

# THE COMPARISON BETWEEN CHINA AND THE UNITED STATE (US) RIVALRY IN COVID-19 VACCINE INDUSTRY: AN EXMINATION FROM INDONESIAN PERSPECTIVE

<sup>1</sup>RIDHA NAHDHIYAH ALMA AMALIYAH  
<sup>2</sup>ALI MAKSUM

<sup>\*1&2</sup>*Department of Magister International Relation, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Jl. Brawijaya, Geblagan, Tamantirto, Kec. Kasihan, Kabupaten Bantul, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55183, Indonesia*  
*Corresponding Author: <sup>1</sup>nahdhiyah.alma.psc22@mail.umy.ac.id; <sup>2</sup>alimaksun@umy.ac.id*  
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**Abstract** The trade war between the US and China has not ended so far; coupled with the outbreak of Covid-19 outbreak, the two countries are increasingly demonstrating their hegemonic power in their way; China, with its Belt Road Initiative, and the US, which has long been the ruler of the world. We can see vaccine competition between the US and China from the many vaccine companies in the two countries circulating in the world. This study aims to analyze Indonesia's response to vaccine competition between China and America using the hegemonic theory. In this study, the authors used qualitative methods. The author argues that by using free and active Indonesia Foreign Policy from Indonesia's point of view, Indonesia's response to the two countries is still neutral, such as how Indonesia responds to the competition between the two countries, starting from the Vaccine Cooperation with Russia, making its vaccines, to Indonesia's position as a Non-Aligned country. However, it does not rule out the possibility that Indonesia will not receive the full aid quota from the two countries.

**Keywords:** Vaccine, Indonesia, United States (US), China, Covid-19.

## INTRODUCTION

Priscilla et al., (2022) argue that this vaccine diplomacy opens opportunities or land for the US and China to further expand their influence throughout the world, especially in this research in the ASEAN region. The momentum of the need for vaccines by countries in ASEAN then made the US and China

see a great opportunity to spread their influence with a soft power approach through vaccine diplomacy.

The rivalry between the two countries in showing their hegemony to the world continues to this day. The war between China and the United States was less audible at first, more covert and muffled. Starting from the trade war, Donald Trump was furious when he learned that his country's trade balance had a record deficit with China (CNN, 2020). Therefore, this step then brought protectionism as Donald Trump's first step to "protect" his country. Donald Trump deliberately increases import prices for China (House, 2018). China also responded by doing the same for imports from America; either phase one or phase two, these two countries have not found a way out. The WTO also previously assisted in mediation between the two countries but did not produce satisfactory results.

This rivalry seems to be growing. Especially when Covid-19 rocked the world with an alarming death toll, Donald Trump's hatred seemed unstoppable. He blamed China for the increasingly frenzied spread of the virus and the rising death toll. With the increase in the number of patients affected by this virus, WHO announced that the Corona Virus has been considered a global pandemic by Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in a press conference (Ardi, 2020).

Indonesia is also no exception. The impact of Covid-19 in Indonesia can be said to be quite significant. Not to mention the delay in the government's efforts to handle Covid-19 cases in Indonesia. When the first case of Covid-19 entered Indonesian territory on March 2, 2011, people only thought this news was confusing. However, this "chaotic" case experienced a significant spike in development. This distribution was conveyed directly by President Jokowi that covid-19 cases continue to take victims an average of 100 cases per day (Mohammad Ansori Hasan, 2020).

The poor capacity, speed and effectiveness of the Indonesian Government and the lack of response and decision-making that are full of doubts are responsible for the high number of cases. Only later April 10, 2020, did the Indonesian Government set PSBB (Large-Scale Social

Restrictions). During the PSBB period, many public facilities were closed, such as schools and offices, carried out at home, transportation restrictions tended to be completely closed except for private vehicles, and only certain sectors were allowed to remain open during the PSBB period.

Based on Pergub 33 of 2020 concerning the implementation of PSBB, the 11 sectors are health, food, energy, communication and information technology, finance, logistics, hospitality, construction, public and industry which are designated as national vital objects, as well as certain objects and objects. daily needs. day (CNN, 2020). This PSBB has undergone several transitions, such as the continuous implementation of PSBB every two weeks to deal with the increasing number of Covid-19 cases.

Other journals, also have almost the same opinion as the previous argument, that America and China use vaccines as a means of competition (Irawan et al., 2021; Priscilla et al., 2022), and how the two different vaccines work; The vaccine from the United States, Pfizer/BioNTech, uses messenger RNA (mRNA), the genetic material read by the body's cells to make proteins. Meanwhile, Moderna, which also uses the latest technology, is based on a synthetic mRNA version of the SARS-CoV-2 virus molecule. For vaccines made in China, Sinovac and Sinopharm, both use inactive virus technology or viruses that are no longer active, where this technology raises the possibility that the virus cannot be reactivated. It should be noted that the Sinopharm vaccine made in China has lower effectiveness—or about 79.34 per cent—when compared to the other three vaccines (Irawan et al., 2021). Indonesia CNN (2021) put forward the price of the two countries. For the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, which sells for Rp. 333,957 per dose. Even though they are produced in the same country, the differences in Moderna's vaccine technology still affect the price. Moderna vaccine is marketed for Rp 436,173 per dose. Continue to China, Sinovac vaccine is sold for IDR 211,000 per dose (Saretta Irene Radius, 2022). Unlike other vaccines, the Sinopharm vaccine is said to cost around IDR 520,000 for a single dose (Asmara Chandra Gian, 2022).

Talking about vaccines, before Indonesia had the thought of using vaccines from America and China, Indonesia had the idea of making its

coronavirus vaccine, which was named the Red and White Vaccine. Of course, making a vaccine takes a lot of energy, precision, money, and time to find the right one. Due to the long research process, while Indonesia itself has obligations from the WHO regarding the provision of vaccines to the entire community, and is driven by necessity, in the end, Indonesia began to carry out vaccine diplomacy. At first, Indonesia carried out vaccine diplomacy with China, by taking Sinovac and then distributing it to all corners of Indonesia.

Jose (2021) for example, expressed the opinion that Indonesia is building multilateral diplomacy to deal with the covid-19 pandemic through the COVAX Facility. COVAX is a multilateral vaccine cooperation framework led by several international entities, namely WHO, Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), and partners with UNICEF in distribution.

In the previous argument, most writers only talked about China and America and saw vaccine opportunities to spread their influence. Here, the author argues that not only as a tool to spread the influence of the two countries but also see it from an Indonesian perspective; how Indonesia handles and responds to the two rivalries between these countries, and what steps are taken to maintain the stability of Indonesia's diplomatic relations with the United States and China.

In this paper, the researcher wants to discuss how Indonesia faces the war of hegemony between China and the United States and limits this research only from the Indonesian point of view.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to KBBI (1988) hegemony is the influence of leadership, domination, power, and partly over a country to other countries. This understanding is taken from the Greek which also means leadership. Meanwhile, experts, Bates (1975) interpret domination as control of social class over other social classes in society through cultural hegemony. In

his book Hassig (2014) said that hegemony is also a form of empire that controls its vassal states with power (imposing political goals), and not by force (physically imposing political goals).

Holsti (1985) in his book entitled *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory* shows the problem of the hierarchy of disciplines which is one of the characteristics of international political theory. The literature that produces the theory of international relations from around 155 countries in the world is dominated by two countries, namely: the US and the United Kingdom (UK). According to Holsti, the two countries form an intellectual condominium in the realm of international relations. In this case, the two countries that currently dominate the world are the US and China. We cannot argue how China is now influencing various countries to the point of almost defeating the hegemony of the US itself. The starting point of Holsti's analysis of the international scholar community interaction model includes at least two characteristics; First, professional communication between researchers who are in different and separate political jurisdictions. Second, the symmetrical pattern of "production" and "consumption" of theories, ideas, concepts, methods, and data between the academic community of world countries. Holsti's study shows the occurrence of hierarchical communication patterns characterized by some parties acting as producers, and most others as imitators and consumers, with the position of knowledge flow flowing from the centre to the periphery. This is then clarified by (Sulistyo, 2020) this competition was described by the *Washington Post* as a 'Sputnik moment' reminiscent of the space race between Russia and the US after the launch of Sputnik in 1957. Now China is the US's formidable opponent in the global war against Covid-19. Moreover, the two countries have been competing in biomedical research for many years.

At the same time, the coordinating minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan opened up about President Joko Widodo's government leaning towards China compared to the US (Asworo, 2020). Luhut said that previously Indonesia had no close contact with American officials. He also said that the Indonesian side had tried to ask for time but the Americans were very difficult to find, they were only met

by the deputy minister, so Indonesia cannot be blamed if Indonesia prefers to cooperate with China. Gosta (2022) In another interview, Luhut said that if America has “American First”, it does not mean that Indonesia will also not use “Indonesian First” guidelines as a response to questions from the US Ambassador who questioned why their products were being made difficult in Indonesia.

Kumoro (2019) states, Rizal Ramli, an expert on security economics, also clarified the implications of Indonesia’s leaning towards China. Rizal Ramli said that all government policies during the Joko Widodo era are currently leaning towards China. Rizal did not disclose what policy he meant by leaning towards China. He only gave an example of the potential of the Indonesian government’s actions. However, at the same time, according to him, this is not following Indonesia’s foreign policy which is free and active. Based on a free and active foreign policy, Indonesia has the right to determine its direction, attitudes, and desires as an independent and sovereign country. Thus, it cannot be influenced by other countries foreign policy.

From the previous arguments, it shows that in President Jokowi’s government, Indonesia does seem to be more inclined towards China. No research has been found that discusses the strategic steps that Indonesia is taking to seek a balance of power in its own country when facing vaccine rivalry between China and America. This research will show several new findings such as Indonesia’s response to the two dominant global power countries.

## METHODS

This journal focuses on qualitative methods with literacy studies. Qualitative methods here are defined as data collection and analysis techniques that depend on the collection and analysis of non-numeric data (Lamont Christopher, 2015). The data collection technique in this study is a literature study technique by looking for secondary data sources such as journals, official government websites and related organizations such as the WTO, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, books, and other sources whose credibility can be justified. After the data is collected, it is analyzed to

determine. Qualitative methods are used because they can understand the event and its context in it (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### **USA VS China Vaccine Competition**

Discussing the complicated polemic between China and the US seems to be a topic that never stops being discussed, especially during the trade war between the US and China. The US-China trade war began in July 2018 under the administration of then-US president Donald Trump, eventually leading to tariffs on some US\$550 billion of Chinese goods and US\$185 billion of US goods (Mullen Andrew, 2021). Even five years later, these two countries are still showing their dominance (hegemony) in the world arena, either directly or indirectly. The situation is getting hotter when Covid-19 spreads widely. The US clearly expressed its dislike of China, they felt that China should be held responsible for the epidemic that did not subside.

Before the vaccine rivalry between the two countries, the US and China had been embroiled in a massive trade war that rocked the world economy. This can happen because of the existence of two ‘problematic’ central forces that hinder the economic growth of the countries below which cooperate with the central state, or at least that’s what the spider web theory says (Kaldor, 1934). China’s economic revival is one of the triggers for the unfinished trade war. Both China and the US are the two largest trading partners. However, recently when President Donald Trump learned that his country has a lot of foreign exchange with China, he decided to increase import duties on imports from China into his country. The US has released a list of products that are the target of imposing import tariffs on April 3, 2018, the proposed tariff amount is US\$ 50 billion. The product list is dominated by high-tech industrial products. Exactly a day later, China responded to US policy by imposing additional tariffs on 106 25 per cent US products, including chemicals, aircraft, and soybeans as well as Chinese-made cars. If the US continues to carry out this policy, China threatens to raise this issue and report America to the WTO (Kebijakan Moneter et al., 2020).

Since the start of the trade conflict between the US and China, the two countries have raised tariffs substantially on each other's exports, from 2.6 per cent to 17.5 per cent on Chinese imports to the US and from 6.2 per cent to 16.4 per cent on imports US to China. The Phase one agreement between the US and China reduced tariffs on Chinese imports into the US to 16 per cent. To limit the scope of this paper, this paper focuses on the trade tensions between the US and China (Bekkers & Schroeter, 2020). Although the phase I agreement has been signed by both parties, the US will still impose tariffs on Chinese imported goods until there is a phase II agreement. However, the US agreed to suspend tariffs on several electronic products worth US\$160 billion. The tariffs previously took effect on December 15, 2019. So far, the US and China have not discussed further the phase II trade deal. Trump says he's not interested in talking about it because of the Covid-19 pandemic (CNN, 2020).

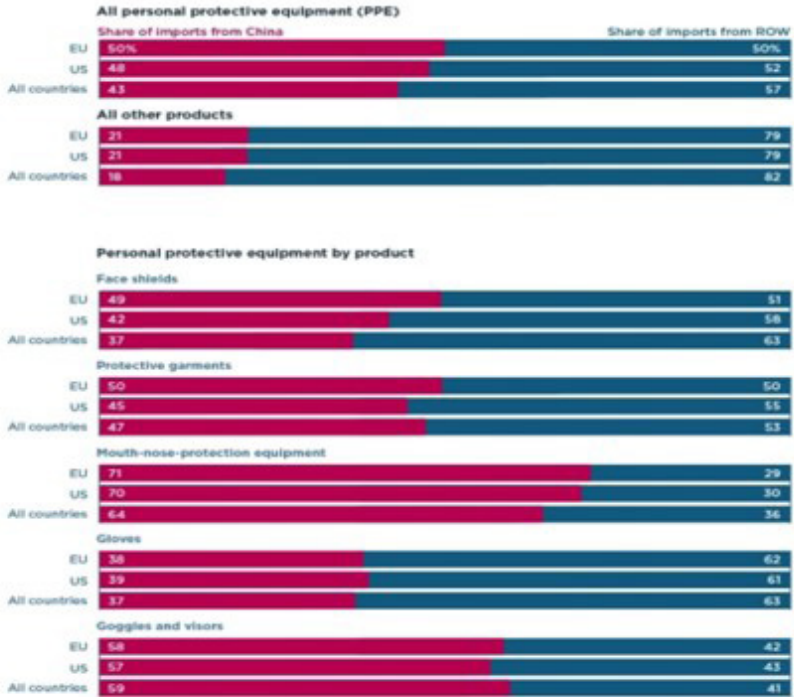
When the pandemic occurred, China was scapegoated by Donald Trump as the country that spread the virus, and China was fully responsible for what happened to the world. Unmitigated, Trump also accused the WTO of being a "slave of China" for allowing the epidemic to continue. China thinks Trump should stop spreading fake news (BBC, 2020). Even though China has already received bad marks from all countries, China is trying to do its best by taking concrete actions, such as exporting masks and personal protective clothing to European countries, America, and other countries that need them (Brown Chad P., 2020).



Figure 1

### Much of the world's imports of personal protective equipment come from China

Imports by product and source, 2018



ROW = rest of world; EU = European Union; US = United States

**Note:** ROW data for EU are extra-EU imports only. All other products are imports of all products, not only medical products.

**Source:** Constructed by the author from 6-digit Harmonized System import data, available from UN Comtrade accessed via World Integrated Trade Solutions, matched to personal protective equipment definitions from Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/402 of 14 March 2020 making the exportation of certain products subject to the production of an export authorization, Official Journal of the European Union, L 0771, 15 March 2020.

**Figure 1** Personal protective equipment from China

Source: [www.piie.com](http://www.piie.com)

The data above is data for 2020 regarding China's concrete actions that are trying hard to help countries around the world when the Covid-19 pandemic spreads. It did not stop there, China then held an online meeting between Wang Yi, the Chinese Foreign Minister, the Foreign Ministers participating in the BRI project and the Director General of WHO. During

the meeting, China put forward the Health Silk Road plan as a continuation of the BRI project itself (Kobierski Łukasz, 2020). From here, the Chinese government began to design a vaccine project, as well as the beginning the vaccine competition between the US and China.

In 2021, China will start conducting vaccine trials. The vaccine used in this trial is the Sinovac vaccine and Sinopharm to several countries (Cipto, 2022). China promises donated vaccines to Laos, Brunei, Myanmar, and Cambodia. Meanwhile, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore immediately bought the vaccine (Karásková Ivana & Blablová Veronika, 2021). In addition to distributing, it as frees vaccine aid, China is also selling its vaccines in larger quantities either by payment or in the form of loans. Chinese vaccines are now available in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Eastern Europe (Cipto, 2022; Karásková Ivana & Blablová Veronika, 2021).

**OVERVIEW OF CHINA'S VACCINE DIPLOMACY**

country	vaccine	distribution method	number of doses
Afghanistan	Sinopharm	donation	400,000
Algeria	Sinopharm	donation	200,000
Argentina	Sinopharm	purchase	1,000,000
Azerbaijan	Sinovac	purchase	4,000,000
Bahrain	Sinopharm	purchase	300,000
Belarus	Sinopharm	donation	100,000
Bolivia	Sinopharm	donation + purchase	100,000 + 400,000
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Sinopharm	purchase	not known
Brazil	Sinovac	purchase	130,000,000
Brunei	Sinopharm	donation	not known
Cambodia	Sinopharm	donation	1,000,000
Colombia	Sinovac	purchase	6,000,000
Czech Republic	potential use of Chinese vaccines (Sinopharm)		
Dominica	Sinopharm	donation	20,000
Dominican Republic	Sinovac	donation + purchase	60,000 + 10,000,000
Ecuador	Sinovac	donation (Chile) + purchase	20,000 + 2,000,000
Egypt	Sinopharm	donation (UAE and China) + purchase	100,000 and 300,000 + 40,000,000
Equatorial Guinea	Sinopharm	donation	100,000
Ethiopia	potential use of Chinese vaccines		
Gabon	Sinopharm	donation	100,000
Guinea	Sinopharm	donation	200,000
Guinea-Bissau	Sinopharm	donation (Senegal)	10,000
Guyana	Sinopharm	donation	20,000
Hungary	Sinopharm	purchase	6,000,000
Chile	Sinovac	purchase	10,000,000
Indonesia	Sinovac, Sinopharm, CanSino	purchase	125,000,000; 15,000,000; 15,000,000
Iran	Sinopharm	donation	250,000
Iraq	Sinopharm	donation + purchase	60,000 + 2,000,000
Jordan	Sinopharm	purchase	not known
Kenya	potential use of Chinese vaccines		
Laos	Sinopharm	donation	300,000
Lebanon	Sinopharm	donation	60,000
Malaysia	Sinovac, Sinopharm, CanSino	purchase	12,000,000; 2,000,000; 3,500,000

**Figure 2** Overview of China’s vaccine diplomacy  
 Source: Association of International Affairs

Since April 2021, China has donated at least many vaccines to 80 countries; at least 53 countries that receive vaccine assistance for free while there are 27 countries belonging to middle-income countries that must pay (Cipto, 2022). China is using vaccines as a method to fix their bad name because some politicians in America say that their country is the country that spreads the virus by 2020 (Suisheng Zhao, 2021). This global vaccine vacuum is used by China to improve its bad image and show that China is a responsible country even though the efficacy of Chinese vaccines is known to be lower than vaccines made by Western countries. China's success in the first quarter of 2021 is due to the unpreparedness of developed countries to help developing countries because they prioritize the safety of Western citizens themselves. (Cipto, 2022; Suisheng Zhao, 2021). China's big move in the future further strengthens the intensity of the US-China rivalry. In mid-2021, the US began deploying its vaccine power to keep pace with China's vaccine diplomacy advances in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America. And Southeast Asia in particular is a key vaccine diplomacy meeting ground for the two countries (Cipto, 2022).

On the other hand, the US itself is arguably one step behind China. This happened because of two things, namely the appointment of Joe Biden as US president, which was one of the factors behind America's delay in vaccine diplomacy, plus Joe Biden's main priority as president was to vaccinate his citizens first so that the virus can be ended immediately (Gregory B. Poling, 2021). When Biden was appointed as America's new president, many ASEAN leaders expected that the American side would pay more attention to ASEAN, considering that during Trump's tenure, he was not very interested in ASEAN. In addition, ASEAN itself hopes that America will help with the vaccine problem which is very much needed, especially in Southeast Asian countries (Takashi Nakano et al., 2021). Instead of administering vaccines bilaterally, Joe Biden used the multilateral route, it was announced in February 2021 that the US would contribute \$4 billion in vaccines to poor countries through the COVAX channel, in which rich countries would finance vaccines, and WHO then will manage it (MISSIONBB, 2021). To strengthen its position, America will even host the online COVAX meeting in April 2021. This meeting strengthens US vaccine diplomacy multilaterally (David P Fidler & CFR, 2021). However, there

is no US plan to visit Asia, so most Asian countries, especially Southeast Asia, prefer to use vaccines from China.

In early June 2021, we received news that Joe Biden would help distribute 80 million doses of the vaccine to low-income countries, it is hoped that by the end of June, 25 million doses would have been distributed. (Zeke Miller, 2021). ASEAN is also one of the countries receiving the COVAX vaccine. And Indonesia is one of the ASEAN countries that get the vaccine from this route. A total of 3 million doses of the Moderna vaccine arrived in Indonesia on June 11, then received back 1.5 million doses of Moderna vaccine on June 15. All of this Indonesia has received through the COVAX scheme and has received at least 12.7 million doses of vaccine from this COVAX scheme (U.S. Embassy Jakarta, 2021). The latest update, on October 27, 2022 yesterday, there were at least additional shipments of Pfizer vaccine from America and at least 40.8 million doses had been collected. (U.S. Embassy Jakarta, 2022). Just like China, America later announced that through this COVAX scheme it would reach Africa and Latin America.

Seeing the explanation above, both China and America do not hesitate to show their hegemonic side to other countries. However, as Covid-19 spread across the globe, these two countries were the only producers of the vaccine we currently use. So, as a big country in Southeast Asia, how does Indonesia deal with this war of two hegemons, and what steps are being taken?

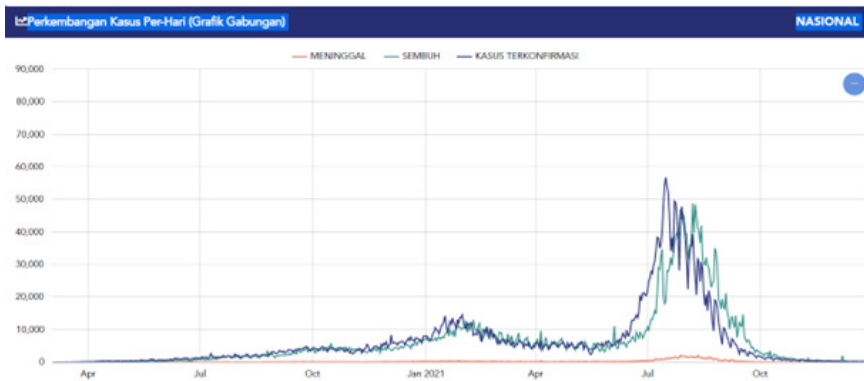
### **Indonesia in the face of competition between China vs Americas**

To answer the previous question, the author will explain a little about Indonesia's diplomatic history with the two countries, because after all in every historical series there is always a connection between the two. When Indonesia first became independent, long story short, President Ir. Sukarno preferred to be friends with China than America. This Indonesia-China friendship also started a real commitment to the free and active political policy that was echoed by Indonesia during the cold war at that time. The Soekarno era became an important milestone in Indonesia-China friendly relations, Liu Hong, in China and the Shaping of Indonesia, 1949-1965, revealed that China at that time was like a beacon, a sign that Indonesia should be built (Utami, 2015).

Hemaputri (2021) in the era of this second president, Suharto's foreign policy was considered more lenient because his government was more interested in developing the Indonesian economy. It was also in this era that Indonesia's cooperation with China began to disintegrate, more precisely President Suharto wanted to cut ties with China because Indonesia's history with the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) was not as expected. During Suharto's leadership, he focused on issues of economic development and friendly relations with western countries. This friendly relationship opened the doors of the Indonesian economy through foreign loans and foreign investment to rehabilitate the Indonesian economy. Indonesia's foreign policy at that time was oriented abroad, which could be evidenced by Indonesia's tendency to side with western countries as seen from Indonesia's relationship with the US and its attitude towards socialist-communist countries such as the Soviet Union and even North Korea. then immediately cut ties with China.

Indonesia has free and active politics as a foreign policy principle that is always applied. What is meant by "free and active" is a foreign policy that in essence is neutral, but a foreign policy that is free to determine attitudes and policies towards international issues and is not a priori bound to any world power and actively contributes, both in form of thought as well as active participation in resolving conflicts, disputes, and other world problems, for the sake of realizing world order based on freedom, eternal peace, and social justice.

Furthermore, in the Jokowi Era, Indonesia reopened cooperation with China, and it can be said that there was a tendency for Indonesia to prefer China over America. However, the great temptation of China's Belt Road Initiative to make Indonesia able to build infrastructure faster is one of the reasons why Indonesia-China relations are getting stronger. There is no denying that BRI has more benefits and conveniences that are not only felt by Indonesia but also by other countries, apart from the news about the debt trap that occurred in Sri Lanka. This is because China's handling of fast-paced and easy access to Asian countries, especially Southeast Asia, prefers to work with China rather than cooperate with other countries whose procedures are quite complicated.



**Figure 3** Covid-19 data 2021

Source: <https://data.covid19.go.id/public/index.html>

When Covid-19 hit Indonesia, there was a lot of chaos—and according to researchers, this happened not only in Indonesia but also in all countries in the world. In the early days of the entry of Covid-19, the number of patients increased rapidly. In 2021, for example, Indonesia can get at least 56,899 patients affected by Covid-19 per day, not to mention monthly data that can jump higher. This is the situation a year after Covid-19 entered Indonesia, not yet the situation in 2020 whose numbers may be higher than the graphic data presented. By using this free and active principle, Indonesia then used it to collaborate on vaccines with China in purchasing the Covid-19 vaccine, and GAVI through COVAC.

So that China’s vaccine diplomacy and the COVAX framework vaccine diplomacy carried out by the US have provided a lot of assistance to the Indonesian people, whose numbers are not small as shown in the following statement.



**Figure 4** Vaccine data in Indonesia

Source: <https://data.covid19.go.id/public/index.html>

This figure looks very fantastic because of the large number of Indonesian people, however, there are still many Indonesian citizens who have not even had their first vaccine due to limited vaccine spread or running out of vaccines. However, Indonesia also realizes that we cannot rely too much on China, and how to keep diplomatic relations with America going. It needs to be emphasized once again that Indonesia's foreign policy is free and active. Free, meaning that our nation is free to establish relations with other countries in the world without having to be bound by the western block or the eastern bloc. Active, meaning that we will always try to create and realize a safe and peaceful world life. There are at least three factors that can make Indonesia remain to stick towards the principle of Free Active Politics and not be too biased towards both sides.

### **Merah Putih Vaccine**

Before the Covid-19 vaccine from China and the US circulated, Indonesia itself already had a plan to make its vaccine and give it to the Indonesian people. Jokowi hopes that Indonesia will not depend on other countries for vaccines. Speaking at the launch of the product, Jokowi this time asked his staff to make a Covid-19 vaccine. Just like several other countries, Indonesia too must participate in handling Covid-19 around the world, adding, "We also have to make our vaccine" (Asmara, 2020).

In its manufacture and development, this red and white vaccine involves at least six national institutions with different platforms; Eijkman Molecular Biology, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), University of Indonesia, Bandung Institute of Technology, Airlangga University, and Gadjah Mada University (CNN, 2021). The government targets to give a clinical trial of the Merah Putih vaccine by the end of June 2021. Unfortunately, the researchers appear to be taking longer than the government had anticipated. Therefore, due to the high demand for vaccines, Indonesian citizens not only number in the tens of millions, but also hundreds of millions, need a lot of vaccine stocks. So, the government made another alternative to use vaccines from outside first (such as vaccines from China, Russia, and America) before this Merah Putih vaccine could be given to the public. One after that, on June 28, 2022, BPOM Indonesia started the trial of Merah Putih Vaccine (BPOM, 2022).

Around the end of October or early November, two Indonesian vaccines began to be officially circulated. Inavac and Indovac. Inavac is a vaccine previously known as the Red and White Vaccine which was developed by Universitas Airlangga in collaboration with PT. Biotis Pharmaceuticals Indonesia (PT. Biotis) (Covid-19.go.id, 2022). Then, what is the difference between Indovac and Inavac? According to Indonesia Baik (2022) the difference is only in who produces the vaccine. Inavac was made by researchers from Airlangga Universitas, while Indovac was made by BUMN (State-Owned Enterprises), the Inavac vaccine with an inactivated virus platform was developed by a research team from Airlangga Universitas in collaboration with PT Biotis Pharmaceutical Indonesia. Meanwhile, Indovac with a protein subunit platform was developed by PT Bio Farma and Baylor College of Medicine. It is hoped that this vaccine can then become a booster vaccine for the Indonesian people who have received the first and second vaccines. In this case, Indonesia has proven that Indonesia tries not to depend too much on these two countries.

### **Vaccine Cooperation with Russia Together with ASEAN**

The traces of Covid-19 when it first spread around the world made everyone panic. Many countries have started implementing various ways so that their citizens can be protected from Covid-19. However, the number of people infected with the virus has not decreased. That's why WHO later declared through a press conference that Covid-19 was declared a pandemic. The world, especially Donald Trump, then blamed China for this unexpected health catastrophe.

Amid this chaos, China, the country accused of spreading the virus, has begun to take definite first steps, namely distributing masks throughout the country, and making a coronavirus vaccine that utilizes inactive virus technology. Active again, where this technology raises the possibility that the virus cannot be reactivated (Irawan et al., 2021). Only then did the US follow Russia, the European Union (EU), and several other countries that also participated in the manufacture of the vaccine – of course, Indonesia was also one of the countries participating in the manufacture of the Covid-19 vaccine, even though Jokowi only announced this vaccine on October 13, 2022. named Indovac (Pebrianto, 2022). In the same vein as the US



and China's vaccine diplomacy in Southeast Asia, Russia is leveraging its vaccines to establish a more visible presence and reclaim some relevance in the region.

The poll from the ISEAS 2020 report revealed that even when China and the US were excluded from consideration, Russia was only ASEAN's fifth "preferred and trusted strategic partner", with only Laos listing Russia as the least influential (Murphy, 2021). Again, the discussion of ASEAN-Russia cooperation, also cannot be separated from the discussion of vaccine cooperation. On July 6, 2021, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Retno LP Marsudi, and the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov chaired a special meeting at the ASEAN-Russia Ministerial level virtually. During the meeting, the Indonesian Foreign Minister encouraged the strengthening of cooperation in the health sector, especially in handling the pandemic and economic recovery (Kominfo, 2021). During the meeting, Retno expressed her opinion on two things; first, regarding cooperation in dealing with the pandemic, and second, asking Russia to better fulfil the vaccine needs of ASEAN countries through dose-sharing, and give ASEAN the main right as vaccine recipients.

Quoted from *Vietnam News* (2021), speaking at the meeting, the Russian Foreign Minister said the importance of the strategic partnership with ASEAN supports the bloc's central role in the regional architecture. Sergey Lavrov said Russia pledged to continue to actively participate in the ASEAN-led mechanism and strengthen dialogue, cooperation, and coordination in response to difficulties and challenges in the context of the unstable and complicated regional and international situation. The delegation from Russia said Russia would continue to supply vaccines to ASEAN countries and confirmed its readiness to transfer and expand vaccine production in the region and continue to organize training programs for medical experts and staff of ASEAN countries.

As coordinator of the ASEAN-Russia partnership for the 2018-2020 period, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Mahendra Siregar praised the progress of the ASEAN-Russia partnership since 2018 when ASEAN and Russia officially upgraded relations to a Strategic Partnership.

ASEAN countries highly appreciate the results of the ASEAN-Russia Special Meeting of Foreign Ministers held in July, contributing to advancing bilateral relations and joint efforts in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and promoting post-pandemic recovery.

Storey (2021) explained that cooperation with Russia is an opportunity not only for Indonesia but also for ASEAN to get more vaccine options. It's a shame that this collaboration doesn't seem to be running optimally. This is because the price of the Sputnik V Vaccine which is more expensive than other vaccines is also a factor, with a price of US\$20 for two doses, much more expensive than Pfizer (US\$13), AstraZeneca (US\$6) and Johnson and Johnson (US\$10) (Storey, 2021). So, Sputnik V only entered Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar – and even then, there was a shortage in the quantity demanded. Vietnam has negotiated with Russia to ask for 60 million vaccines but only about 1,000 doses have been delivered. As for Myanmar, General Min Aung Hlaing has stated that Russia is ready to send at least 2 million doses and is trying to negotiate up to 7 million. But it was all in vain because, in the end, these countries had gotten more vaccines from COVAX facilities, China, and America. Interestingly, Sputnik V was very successful in the Philippines, which incidentally is an ally of America with as many as 350,000 doses of the vaccine being delivered. However, this number still falls short of the 5 million doses shipped by the US, and the 20.5 million vaccines shipped by China. Russia also fared badly in other Southeast Asian countries. They offered production arrangements to Malaysia and Indonesia, but the two countries have not yet agreed to Sputnik V. However, recently due to the dwindling availability of vaccines and too much demand from the Indonesian people, in the end, the BPOM gave permission to distribute Sputnik V (BPOM, 2021). With various efforts by Indonesia to remain neutral, Indonesia is also trying various international collaborations, especially by taking advantage of ASEAN's cooperation with Russia to bring in their vaccines. Even though there had been doubts about the use of the Sputnik V vaccine, in the end, Indonesia allowed and used it. This is a crucial step for Indonesia to have a “neutral” country identity in the eyes of the international community.

### **Non-Block Country**

Having a free and active motto, Indonesia has implemented this motto into a real idea. One of them is to become one of the initiators of the Non-Aligned Movement with India, Malaysia, Egypt, and others. The Non-Aligned Movement itself is not an organization but a movement to regulate cooperation among its members in the political, economic, and social fields. As for the outside, this movement was used for countries that did not want to side with the US and the Soviet Union at that time and intended to be neutral without choosing to choose the two hegemonic ideologies that occurred at that time (Hemaputri, 2021; Nadia, 2022).

Although perhaps now there is no longer an ideological cold war between the US and the Soviet Union, the meaning of remaining neutral is still there. Indonesia itself, for example, regardless of how aggressively China is with BRI, Indonesia tries to remain neutral and establish cooperation with the US Government. Even though this could be a boomerang because of the state's half-hearted attitude, that doesn't mean it's impossible. According to the author, Indonesia's attitude is correct.

Indonesia needs China to carry out the reconstruction of the fast rail transportation that the government promised to its people, on the other hand, we also still need the United States to stay by our side, even though during the Trump presidency he did not seem unimpressed with the Asian Region, especially Southeast Asia (Hasan, 2019). So, Indonesia still holds fast to the core of the non-block movement that does not side with any party and chooses to remain neutral while maintaining good relations with countries that do have more benefits for Indonesia.

### **CONCLUSION**

To Sump up this study that competition between the US and China has become widespread. They seek to spread their hegemony through trade competition—which is the forerunner of global competition between China and the US. In the first phase, the WTO tried to mediate between the two sides, and for a moment it seems that both China and America agree with

the mediation. However, who would have thought that after the meditation, America was even more aggressive in increasing tariffs on the Chinese side? In the end, this meditation failed, and the trade war is still going on today. All of that seems to have been delayed again due to Covid-19, which has spread throughout the world and has resulted in a lot of lockdowns being carried out.

The US, especially then-President Trump, accused China of being behind the current pandemic and demanding responsibility. China itself then proved its responsibility by spreading masks throughout the country to the point of being called mask diplomacy—and making this important momentum a turnaround for them to clear the name that had been tarnished by the US. Shortly after, China also demonstrated its commitment to accountability by issuing a Covid-19 vaccine.

This vaccine is then distributed by China by donating to countries that cannot afford it and countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brazil buy the vaccine from China. The US itself is said to be late in handling vaccines because it prioritizes its citizens first, and then they help other countries through COVAX. And it looks like the competition from the trade war is creeping into the world of Health.

From Indonesia's point of view, responding to the trade war between America and China, trying not to rely too much on America or China. We must as much as possible be neutral and maintain good relations with both countries (America and China). After all, all countries have their intentions, and so does Indonesia. Cooperating with the Belt Road Initiative does not mean that we can depend on China continuously, and Indonesia understands this very well. So, the steps taken by Indonesia when there was a pandemic were to make their vaccines in the hope that Indonesia would not be too dependent on other countries, secondly, by collaborating with Russia and emphasizing that the ASEAN community, which Indonesia is also part of, should be prioritized in getting the Sputnik V vaccine. then other countries—although then this does not seem to mean much because there are so many obstacles in it, and the last one is because Indonesia is part of a non-block country. As part of the founding

father of the non-block movement, Indonesia tries to use its important values, namely trying not to be too biased towards one side, and as much as possible to remain neutral.

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