standards which prescribe proper behaviors according to such defined identities.⁴⁶

Identities are constructed through the norms coming from either internal or external environment or both. While the systemic constructivism believes in the role of international norms thanks to the interactions between states and the unit-level constructivism believes in domestic norms affecting domestic actors’ identities, the holistic constructivism bridges the two in which both sorts of norms contribute to such identity construction. The holistic constructivist framework of construction between normative structure and actor can be seen as following:

⁴³ “The Power of (Emotion) Words: On the Importance of Emotions for Social Constructivist Discourse Analysis in IR,” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 21, no. 3 (2018): 495–522, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-017-0086-0>.

⁴⁴ Martin Weber, “Between ‘Is’ and ‘Ought’: IR Constructivism, Critical Theory, and the Challenge of Political Philosophy,” *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 2 (January 4, 2013): 516–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066112466573>.

⁴⁵ “Introduction: Alternative Perspective on National Security,” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. P.J Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

⁴⁶ R.I Jepperson, Alexander Wend, and P.J Katzenstein, “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security,” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

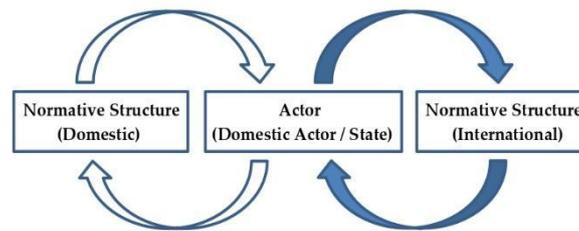


Figure 1. Holistic Constructivist Framework of Normative Structure and Actor Construction

Source: Author's own visualization, adapted from M M Nia, 'A Holistic Constructivist Approach to Iran's Foreign Policy', *International Journal of Business and Society*, 2.4 (2011); M Alexandrov, 'The Concept of State Identity in International Relations: A Theoretical Analysis', 2003.

Despite the fact that each constructivist approach portrays different ideas on norms and actor identities, they arrive at the same principle of norm and identity theory; norms refer to the environment's cultural and regulative contents; on the other hand, identities refer to the actor cultural representation shaped by such environment.⁴⁷ In other words as Maxym Alexandrov⁴⁸ proposed, state identity is "a set of broadly accepted representations of state, in particular in its relation to other states, together with the corresponding beliefs about the appropriate behavior, rights or responsibilities."

This research emphasized the role of domestic norm and actor as well as global norm in creating Indonesia's identity. A domestic norm contributes to the construction of domestic actor's identity which then represents state identity. Gotong royong (mutual cooperation) was the domestic norm and the MoFA was the main actor in constructing Indonesia's identity. As a collective expectation, indigenous value of gotong royong guided the MoFA to issue foreign policy decision; multilateralism which was proper in addressing the Covid-19. Its commitment to such practice could be seen through its reoccurring practices and the information stated in its website as well as its officials' statements and writings.

Despite our argument that the MoFA was the most apparent actor in Indonesia's foreign policy in responding to the Covid-19, other domestic branches of government such as the President, the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Parliament also played important role in boldening the MoFA's commitment to the indigenous norm and multilateralism. The perspective is in line with the characteristic of foreign policy in democratic states in which foreign policy making is an arena of involvement for diverse actors.

The idea and practice of multilateralism were not solely constructed by the elements within domestic level. In addition, the international normative structure resulted in by interactions among states played a significant role in constructing Indonesia's identity. As an active member of the WHO, Indonesia already showed its commitment to the IHR as moral principles and a guidance when facing the international public health concern. Embracing the IHR meant that Indonesia was supposed to share responsibility and work together with other actors against any threat of globally transmitted infectious disease. Multilateralism was taken by Indonesia as it was encouraged by the IHR. Furthermore, multilateralism had a number of success experiences since the end of Cold War. Multilateral norms and institutions helped bring about stabilization and management of regional and global changes in today's world system.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Jepperson, Wend, and Katzenstein.

⁴⁸ "The Concept of State Identity in International Relations: A Theoretical Analysis," 2003, 38.

⁴⁹ John Gerard Ruggie, "Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution," *International Organization* 46, no. 3 (1992): 561, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2706989>.

As strongly embraced by the constructivist approach, only if an actor realizes its identity can it determine its interest and role or behavior. In order to respond to the Covid-19, Indonesia was keeping up with international collaboration and cooperation driven by its norm-based identity. Meanwhile, to uphold multilateralism, Indonesia played a number of roles such as maintaining trust on and support to the WHO and engaging within global and regional frameworks. That Indonesia had right and responsibility protecting its citizens and mitigating economic impacts as well as cooperating with other actors either regionally or internationally was deemed appropriate in accordance with its identity.

Analysis

a. Drivers of Indonesia's Multilateralism

Indonesia's multilateralism was initially expressed in 1945 Constitution Preamble and implemented in the 1955 Bandung Asia-Africa Conference. Indonesia encouraged the spirit of non-alliance among the post-colonial nations. These are significant precedents within Indonesia's foreign policy which emphasized on multilateralism and international solidarity.

John Gerard Ruggie refers multilateralism as "coordinating relations among three or more states in accordance with certain principles."⁵⁰ Similarly, Fen Osler Hampson and Paul Heinbecker defines multilateralism as "collectively agreed norms, rules and principles guiding and governing interstate behavior," while the generalized reciprocity principles are the basis of multilateral institutions.⁵¹ In other words, multilateralism means cooperation among states which are encouraged by mutual understanding and shared values frequently facilitated by international organizations and institutions. This paper suggests that Indonesia's multilateralism in responding to the COVID-19 be driven by a couple of norms, namely gotong royong and the IHR. Not only was it a political decision but it also became another institution (a set of norm and practice) in Indonesia's foreign policy.

Gotong royong is an indigenous institution of communality among Indonesian valued even before the republic modern time. Koentjaraningrat⁵² categorizes gotong royong into 'spontaneous help' and 'mutual assistance'; while the former occurs generally in collective activities in a variety of social aspects, the latter is based on the reciprocal principle either initiated by citizens or expressed as mutual cooperation. It is believed that both various common problems and community development activities could be solved easily and cheaply thanks to the existence of mutual assistance.⁵³

Gotong royong was constructed as a means of nation building by Indonesian founding fathers in times of the republic early inception as well. The spirit of gotong royong was believed to be incorporated in national ideology of Pancasila and to constitute the national political system. However, gotong royong played different roles during the Indonesian leadership in either domestic politics and foreign policy. I.A.A. Gde Agung⁵⁴ noted that the Indonesian first president Soekarno once utilized gotong royong to justify his guided democracy and criticized those rejecting the idea of Nasakom (Nationalist-Religion-Communist). So did President Soekarno try to get advantage of gotong royong slogan in order to gain domestic support for his anti-imperialism and colonialism rhetoric within his active militant foreign policy.⁵⁵ During President Soeharto's regime, despite less sounding, gotong royong was valued to strengthen the concept of integralist state in which rulers and the ruled should be in harmony instead of conflict. The top-down governance style was deemed a typical authoritarian

⁵⁰ Ruggie, "Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution," 568.

⁵¹ "The 'New' Multilateralism of the Twenty-First Century," *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 17, no. 3 (2011): 300, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-01703003>.

⁵² as cited in L.J Slikkerveer, "Gotong Royong: An Indigenous Institutions of Community and Mutual Assistance in Indonesia," in *Integrated Community Managed Development: Strategizing Indigenous Knowledge and Institutions for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Community Development*, ed. L.J. Slikkerveer (Cham: Springer, 2019), 308.

⁵³ Slikkerveer, 308.

⁵⁴ *Twenty Years Indonesian Foreign Policy 1945-1965* (De Gruyter Mouton, 1973), 283, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/9783111558226>.

⁵⁵ Agung, 283-84.

state in which people should support the government's domestic and foreign policy.

I.G. Wahyu Wicaksana argues that gotong royong is a fundamental force of Indonesian societal cohesion in which conflicts and disputes should be solved through conciliations constituted Indonesia as a family state.⁵⁶ The family state foreign policy has led it to cooperate with others and avoid conflicts post-Soeharto regime. Before elected as a President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo once reiterated the spirit of gotong royong in Indonesia's foreign policy within his vision "creating a sovereign, independent Indonesia."⁵⁷ The spirit of gotong royong would reflect Indonesia's foreign policy favoring the mutual assistance and win-win solution. Hence, multilateralism could be the most suitable decision when dealing with other international actors in a number of issues.

Multilateralism is a belief fitting the Indonesian indigenous value living for centuries among the people as the Indonesian Permanent Representative Mr. Dian Triansyah Djani stated at the April 2019 High-Level Meeting of the United Nations' General Assembly (HLM-UNGA) recorded in the MoFA's website:

*"Indonesia believes in multilateralism because for centuries we believe on the principle of gotong royong, loosely translated as working together, shoulder to shoulder for the greater good. Multilateralism is working together for the greater good, to face global challenges together."*⁵⁸

Multilateralism was infused in one of the MoFA's strategic purposes emphasizing the Indonesia's leadership and role in influential international cooperation.⁵⁹ In addition, the MoFA formed a directorate of multilateral affairs in order to be able to engage Indonesia's diplomacy more actively and effectively in multilateral affairs. The step was deemed necessary that Indonesia was taking into account multilateralism as an international practice as well as a belief. The officials' statements and strategic purpose could be evidences that multilateralism was a preference which was embraced by the MoFA as a state institution.

As the constructivist approach suggests, an actor's behavior is dependent on the norm-based identity. In the domestic level, Indonesia's multilateralism reflecting gotong royong was embraced and practiced by the MoFA. The norm was a basis of the MoFA's identity construction through which represented the state identity, interest and behavior. Ted Piccone noted that Indonesia already experienced a significant reorientation in its foreign policy due to the remarkable transformation to open and pluralist democracy following the regime change.⁶⁰ Despite the fact that democratization has also occurred to the foreign policy making institution during reformation era, Muhammad Hadiano Wirajuda in his dissertation "The Impact of Democratization on Indonesia's Foreign Policy" argues that the MoFA is still the most central body in Indonesian foreign policy making. Such situation enabled what the MoFA believed to be transformed into Indonesia's policy.⁶¹ By this explanation, we

⁵⁶ "The Family State: A Non-Realist Approach to Understanding Indonesia's Foreign Policy," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 27, no. 3 (September 2, 2019): 6–7, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02185377.2019.1686997>.

⁵⁷ R.L Pattiradjawane and N. Soebagio, "Global Maritime Axis: Indonesia, China, and a New Approach to Southeast Asian Regional Resilience," *International Journal of China Studies* 6, no. 2 (2015): 179.

⁵⁸ MoFA-RI, "International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Indonesia, April 24, 2019, <https://kemlu.go.id/newyork-un/en/read/statement-at-the-international-day-of-multilateralism-and-diplomacy-for-peace-high-level-meeting-of-the-general-assembly/2610/etc-menu>.

⁵⁹ MoFA-RI, "Strategic Purposes Of The Indonesian Foreign Policy (Accessed 1 August 2020) | Portal Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Indonesia, March 25, 2019, https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/19/halaman_list_lainnya/strategic-purposes-of-the-indonesian-foreign-policy (accessed 1 August 2020).

⁶⁰ Ted Piccone, "Do New Democracies Support Democracy? The Multilateral Dimension," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 4 (2011): 140, <https://doi.org/10.1353/JOD.2011.0063>.

⁶¹ "The Impact of Democratisation on Indonesia's Foreign Policy: Regional Cooperation" (The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2014), 77–78.

assumed and believed that the idea of 'gotong royong' fits in to our explanation of Indonesia's multilateralism as its approach to response and overcome the pandemic of Covid-19.

In addition to the MoFA's capability of constructing the state identity, this paper attempts not to ignore other executive bodies such as the President and the MoH in the Indonesian foreign policy. President Jokowi has repeatedly utilized the speech on gotong royong in fighting the Covid-19 in domestic level⁶² and called on close cooperation among states to tackle the pandemic⁶³. The MoFA's actions would not be independent from the president's approval as he acted as a head of the republic's government. The MoH also recorded a number of international engagements regarding global health issues⁶⁴. Thus, the MoH has been the important part of foreign policy making when it comes to health issues. In addition to executive body, the Indonesian parliament also demanded the MoFA to maximize Indonesia's diplomacy to defend multilateralism practice⁶⁵. Those actors' role played a part as the push factor strengthening the MoFA's commitment to the norm of gotong royong which then influenced the state preference on multilateralism.

The IHR was officially established in 1969 as a revision of the previously known the 1951 International Sanitary Regulation (ISR). The regulation was fundamentally revised in 2005 following the spread of new endemic diseases as well as viral outbreak in some parts of the world.⁶⁶ The regulation aims to:

“Prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade.”⁶⁷

The IHR is an international treaty upholding global cooperation to make the world more secured which is also often called a governing framework for global health security and the WHO is the one responsible to ensure its implementation among the member states. The regulation suggests that all states cooperate when facing a global threat of infectious disease.

The WHO requires the member states to develop and meet core capacities in the IHR such as to detect, assess, report and respond to potential public emergencies of international concern. In spite of aiming to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to international spread of disease, the IHR embraces a balancing dynamic of three things; public health, commerce and human rights.⁶⁸ It means that state domestic measures to tackle any infectious disease and other health

⁶² Desca LN and Rahmat Nasution, “Indonesia Needs Spirit of ‘gotong Royong’ in COVID-19 Fight: Jokowi,” Antara New, 2020, <https://en.antaranews.com/news/146268/indonesia-needs-spirit-of-gotong-royong-in-covid-19-fight-jokowi>.

⁶³ Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary for State Documents and Translation, “President Jokowi Calls for Close Cooperation among Countries to Tackle COVID-19,” Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary for State Documents and Translation, 2021, <https://setkab.go.id/en/president-jokowi-calls-for-close-cooperation-among-countries-to-handle-covid-19/>.

⁶⁴ Hiebert, “Indonesia Steps Up Global Health Diplomacy: Bolsters Role in Addressing International Medical Challenges.”

⁶⁵ Kiswondari, “DPR Minta Kemlu Maksimalkan Diplomasi Dalam Penanggulangan Covid-19,” Sindonews.com, 2020, <https://nasional.sindonews.com/read/78374/12/dpr-minta-kemlu-maksimalkan-diplomasi-dalam-penanggulangan-covid-19-1592878004>.

⁶⁶ Lawrence O Gostin and Rebecca Katz, “The International Health Regulations: The Governing Framework for Global Health Security,” *The Milbank Quarterly* 94, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 266–67, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.12186>.

⁶⁷ Uluslararası İlişkiler Konseyi and Dilaver Açar, *Global Governance and the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2021, 10, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.35706.31687>.

⁶⁸ Gostin and Katz, “The International Health Regulations: The Governing Framework for Global Health Security,” 267–68.

problem risks should be neither restrictive to international travel and trade nor harmful to human rights as written in a number of IHR's articles.

Indonesia has been complying with the revised IHR since 2007 and established its national commission for the implementation in 2011.⁶⁹ Indonesia announced its achievement to meet the IHR core capacity requirements in 2014.⁷⁰ The commitment to the preparedness from detecting to responding to the previous avian influenza, SARS and MERS-CoV could be examples of Indonesia's favor of the IHR.

This research not only viewed gotong royong as an Indonesian domestic norm but it also viewed the IHR as a global norm in relations between states and other international communities as suggested by the holistic constructivism. The WHO was the most important actor which encouraged the member states to adopt the IHR in their domestic efforts to handle any threat of infectious disease. As a norm entrepreneur, the health organization is at the forefront of international partnership including with Indonesia. In addition, Indonesia's experience in handling the previous infectious diseases strengthened its belief to be with the WHO and IHR. Handling the current Covid-19 could be a dilemma for Indonesia; saving domestic public health without harming international travel and trade. Nevertheless, the dynamic balance prescribed in the IHR was a value to which Indonesia was committed.

The global norm contributed to the construction of Indonesia's identity through interactions with other international actors as well as its interpretation of their behaviors. The identity led Indonesia to prefer multilateralism in responding to the Covid-19. Multilateralism which is a common good has been adopted by the United Nations (UN) as written in its charter. As the representation of states, the UN could be the most active body promoting multilateralism and the United Nations' General Assembly (UNGA) already adopted a resolution on the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace. Multilateralism is also a common value adopted by the European Union and emerging powers.⁷¹ So do small and developing states convey their concern on multilateral efforts in many challenging global issues. Considering the trend of multilateralism, Indonesia trusted that working with international institutions would more effectively solve global issues rather than with unilateral measures.

According to the constructivist approach, normative structure and state mutually constitute. This paper argues that Indonesia's identity was constructed by the domestic norm of gotong royong and international norm of IHR leading its foreign policy to embrace multilateralism. In other words, multilateralism was a collective expectation constructed by the state (and domestic actors). Upon realizing its norm-based identity, Indonesia had to consider what action was proper to respond to the Covid-19. In this case, taking multilateralism-laden foreign policy to mitigate the pandemic was Indonesia's preference.

b. Upholding Multilateralism to Mitigate the Covid-19

The Covid-19 is a global problem which has been affecting all states very quickly regardless their geographical distance, economic capability and preparedness. The actions of a few states

⁶⁹ Nyoman Kumara Rai et al., "Strengthening Emergency Preparedness and Response Systems: Experience from Indonesia," *WHO South-East Asia Journal of Public Health* 9, no. 1 (2020): 27, <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/331827>.

⁷⁰ Rai et al., 27.

⁷¹ Hans W Maull, "Multilateralism: Variants, Potential, Constraints and Conditions for Success," March (Berlin, 2020), 1.

ironically did not reflect constructive diplomacy since they tended to be uncoordinated and encouraged by the nationalistic sentiment instead of response as part of international society.⁷² One of the phenomena is state isolationism. In classical realism thoughts, it is rational for state to put forward its own national interest regarding to its consideration on anarchic international system and its struggle for power among other nations. This isolationism apparently has influenced and shaped—some of but not all—major powers' behaviors and policies toward Covid-19. United Kingdom is one of countries which applied some isolationist policy in response to Covid-19 regarding to the travel restrictions and visas suspension for immigrant workers.⁷³ Ralf Roloff also noted that a few European states took similar measures such as France, Italy and Spain at the beginning of the pandemic⁷⁴. Another example is related to 'vaccine nationalism' where states regulate agreements with its pharmaceutical sectors to only supply their own populations with vaccines ahead of them becoming available for others due to strong public and political pressures and fear of waning immunity.⁷⁵

While some countries exhibit characteristics of isolationism, endangering the health and food supply chains that are currently required to combat the effect of the Covid-19, it shows that many other states are doing the exact opposite, reaching out through international cooperation, and seeing the benefits of internationalism rather than isolationism. No exception for Indonesia, which realized that each state would hardly be able to avoid it. Instead, Indonesia believed that only with cooperation and collaboration would all states be able to mitigate the pandemic.

Indonesia believed that multilateralism opened the pathway for all sides to tackle all issues including the Covid-19 through coordinations to cooperations and from which the interests of states could find middle grounds. Indonesia was putting efforts to engage with both global and regional organizations in order to mitigate the pandemic in addition to maintain support to the WHO.

Maintaining Trust on and Support to the WHO

The The IHR urges the WHO and global communities' responsibility to share resources, information and expertise to help states to prepare for and respond to the health emergencies⁷⁶. The regulation entrusts the WHO to be the most leading global organization to consolidate efforts and encourage states to comply with it. Embracing the global norm, Indonesia suggested the global health organization be not ignored during the Covid-19 as Minister Marsudi said during her remark at the video conference of Ministerial Meeting for the Alliance for Multilateralism (MM-AM) on 16 April 2020 recorded by the MoFA:

“No country is able to overcome this crisis alone. In this connection, we have no other option but to count on the WHO to be a platform of cooperation among countries. This crisis provides a momentum to review the global health governance system so that it will be able to

⁷² A Triwibowo, “Diplomacy and Covid-19: A Reflection,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional*, 2020.

⁷³ James Melville, “Isolationism Is Not the Way Forward during Coronavirus | Coronavirus Pandemic | Al Jazeera,” *Aljazeera*, April 10, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/4/10/isolationism-is-not-the-way-forward-during-coronavirus>.

⁷⁴ Ralf Roloff, “COVID-19 and No One's World,” *Connections* 19, no. 2 (2020): 25–37.

⁷⁵ Caroline E Wagner et al., “Vaccine Nationalism and the Dynamics and Control of SARS-CoV-2.,” *Science (New York, N.Y.)* 373, no. 6562 (September 2021): eabj7364, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abj7364>.

⁷⁶ Rebecca Katz et al., “Global Health Security Agenda and the International Health Regulations: Moving Forward,” *Biosecurity and Bioterrorism-Biodefense Strategy Practice and Science* 12 (2014): 231–38.

*better deal with future outbreaks.”*⁷⁷

The WHO was facing some criticisms over its lack of transparency and China-centric response accusation.⁷⁸ In addition, A. Chapelan⁷⁹ argued that the termination of the U.S - WHO relationships could worsen existing global health governance crisis. Brett Meyer noted that populist leaders in a few states would either downplay or take the Covid-19 seriously⁸⁰. Though they took different initial actions to respond to the pandemic, they had similar policy putting aside the WHO's views on the new disease.

Indonesia, however, still retained trust on the health organization which would coordinate the international cooperation against the Covid-19. Instead, as a member of the WHO, Indonesia expected that the global health organization would be able to facilitate cooperation for effective mitigation on the pandemic. Furthermore, it would suggest that the WHO evaluate how much the current health governance system could work against the pandemic and some future similar issues. The stand indicated that Indonesia admitted the importance to continue standing behind the organization.

That the Indonesian government such as the most apparent the Indonesian Minister of Health, Lt Gen (Ret.) Terawan Agus Putranto downplayed the Covid-19 at the beginning of the Covid-19 spread in January and February 2020 did not mean Indonesia rejected multilateralism. We assume it was merely a domestic effort to prevent panic among citizens and maintain domestic stability. Furthermore, Indonesia and other states in the world were still blind about the new disease during the first two months of its spreading and were still waiting for more official guidances from the WHO. In fact, the MoH was one of the participants in the Foreign Policy and Global Health (FPGH) which officially stated to back the WHO and international cooperation against the Covid-19⁸¹. The commitment was increasing following the WHO's declaration on the pandemic status of the Covid-19.

The WHO issued priority strategies in March 2020 in responding to the Covid-19 ranging from expanding, training and deploying health-care workers; implementing systems to locate suspected cases; raising production of tests and availability; identifying facilities which could be transformed into health centres; developing plans to quarantine cases; and refocussing measures on suppressing the virus.⁸² The strategies were to be undertaken by all states including Indonesia which counted on the organization as its commitment to the multilateralism. Indonesia also stepped up its support to the Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization (GAVI) as the WHO's partner in

⁷⁷ MoFA-RI, “Joint Statement Of The Special Asean Plus Three Summit On Coronavirus Disease 2019 Covid 19 | Portal Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, April 14, 2020, <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/1206/pidato/joint-statement-of-the-special-asean-plus-three-summit-on-coronavirus-disease-2019-Covid-19>.

⁷⁸ Balogun and Soile, “‘Pandemic Diplomacy’ and The Politics of Paradox: International Cooperation in The Age of Distancing,” 423.

⁷⁹ “The World Health Organization and the Political Embroilment of Wounded Multilateralism,” *Revista de Stiinte Politice* 8, no. March 29 (2020): 137, <https://library.laredo.edu/eds/detail?db=edsdoj&an=edsdoj.383b84c377194dd7a91923e34c7e954a>.

⁸⁰ Brett Meyer, “Pandemic Populism: An Analysis of Populist Leaders’ Responses to Covid-19.,” The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change., 2020, <https://institute.global/policy/pandemic-populism-analysis-populist-leaders-responses-covid-19>.

⁸¹ Ministry of Health Republic of Indonesia, “Komitmen Kemenkes Mendukung WHO Dan Kerjasama Internasional Menghadapi COVID 19.,” Ministry of Health Republic of Indonesia, 2020, <https://sehatnegeriku.kemkes.go.id/baca/umum/20200518/3033922/indonesia-pimpin-foreign-policy-and-global-health-dukung-upaya-global-akhiri-pandemi-covid-19/>.

⁸² Djalante et al., “Review and Analysis of Current Responses to COVID-19 in Indonesia: Period of January to March 2020,” 2.

researching, developing, producing and distributing the Covid-19 vaccines to all states. Such support was aimed to prevent any state of finding itself difficult to access the vaccines.

Indonesia kept announcing the vital role of the WHO in a number of international fora and kindly demanded international communities to keep cooperating with the organization. By doing so, Indonesia and others could support the health organization as a global platform to address the Covid-19 collectively. Indonesia believed in the organization for having experience and expertise when facing many challenges on past global health issues. Indonesia cooperated in a number of health issues together with it as well. Even when the viral dispute of avian influenza between the two once occurred, the health cooperations between the officials preserved.⁸³

Regarding Indonesia's decision to withhold the avian influenza virus samples to the WHO by the end of 2006, we argue that the action did not mean that Indonesia withdrew itself from multilateralism practice. Indonesia's demand to the WHO was the effort to call on major changes in global influenza vaccine production and distribution mechanism towards an equitable, fair, and transparent mechanism. Fidler noted Indonesia was discontent with the Global Influenza Surveillance Network led by the WHO which shared virus samples to the vaccine manufacturers based in the developed states without the consent of source states⁸⁴. While the developed states could produce the vaccines and patent them, the developing states would have a little access to them. Indonesia's stand to dispute the viral sharing was supported by other developing states and the Third World Network (TWN); an international non-governmental advocacy group promoting the reform on the global health governance. Indonesia demanded multilateralism in fighting avian influenza providing benefits for all.

In addition, Indonesia was willing to resolve the dispute with the WHO through multilateral processes mediated by the World Health Assembly (WHA). The WHO accommodated Indonesia and developing world states' aspiration by issuing the 2011 Pandemic Influenza Plan in order to provide better access to the vaccines⁸⁵. During the dispute, Indonesia did not cease its relations with the WHO and other aspects of cooperation beyond the viral sharing continued between the two. We propose an argument that apart from the its experience and expertise, the WHO's decision to finally accommodate Indonesia's demand has helped the state regain trust on the organization in fighting the pandemic. The latter event contributed to the Indonesia's position towards the WHO in tackling the Covid-19 as well.

Furthermore, Indonesia's willingness to finally securitize the Covid-19 pandemic at home was influenced by the WHO.⁸⁶ Indonesia saw the organization having a role as a global health governance in disease control as mandated by the IHR despite its past unpleasant experience. Maintaining trust on and support to the WHO indicated that Indonesia upheld multilateralism in its foreign policy in responding to the Covid-19. As suggested by the constructivism, Indonesia's behavior towards the organization was driven by its identity constructed by both domestic and global norm. While the norm of gotong royong prescribed Indonesia to cooperate with the WHO as frequently argued by Minister Marsudi and the MoFA, the norm of IHR suggested that the organization receive mandate to facilitate and coordinate the health emergency response among states. In other words, the norms regulated

⁸³ Hameiri, "Avian Influenza, 'Viral Sovereignty', and the Politics of Health Security in Indonesia," 334.

⁸⁴ David P Fidler, "Influenza Virus Samples, International Law, and Global Health Diplomacy," *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 14, no. 1 (2008): 88.

⁸⁵ Shawn Smallman, "Biopiracy and Vaccines: Indonesia and the World Health Organization's New Pandemic Influenza Plan," *Journal of International & Global Studies*, 2013.

⁸⁶ Cornelia Clara Tiffany, "Securitization on the Spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia [Sekuritasasi Dalam Penyebaran Covid-19 Di Indonesia]," *Jurnal Politika Dinamika Masalah Politik Dalam Negeri Dan Hubungan Internasional* 11, no. 2 (December 5, 2020): 139, <https://doi.org/10.22212/JP.V11I2.1749>.

Indonesia to stand together with the health organization to fight against the pandemic.

Engaging within Global and Regional Frameworks

In order to ensure all international entities to engage in international collaboration and cooperation, Indonesia believed that solidifying international solidarity was prerequisite. The cooperation emboldened by solidarity without stigma and discrimination should be advanced as all states shared responsibility to fight the Covid-19. Indonesia together with other five states, namely Ghana, Liechtenstein, Norway, Singapore and Switzerland pushed the global solidarity against the Covid-19 pandemic to be a resolution of the UNGA on 2 April 2020 which was supported by 188 member states.⁸⁷ It was the effort within Indonesia's diplomacy mainly to solidify the global solidarity facing adversity amidst the rising trend of unilateralism among a number of states.

Due to the fact that the Covid-19 caused numerous impacts, Indonesia expected that through multilateral institutions all states would not face difficulties in accessing all needs such as essential protective equipment as well as other medical supplies. Meanwhile, following the outbreak the trade should not be disrupted in order to minimize the economic loss. In this regard, at the Video Conference Ministerial Meeting for the Alliance for Multilateralism as recorded by the MoFA, Minister Marsudi said, "We must ensure that our multilateral system delivers to address the immediate need of our people."⁸⁸ Indonesia conveyed a message that all states regardless their status should be able to take advantage of international cooperation and collaboration which were valued in multilateralism especially during the deadly pandemic.

In times of early Covid-19, as delivered by Minister Marsudi at the CSIS Indonesia's discussion forum, Indonesia was engaging with several regional or global groupings to respond to the pandemic such as the ASEAN Plus Three Special Summit (APT-SS), Organization of Islamic Cooperation Steering Committee on Health (OIC-SCH), Group of Twenty Extraordinary Leaders Summit (G20-ELS), and International Coordination Group on Covid-19 (ICGC).⁸⁹

ASEAN was the first regional institution maintaining commitment to collaborative culture when self-help mechanism was increasing among many states in response to the Covid-19.⁹⁰ On 14 April 2020, ASEAN member states along with China, Japan and ROK held a joint statement on the Covid-19 following a few meetings among their leaders.⁹¹ The MoFA announced that the summit acknowledged people's participation and welcomed international financial institutions to support states in need using and enhancing their instruments in addition to stressing the importance of the WHO's role in leading campaign to control and contain the viral spread and to implement health measures under the IHR.⁹² Since the APT had role in creating peace, security and prosperity in East Asia, Indonesia expected the role of APT to build solidarity and cooperation in responding to the pandemic in the region.

⁸⁷ Harun Umar and Irma Indrayani, "Foreign And Domestic Policy, Diplomacy and Cooperation, International Political Dynamics)," *Journal of Social Political Sciences* 1, no. 2 (May 31, 2020): 113, <http://e-journal.unas.ac.id/index.php/jsps/article/view/14>.

⁸⁸ MoFA-RI, "Remarks Minister For Foreign Affairs Of The Republic Of Indonesia Video Conference Ministerial Meeting For The Alliance For Multilateralism | Portal Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Indonesia, April 16, 2020, <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/id/read/1226/pidato/remarks-minister-for-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-indonesia-video-conference-ministerial-meeting-for-the-alliance-for-multilateralism>.

⁸⁹ Retno LP Marsudi, "International Cooperation to Mitigate #COVID19: Indonesia, Southeast Asia, and Beyond | CSIS," CSIS Indonesia, April 17, 2020, <https://csis.or.id/events/international-cooperation-to-mitigate-covid19-indonesia-southeast-asia-and-beyond>.

⁹⁰ Riska Putri Hariyadi, "Singapura Dan Asean: Analisis Relasi Negara dan Institusi Kawasan di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19," *Jurnal Dinamika Global* 5, no. 02 (December 10, 2020): 312, <https://doi.org/10.36859/JDG.V5I02.219>.

⁹¹ MoFA-RI, "Joint Statement Of The Special Asean Plus Three Summit On Coronavirus Disease 2019 Covid 19 | Portal Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia."

⁹² MoFA-RI.

The OIC played its role in curbing the Covid-19 in the Moslem world as its charter paved the cooperation and coordination among member states in humanitarian emergencies.⁹³ The OIC-SCH facilitated the sharing of knowledge and information on the pandemic and discussion of ways and means to coordinate individual and collective response alike among the member states. Indonesia kept inviting the member states to strengthen coordination and cooperation against the pandemic.

In March 2020, G20 leaders held an extraordinary summit on Covid-19 and delivered their commitment to overcoming the pandemic together with its global partners.⁹⁴ During the summit, the G20 leaders was raising concern on fighting the pandemic, safeguarding global economy, addressing international trade disruptions and enhancing global cooperation. The summit recognized the pandemic as a common threat that solidarity along with a transparent, robust, coordinated, large-scale and science-based global response was necessary in interconnected and vulnerable world.

Minister Marsudi reiterated such virtual meetings were the concrete forms of partnership which had to be continuously carried out to tackle global problem especially in the unprecedented situation caused by the Covid-19.⁹⁵ Moreover, Indonesia realized that its stand could only be heard in international fora in which it actively participated in addressing the pandemic. Therefore, Indonesia used all channels available to coordinate, collaborate and cooperate with international communities in both regional and global level. Not only could such channels facilitate cooperation in responding to the pandemic, they could be suitable media to promote Indonesia's call for sustaining multilateralism.

The ICGC was aimed to resolve challenges regarding the Covid-19 especially the vaccines. The vaccine invention was the key global effort that would only stop the virus and it was, unfortunately, like a race among states and their companies to be the first producers. Indonesia's efforts to ensure the vaccine affordability could be the challenge in its diplomacy since the production and distribution would be concentrated in developed states. However, Indonesia kept sounding that the vaccine allocation should be equitable for all including the vulnerable groups⁹⁶. In addition, at the ICGC forum, Indonesia also proposed a platform with which companies from different states could cooperate in increasing capacity and production of health equipment and medicines within joint production schemes⁹⁷.

The above mentioned roles were played by Indonesia to show its commitment to multilateralism practice. Indonesia could undertake such roles thanks to its active engagement in various international institutions long attached to its foreign policy under a traditional independent and active guiding narrative. In addition, Indonesia believed that multilateral institutions could work better to solve global problems as it had repeatedly expressed idealistic views on the role of international institutions as agencies sharing benefits to all sides.⁹⁸ Indonesia's role was aligned with the common practice among the Asian states considering norms into their foreign policy as well. Ralf Emmers⁹⁹ suggested that the Asian states show its involvement with global institutions through normative strategy in order to manage negative impacts of competitions.

⁹³ M Hussain, *Socio-Economic Impacts of Covid-19 Pandemic in OIC Member Countries: Prospects and Challenges* (Ankara: Statistical, Economic, and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries, 2020).

⁹⁴ Wiwiek Rukmi Dwi Astuti, "Kerja Sama G20 Dalam Pemulihan Ekonomi Global Dari COVID-19," *Andalas Journal of International Studies (AJIS)* 9, no. 2 (November 30, 2020): 138, <https://doi.org/10.25077/AJIS.9.2.131-148.2020>.

⁹⁵ Jessica Martha, "Pemanfaatan Diplomasi Publik Oleh Indonesia Dalam Krisis Covid-19," *Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional*, 2020.

⁹⁶ Abdul Kadir Jailani, "How Indonesian Diplomacy Can Ensure Equitable Access to Covid-19 Vaccine," *Jakarta Globe*, 2020, <https://jakartaglobe.id/opinion/how-indonesian-diplomacy-can-ensure-equitable-access-to-covid19-vaccine>.

⁹⁷ Anadolu Agency, "Indonesia Usulkan Negara ICGC Kerja Sama Alat Kesehatan Covid-19," Anadolu Agency, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/id/nasional/indonesia-usulkan-negara-icgc-kerja-sama-alat-kesehatan-covid-19/1822241>.

⁹⁸ Yulius P. Hermawan and Ahmad D. Habir, "Indonesia and International Institutions: Treading New Territory," in *Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, and the Regional Order* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), 188, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137397416_9.

⁹⁹ "The Role of Middle Powers in Asian Multilateralism," *Asia Policy* 25, no. 4 (2018): 42–43, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ASP.2018.0060>.

Not only was Indonesia promoting the spirit of multilateralism but it was also encouraging collective leadership and win-win solutions in responding to the Covid-19. Such action was in accordance with the characteristic of today global problems. They could be more complex, multidimensional and wide-ranging so that international actors need global institutional cooperation more than ever.¹⁰⁰

Engaging within global and regional frameworks reflected Indonesia (and the MoFA)'s preference of multilateralism practice. In addition to the domestic norm of gotong royong, Indonesia realized that the IHR demanded states not only to cooperate but also to maintain the economy without harming people's rights in the middle of national and international efforts to mitigate the health emergency. None of state policies should risk other states including people during the the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, cooperation was the best option appropriate to its identity which was constituted by the norms as suggested by the constructivist approach.

c. Priorities of Indonesia's Foreign Policy

Despite multilateralism rhetoric, there existed several national interests which Indonesia was pursuing. Following the Covid-19 outbreak, Minister Marsudi announced that Indonesia's foreign policy had three priorities, namely addressing the pandemic itself, mitigating economic impacts and protecting Indonesian citizens abroad and foreign nationals at home.¹⁰¹ In term of addressing the pandemic, at many international fora, Indonesia kept inviting all states to work together to tackle the pandemic instead of blaming each other. During the pandemic, Indonesia suggested that protectionism and isolationism be avoided. The flows of medical equipment and other relevant needs across border should not meet any barrier so every government would be able to access them in order to save people's lives or minimize victims.

Minister Marsudi uttered that Indonesia already sent protection equipment to the states infected earlier before the virus was announced as a pandemic.¹⁰² So should other states take the similar decision as more and more states would suffer due to lack of protection equipment. In her writing entitled "Cooperation: The Catalyst for Fighting the Covid-19 Crisis" published in the Jakarta Post, Minister Marsudi argued that information sharing, technical assistance and joint production of basic medical equipment which had to be virtues in global friendship during difficult time were Indonesia's diplomacy messages.¹⁰³ In addition, Indonesia believed that coordination with the WHO was imperative as ignoring its health protocol and recommendations would only cause the situation worse. Once the vaccines were found in the future, they should be affordable for all states including the third world instead of monopolizing them.

The Covid-19 already impacted the global economy as the results of global supply chains disruption and restriction of people movements and border closures. The ADB projected that the Southeast Asia's economic growth would drop by 1 percent in 2020, while the World Bank Group (WBG) predicted there would be another 11 million people falling into poverty in East Asia and the Pacific.¹⁰⁴ Indonesia's Rupiah and many industries were weakening in addition to capital flight.¹⁰⁵ In order to mitigate the economic impact, Indonesia urged global and regional economic institutions to be reliable platforms to prevent global economy from deteriorating and help weaker states to minimize damages to their national economy amidst the global efforts to contain the further disease spread and

¹⁰⁰ Konseyi and Açar, *Global Governance and the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 1.

¹⁰¹ Marsudi, "Cooperation: The Catalyst for Fighting the COVID-19 Crisis - Opinion - The Jakarta Post."

¹⁰² Marsudi, "International Cooperation to Mitigate #COVID19: Indonesia, Southeast Asia, and Beyond | CSIS."

¹⁰³ Marsudi.

¹⁰⁴ Marsudi.

¹⁰⁵ Dyah Gandasari and Diena Dwidienawati, "Content Analysis of Social and Economic Issues in Indonesia during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Heliyon* 6, no. 11 (November 1, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.HELIYON.2020.E05599>.

flatten curves of the infected.

Indonesia rejected export restriction and import suspension during the Covid-19. Those two trade policies were commonly taken by a number of states to tackle the pandemic at home, but they potentially harmed the weak states.¹⁰⁶ Indonesia believed that protectionism would not work and none of states would survive on its own during the pandemic. The flow of goods should be maintained despite the pandemic threat as one of the measures to mitigate the economic impact. Similar stand was also shown by Indonesia at other international fora. Indonesia's demands were aligned with a number of IHR articles regulating and ensuring trade and travel during public health emergencies.¹⁰⁷ As the consequence, Indonesia was struggling to combine countermeasures against the pandemic without sacrificing the economy.¹⁰⁸

The Covid-19 forced many governments to enact firm measures on foreign nationals from quarantine requirement to expulsion. As the disease spread very quickly, many foreign governments imposed a strict measure like either partial or full lockdown in order to prevent further spread which impacted Indonesian nationals residing abroad such as becoming unemployed or being unable to continue their study. Realizing this situation, Indonesia's foreign policy was directed to assure its nationals safe. The MoFA coordinated with foreign governments as well as Indonesian embassies or consulates so that they could either leave the states voluntarily in orderly manner or receive humanitarian aids unless they returned to Indonesia. For an exception, Indonesia conducted an evacuation mission of citizens trapped in isolation-imposed Wuhan after gaining permit from the Chinese government in early February 2020¹⁰⁹.

For foreign nationals at home, Indonesia maintained communication with their respective embassies regarding updates such as the people-under-surveillance, infected, death and recovered cases. In June 2020, Minister Marsudi announced that as many as 311 foreigners tested positive for the Covid-19, 26 of whom passed away and 204 recovered and another 485 classified as people under surveillance.¹¹⁰ The Indonesian government only restricted foreign nationals to enter the state by suspending the visa exemption policy and visa on arrival facilities along with the firm WHO health protocol instead of totally barring them. In addition, such measures were in accordance with the principles of respecting human rights as stipulated in the IHR.

Indonesia's foreign policy during the Covid-19 was not only aimed to protect its citizens and economy but also others. Communication and coordination with other foreign governments were necessary to pursue the three priorities. Unilateral and uncoordinated actions could risk Indonesia's interests as well as others' during the time of uncertainties. It is in line with the Indonesian foreign policy practice as noted by Emmers that Indonesia – just like other Asian states – preserved its national interests by encouraging the adoption of norms and standards of good international behavior.¹¹¹ Even though a few states ignored the IHR, the regulation's role as a new norm sustained during the pandemic. Furthermore, the emergence of new transmissible diseases has made health an important element in state diplomacy guided by the regulation.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Prawita Meidi Handayani, "Nationalism Over Globalization amidst COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on Indonesia's Food Security," *Jurnal Politika Dinamika Masalah Politik Dalam Negeri Dan Hubungan Internasional* 11, no. 2 (December 5, 2020): 151, <https://doi.org/10.22212/JP.V11I2.1751>.

¹⁰⁷ Gostin and Katz, "The International Health Regulations: The Governing Framework for Global Health Security," 268.

¹⁰⁸ Muhyiddin Muhyiddin and Hanan Nugroho, "A Year of Covid-19: A Long Road to Recovery and Acceleration of Indonesia's Development," *Jurnal Perencanaan Pembangunan: The Indonesian Journal of Development Planning* 5, no. 1 (April 30, 2021): 3, <https://doi.org/10.36574/JPP.V5I1.181>.

¹⁰⁹ Luerdi Luerdi, "POLITIK LUAR NEGERI INDONESIA DI AWAL PANDEMI NOVEL CORONAVIRUS DISEASE: JANUARI–AGUSTUS 2020," 2022.

¹¹⁰ Marsudi, "Cooperation: The Catalyst for Fighting the COVID-19 Crisis - Opinion - The Jakarta Post."

¹¹¹ Emmers, "The Role of Middle Powers in Asian Multilateralism," 43.

¹¹² Davies, Kamradt-Scott, and Rushton, *Disease Diplomacy: International Norms and Global Health Security*; Kamradt-Scott, "The WHO Secretariat, Norm Entrepreneurship, and Global Disease Outbreak Control"; Ferhani and Rushton, "The

Considering the constructivist approach, the roles and interests within Indonesia's foreign policy were determined by its norm-based identity. Gotong royong emphasizing mutual assistance and the IHR suggesting the balance of trade, travel and health led Indonesia to uphold multilateralism. In domestic context, these priorities refer to Indonesia's national interests which were not only determined by the MoFA alone but also other domestic actors. Such national interests reflect the identity which belongs to Indonesia influenced by these actors through the MoFA's embracing of multilateralism. Meanwhile, in the systemic level the interactions between Indonesia and other international communities brought about an understanding that the IHR was an international norm which was infused to its identity. Only after Indonesia realized its identity could it determine its interests deemed appropriate. Indonesia would have responsibility to pursue such interests as a consequence of the identity awareness.

Conclusion

Indonesia's active foreign policy during the unprecedented Covid-19 could be an oppositional option compared to what to be taken by more established states and other parts of the world. This paper argues that non-material factors do matter in defining Indonesia's foreign policy and behavior especially when confronting a new challenging global issue. Upholding multilateralism and pursuing national interests would not contradict as the Indonesia's foreign policy was affected by the indigenous and global norm complementary to each other. International fora were the main media for Indonesia to promote the practice of multilateralism. In addition, this paper reveals that looking at the domestic actors is as important as looking at state in international system in order to reach a better knowledge on the issue.

There has been a trend showing that a number of developed states with better health infrastructure and stronger economic foundation seemed to act uncoordinatedly to take serious initial action to respond to the pandemic or downplay the severity of the disease at the beginning of the pandemic. Meanwhile, Indonesia as one of developing states raised multilateralism suggesting a few actions such as coordinating, collaborating and cooperating with international communities. The policy was not the result of applying rationalist principle of foreign policy decision makers who attempted to utilize the existing international norm and overcome domestic shortages for maximizing national interests as suggested by the liberal approach. Neither would Indonesia have taken the former action in order to protect its people and save economy ahead before others if it had been better equipped with health infrastructure as the neorealist approach suggests. Otherwise, we propose that Indonesia's foreign policy would remain to uphold multilateralism when facing other similar crisis thanks to its identity as suggested by the constructivist approach. Only when the identity changes would Indonesia redirect its foreign policy and interests. It is hardly seen in the near future.

This paper has stated a novel theoretical argument in which Indonesia's multilateralism in the pandemic era represents a confluence of domestic norms (gotong royong) and international norms (IHR). The gotong royong along with other international norms is potential to be expanded into other areas of foreign policy including—but not limited to—security, climate change, human rights, developmentalism and socio-economic inequality. Though this paper provides a view of Indonesia's foreign policy in responding to the Covid-19 through the lense of holistic constructivism, it leaves questions – as of the time of writing – if such foreign policy effectively contributes to tackle the pandemic at home and save its economy as the number of confirmed cases keeps surging and recession threat alarms in addition to if Indonesia is able to leverage its leadership and role in regional and

global politics in addressing the pandemic as many see multilateral institutions underperforming without the role of more established states. A few future researches can be expected to fill the gaps. Above all, the study benefits scholars or students who have interest in Indonesia's foreign policy in order to understand how the state behaves during difficult times.

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