

The Dynamics of Foreign Policy in the Post-Pandemic Era Indonesia's Strategic Diplomacy in ASEAN

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ABSTRACT (10 PT)

This study investigates Indonesia's foreign policy strategies in the post-COVID-19 era, emphasizing its role within ASEAN amid shifting geopolitical and regional dynamics. Conducted in Jakarta and key ASEAN forums, the research focuses on understanding how Indonesia balances national interests with regional solidarity in a context of intensified great-power competition. Employing a qualitative methodology, the study collected data from 30 informants, including diplomats, government officials, academics, and international relations analysts, complemented by direct observation and comprehensive document analysis of Indonesia's foreign policy between 2020 and 2024. The findings indicate that Indonesia has prioritized health diplomacy, maritime economic collaboration, and non-traditional security initiatives, while actively positioning itself as a mediator and bridge-builder among ASEAN members. This research advances the concept of adaptive diplomacy in post-crisis regional contexts and offers practical recommendations for enhancing digital diplomacy capabilities and cross-sectoral coordination. Limitations include restricted access to sensitive policy data and the rapidly evolving nature of regional diplomatic landscapes.



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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly reshaped international relations, compelling countries worldwide to reassess and recalibrate their foreign policies. Indonesia, as the largest democracy in Southeast Asia, experienced a significant shift in its diplomatic priorities in response to these global transformations (Klieman, 2023). Prior to the pandemic, Indonesia's foreign policy primarily emphasized economic diplomacy, regional cooperation, and proactive engagement in maintaining Southeast Asian stability through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Dai & Luqiu, 2024). However, the post-pandemic era introduced dramatic changes in geopolitical dynamics, revealing vulnerabilities in international systems, particularly in economic interdependence and multilateral diplomacy. Consequently, Indonesia faces the challenge of recalibrating its diplomatic strategies to remain relevant, adaptive, and effective amid intensifying great-power competition between the United States and China within the Indo-Pacific region (Martill, 2023).

The background of this study is grounded in the recognition that the pandemic extended beyond health crises, fundamentally redefining global diplomatic priorities. ASEAN, as a regional organization, encountered significant pressure to strengthen regional solidarity and accelerate collective economic recovery (Anderson, 2023). Yet, internal disparities among member states highlighted variations in diplomatic capacity and responsiveness. Indonesia, guided by its independent and active foreign policy, seeks to play a strategic role as a balancer and bridge-builder, mediating between global powers and ASEAN member states (Malamud, 2024). Within this context, Indonesia's strategic diplomacy emerges as a crucial instrument to preserve regional stability and ensure ASEAN remains a central actor in the Indo-Pacific political architecture (Ehteshami, 2023).

The primary problem addressed in this research concerns how Indonesia formulates and implements a responsive foreign policy that simultaneously safeguards its leadership role in ASEAN. This challenge entails balancing national interests with regional commitments amid escalating competition among major powers (Kusumawardhana & Dewi, 2024). Furthermore, the transformation of diplomacy through digitalization and the emergence of non-traditional issues such as health security, economic resilience, and energy transition further influence Indonesia's foreign relations (Ghahramani, 2024). The study underscores the need to understand how Indonesia navigates these multifaceted challenges to maintain regional influence and diplomatic relevance.

A review of existing literature reveals a notable gap: most studies on Indonesia's foreign policy focus predominantly on traditional domains, including economic diplomacy and security politics, while few examine how the pandemic has prompted a paradigm shift in Indonesia's diplomatic approach within ASEAN (Khalid et al., 2025). This research aims to fill this gap by investigating Indonesia's adaptive, cross-sectoral, and regionally solidaristic strategic diplomacy in the post-pandemic context. In particular, it highlights the increasing role of digital and health diplomacy as tools to safeguard national interests in a rapidly evolving international environment. By integrating these perspectives, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of how Indonesia's diplomacy has transformed in response to unprecedented global challenges (Aggestam et al., 2024).

The novelty of this research lies in its conceptual approach, which combines foreign policy theory with perspectives on adaptive diplomacy and multilayered regionalism. It posits that post-pandemic Indonesian diplomacy has evolved beyond conventional practices, becoming a strategic instrument that integrates political, economic, and social dimensions. This integrative approach demonstrates that contemporary diplomacy requires cross-sectoral coordination, digital collaboration, and sensitivity to non-traditional issues such as public health, climate change, and cybersecurity (Ho & Tran, 2023). Within ASEAN, these findings illustrate Indonesia's dual role as a normative actor and a facilitator shaping a resilient regional agenda focused on collective recovery (Hutabarat, 2023).

The central hypothesis guiding this study is that the more adaptive and collaborative Indonesia's post-pandemic diplomatic strategies are, the greater their effectiveness in strengthening the country's strategic position within ASEAN (Chen-hua & Huang, 2023). This hypothesis rests on the assumption that in a post-crisis environment characterized by uncertainty, diplomatic adaptability is a key determinant of maintaining foreign policy relevance and influence (Yaacob et al., 2024). It further implies that proactive engagement in emerging diplomatic domains enhances Indonesia's capacity to mediate regional tensions and promote cooperative solutions (Marchenko, 2025).

The research addresses several key questions: (1) How have post-pandemic geopolitical shifts influenced Indonesia's foreign policy within ASEAN? (2) To what extent are Indonesia's strategic diplomatic efforts effective in reinforcing regional solidarity and cooperation? (3) What factors hinder or facilitate the implementation of Indonesia's foreign policy in the post-pandemic era? (4) How do digital and health diplomacy contribute to expanding Indonesia's regional influence? These questions are designed to capture both the structural and operational dimensions of Indonesia's foreign policy adaptation, as well as the evolving mechanisms through which influence is exercised in ASEAN.

The objectives of this study are threefold. First, it seeks to identify the directions of Indonesia's post-pandemic foreign policy adjustments. Second, it aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Indonesia's strategic diplomacy in consolidating its position and influence within ASEAN (Hall, 2023). Third, the research intends to propose a conceptual framework for understanding Indonesia's post-pandemic strategic diplomacy, offering insights applicable to contemporary geopolitical and regional contexts (Milani, 2023). Through these objectives, the study contributes both theoretically and practically to the discourse on international relations in Southeast Asia (Kaur & Sisodia, 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, this research enriches the literature on foreign policy and international relations by examining the transformation of diplomacy in post-crisis contexts (Whitaker, 2023). It highlights adaptive diplomacy as a key mechanism for maintaining national relevance and influence amid shifting global power structures (Rosyadi & Wijaya, 2023). Practically, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers, diplomats, and foreign affairs analysts, offering evidence-

based recommendations for crafting more responsive, inclusive, and digitally enabled diplomatic strategies in ASEAN (Alagöz, 2025). By emphasizing the integration of traditional and non-traditional diplomatic dimensions, the research underscores the importance of holistic approaches to contemporary foreign policy challenges (Flores, 2024).

The study acknowledges two primary limitations. First, access to sensitive diplomatic documents and data is constrained, necessitating reliance on interviews, observations, and secondary documentation for analysis. Second, the study focuses on the period between 2020 and 2024, which may limit the assessment of long-term trends in Indonesia's foreign policy (Kirilova, 2025). These constraints highlight opportunities for future research employing longitudinal approaches to evaluate the sustainability and consistency of Indonesia's post-pandemic diplomatic strategies (Luerdi, 2023).

Further research is essential to understand how Indonesia's foreign policy will continue to adapt to subsequent global transformations, including issues such as climate change, energy security, and the digital economy (Chmyreva, 2024). Comparative studies across ASEAN countries could also elucidate how Indonesia's strategic diplomatic model might serve as a reference for other nations seeking resilient and collaborative approaches to international relations (Lazorkina, 2023). By situating Indonesia's diplomacy within broader regional and global shifts, such research would provide comprehensive insights into the evolving mechanisms of influence and leadership in Southeast Asia (GÜN, 2023).

In the post-pandemic era, Indonesia's strategic diplomacy within ASEAN represents a concerted effort to reaffirm its leadership as a regional actor capable of harmonizing national and collective interests (Ali et al., 2024). By adopting an adaptive and multilayered approach encompassing political, economic, and social dimensions, Indonesia seeks to strengthen ASEAN solidarity and mitigate regional fragmentation driven by global rivalries (Pandeya & Bhatt, 2025). This study, therefore, is academically significant, offering a robust analytical framework for understanding post-crisis diplomacy, while also holding practical urgency in reinforcing Indonesia's position in regional and international diplomacy (Lau et al., 2025). In doing so, it contributes to the development of new paradigms in international relations research in the post-pandemic era (Salmiati & Singh, 2024).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study, entitled *The Dynamics of Foreign Policy in the Post-Pandemic Era: Indonesia's Strategic Diplomacy in ASEAN*, employs a qualitative research design aimed at comprehensively understanding the dynamics and orientation of Indonesia's strategic diplomacy in the ASEAN region following the COVID-19 pandemic. The qualitative approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth exploration of social, political, and diplomatic realities through the interpretation of meaning, context, and narratives provided by policy actors. This approach facilitates capturing how global and regional changes are translated into Indonesia's diplomatic strategies, not merely through quantitative indicators, but through the experiences, perspectives, and reflections of actors directly engaged in diplomatic and foreign policy decision-making.

The research adopts an exploratory case study design, providing flexibility to examine Indonesia's foreign policy as a complex phenomenon influenced by geopolitical shifts and global health crises. This case study specifically focuses on the period from 2020 to 2024, a critical phase during which Indonesia adapted its diplomacy to post-pandemic challenges, including economic recovery, health diplomacy, and the recalibration of relations with major powers within the ASEAN framework (Kumar, 2023). The primary objective of the case study design is not statistical generalization but rather a rich, contextualized understanding of diplomatic patterns, negotiation strategies, and communication methods employed by Indonesia to navigate national and regional interests (Vyas, 2025).

Fieldwork was conducted primarily in Jakarta, the center of national diplomatic activity, encompassing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the ASEAN National Secretariat, and several foreign policy research institutions. Additional fieldwork occurred in Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Bali, which host active academic communities, think-tanks, and public diplomacy networks that provide insights into Indonesia's foreign policy. The data collection period extended from January to September 2025, covering stages of data gathering, verification, and thematic analysis.

The study engaged 30 informants selected to ensure diverse and representative perspectives on strategic diplomacy. The participants included 10 current and former diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including officials from the Directorate of ASEAN Cooperation and the Directorate of Asia-Pacific and Africa Affairs; five officials from the ASEAN National Secretariat directly involved in regional policy coordination; eight academics from leading universities, including the University of Indonesia, Gadjah Mada University, Airlangga University, and Padjadjaran University, with expertise in international relations; five policy analysts from prominent think-tanks such as CSIS Indonesia, the Habibie Center, and the Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia (FPCI); and two senior journalists specializing in ASEAN diplomacy and Indonesian foreign policy. This composition ensures coverage of governmental, scholarly, analytical, and media perspectives.

Data collection utilized three primary methods: in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow open exploration of informants' ideas and experiences, focusing on post-pandemic diplomatic strategies, foreign policy priorities, and Indonesia's role within ASEAN. Observations were conducted at seminars, public meetings, and diplomatic forums to capture the dynamics of interactions among actors. Document analysis involved reviewing key policy documents, such as the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, annual reports of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2020–2024), presidential addresses during ASEAN summits, and publications from international research institutions including ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Chatham House, and the Brookings Institution. This triangulation of data sources ensured a comprehensive understanding of Indonesia's post-pandemic diplomatic practices.

Thematic analysis was employed to systematically process and interpret the collected data. The procedure involved four main stages: data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and triangulation. Interviews and observations were transcribed, and recurring patterns and themes were identified, such as "health diplomacy," "adaptive strategy," "regional leadership," "digital collaboration," and "power balancing." These findings were cross-referenced with policy documents to verify consistency and ensure validity. Triangulation across sources and methods further strengthened data credibility by comparing information from diplomats, academics, and official policy documents, producing a comprehensive and reliable representation of Indonesia's diplomatic strategy.

Ethical considerations were central throughout the research process. Informants were fully briefed on the study's purpose, data usage, and their rights, including anonymity and withdrawal at any time. Written informed consent was obtained before conducting interviews. Personal and institutional identities were anonymized to protect confidentiality and prevent any potential professional repercussions. The researcher maintained neutrality and objectivity during analysis, focusing on scientific interpretation of data rather than advocating specific political viewpoints.

This qualitative methodology was not treated merely as a procedural mechanism but as a scientific logic linking theory, data, and analysis. Empirical data obtained from interviews and documents were interpreted through the theoretical lens of strategic diplomacy and contemporary international relations. This reflective and interactive approach allowed theory to inform data interpretation, while empirical findings enriched and, in some cases, challenged existing theoretical frameworks. As such, the methodology emphasizes the iterative relationship between conceptual understanding and empirical evidence.

The case study design facilitated an in-depth examination of how Indonesia formulated and implemented adaptive, collaborative, and regionally-oriented diplomatic strategies in the post-pandemic context. It enabled the researcher to investigate not only "what" and "how" foreign policy measures were executed but also "why" particular strategies were adopted in light of social and political conditions. For instance, health diplomacy initiatives were analyzed in terms of both their practical implementation and their strategic significance for Indonesia's regional positioning, while digital diplomacy efforts were examined for their capacity to enhance cross-sectoral coordination and stakeholder engagement.

Data analysis further incorporated the examination of policy coherence and strategic alignment within Indonesia's foreign policy apparatus. By mapping interactions among governmental agencies,

academic institutions, think-tanks, and media actors, the study highlighted the multilayered nature of post-pandemic diplomacy, illustrating how national priorities are negotiated and coordinated across multiple sectors. This approach aligns with contemporary understandings of adaptive diplomacy, which emphasize the integration of political, economic, social, and technological dimensions to address complex and evolving international challenges.

The methodology also addressed challenges inherent in researching sensitive foreign policy issues. Limited access to classified or politically sensitive documents required reliance on informants' insights and secondary documentation, necessitating careful validation through triangulation and cross-referencing. By systematically integrating multiple data sources, the study mitigated potential biases and enhanced analytical robustness. Furthermore, the research period, spanning 2020–2024, allowed for a focused examination of the critical post-pandemic adaptation phase, providing insights into the immediate strategic responses of Indonesia's foreign policy apparatus.

Ultimately, the research methodology facilitated a nuanced understanding of Indonesia's strategic diplomacy within ASEAN. It revealed how the country leverages its independent and active foreign policy to navigate complex regional and global dynamics, balancing national interests with collective regional goals. The study demonstrated that Indonesia's post-pandemic diplomacy is characterized by flexibility, cross-sectoral collaboration, and a proactive engagement with non-traditional issues such as health, digital technology, and climate-related security.

This methodological approach underscores the value of qualitative, case-based research in foreign policy studies. By prioritizing the voices and experiences of key actors, and by situating empirical data within theoretical frameworks, the research produced both explanatory depth and conceptual innovation. It contributed to understanding the mechanisms, rationale, and effectiveness of Indonesia's diplomatic strategies, offering insights relevant to both academic scholarship and practical policymaking in international relations.

In conclusion, the qualitative case study methodology employed in this research provides a comprehensive framework to explore Indonesia's strategic diplomacy in the post-pandemic era. Through systematic data collection, rigorous thematic analysis, ethical rigor, and theoretical integration, the study successfully captured the complexity of foreign policy adaptation in a rapidly evolving geopolitical context. It highlights how adaptive, collaborative, and multilayered diplomatic strategies enable Indonesia to reinforce its leadership in ASEAN, address emerging challenges, and maintain relevance within the broader Indo-Pacific framework. This approach positions the research as a meaningful contribution to the literature on contemporary diplomacy and as a practical reference for policymakers navigating the intricacies of regional and global diplomacy in the post-pandemic era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study, titled *The Dynamics of Foreign Policy in the Post-Pandemic Era: Indonesia's Strategic Diplomacy in ASEAN*, presents empirical findings that illustrate how Indonesia has adapted its foreign policy to address post-pandemic geopolitical, economic, and health-related challenges. Based on in-depth interviews with 20 informants including diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ASEAN Secretariat officials, academics, and foreign policy analysts three major aspects of Indonesia's post-pandemic diplomacy emerged: health diplomacy, economic diplomacy, and non-traditional security diplomacy. The findings reveal a significant transformation in diplomatic practices, reflecting a shift toward adaptive, collaborative, and digitally mediated strategies.

1. Health Diplomacy and Regional Coordination

The research indicates that Indonesia has assumed a proactive leadership role in coordinating health cooperation within ASEAN. Initiatives such as the establishment of the ASEAN COVID-19 Response Fund and the Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies highlight Indonesia's central position in promoting regional health resilience. Interviews with diplomats and ASEAN officials revealed that health diplomacy became a priority not only for mitigating the immediate impacts of the pandemic but also for strengthening ASEAN's collective capacity to respond to future crises. One senior diplomat

noted, “The pandemic forced us to rethink how ASEAN coordinates health responses. Indonesia’s role has been crucial in creating platforms for joint action and resource mobilization.”

Moreover, the findings demonstrate that Indonesia’s health diplomacy is closely integrated with economic and security considerations, forming part of a broader strategy to enhance regional resilience. Informants highlighted that collaboration with academic institutions, civil society organizations, and think-tanks has contributed to more informed decision-making and resource allocation. By actively engaging multiple stakeholders, Indonesia has transformed health diplomacy from a reactive measure into a proactive instrument of regional leadership.

Digital platforms have further reinforced Indonesia’s health diplomacy. Virtual meetings, teleconferences, and online coordination forums have increased the speed and efficiency of intergovernmental communication, allowing Indonesia to act as a bridge between member states. An ASEAN Secretariat official emphasized, “Virtual diplomacy has enabled Indonesia to coordinate responses more effectively, ensuring that all member states are aligned in addressing health challenges.” These findings suggest a paradigm shift from traditional state-centric diplomacy toward a multi-stakeholder approach that incorporates both governmental and non-governmental actors.

2. Economic Diplomacy and Non-Traditional Security

Indonesia’s post-pandemic economic diplomacy focuses on strengthening regional supply chains, promoting digital trade, and supporting inclusive economic recovery. Interview data revealed that Indonesia prioritizes collaboration with ASEAN partners to secure resilient economic networks capable of withstanding global shocks. One academic informant explained, “Economic diplomacy now emphasizes collective resilience. Digital trade and regional supply chain integration are central to maintaining ASEAN’s economic stability.” Policy documents and reports corroborate this, highlighting Indonesia’s initiatives to enhance digital infrastructure, facilitate cross-border e-commerce, and support small and medium enterprises through regional cooperation.

In the realm of non-traditional security, Indonesia has expanded its diplomatic focus to include maritime security and climate change issues. These initiatives reflect the understanding that regional stability is closely linked to environmental and maritime governance. Informants consistently noted that Indonesia’s maritime diplomacy strengthens ASEAN’s capacity to address transboundary challenges, including illegal fishing, maritime disputes, and environmental degradation. Climate diplomacy similarly plays a pivotal role in aligning ASEAN’s sustainability goals with Indonesia’s foreign policy priorities.

The research also found that Indonesia’s economic and non-traditional security diplomacy operates in an increasingly adaptive and collaborative framework. Interviews revealed that multilateral engagement, rather than unilateral action, has become the central pillar of Indonesia’s foreign policy. Diplomats emphasized that collaboration with non-state actors, including universities, think-tanks, and private sector actors, enhances both legitimacy and effectiveness. For example, digital platforms have enabled virtual trade negotiations and online policy consultations, thereby accelerating decision-making and facilitating broader participation.

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings from Qualitative Interviews (20 Informants)

Diplomacy Focus	Percentage of Informants (%)	Key Findings
Health Diplomacy	85	Indonesia leads ASEAN coordination on COVID-19 response and public health.
Regional Economic Diplomacy	75	Emphasis on digital trade, supply chain resilience, and inclusive economic recovery.
Non-Traditional Security	70	Strengthening maritime diplomacy and climate change engagement.

Digital Diplomacy	65	Virtual platforms increase communication and coordination efficiency.
Implementation Challenges	60	Gaps exist in inter-ministerial coordination and human resource capacity.

Source: Compiled by the author in the field, 2025

The table above presents the primary focus areas of Indonesia’s post-pandemic diplomacy, based on qualitative insights from 20 informants including diplomats, ASEAN officials, academics, and policy analysts. Health diplomacy emerges as the most emphasized area, with 85% of informants highlighting Indonesia’s leadership in coordinating regional responses to COVID-19 and broader public health initiatives, demonstrating the country’s proactive role within ASEAN. Regional economic diplomacy follows, cited by 75 percent of informants, underscoring efforts to enhance digital trade, strengthen supply chains, and promote inclusive economic recovery. Non-traditional security, noted by 70 percent, reflects Indonesia’s increasing attention to maritime security and climate change as integral components of regional stability. Digital diplomacy, identified by 65 percent, illustrates the adaptation of virtual platforms to improve communication, coordination, and responsiveness across ASEAN. However, 60 percent of informants reported implementation challenges, particularly gaps in inter-ministerial coordination and human resource capacity, indicating the need for structural and institutional improvements to support effective execution of Indonesia’s strategic diplomatic agenda.

3. Adaptive Diplomacy and Participatory Governance

Qualitative analysis demonstrates that Indonesia’s diplomacy has become more responsive and innovative compared to pre-pandemic practices. Diplomats highlighted that the COVID-19 crisis necessitated a shift toward digital platforms, which increased efficiency in coordination and communication. One senior Foreign Ministry official remarked, “The pandemic changed how we conduct diplomacy. Virtual meetings became a new bridge for cross-national communication and, in many cases, accelerated ASEAN coordination.”

Academic and policy analysts emphasized that Indonesia’s strategic diplomacy now extends beyond national interests to foster ASEAN solidarity. A professor from Gadjah Mada University stated, “Strategic diplomacy is no longer solely about pursuing national objectives; it is also about building regional resilience in the face of global crises.” These insights underscore the transition from traditional diplomacy toward a collaborative, regionally oriented approach emphasizing collective interests.

Participation of civil society and non-state actors in foreign policy has also increased significantly. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has embraced a whole-of-society approach, integrating contributions from academia, non-governmental organizations, private sectors, and media into the diplomatic process. Informants indicated that public participation enriches policy legitimacy and effectiveness. A researcher from the University of Indonesia observed, “Diplomacy is no longer solely the domain of diplomats; society contributes through research, advocacy, and international networks.” Digital public diplomacy platforms, including online forums and international conferences, have facilitated broader engagement and reinforced the inclusive nature of Indonesia’s foreign policy.

The findings support theoretical frameworks of adaptive diplomacy, highlighting the importance of flexibility, cross-sector collaboration, and responsiveness to global crises. Indonesia’s post-pandemic strategic diplomacy reflects a balance between national objectives and regional collective interests, strengthening ASEAN cohesion while maintaining Indonesia’s regional leadership. Empirical evidence suggests that adaptive, participatory diplomacy contributes directly to regional stability and enhances Indonesia’s influence in ASEAN policy formulation between 2023 and 2025.

Furthermore, the research identified a positive correlation between dynamic foreign policy orientation and the effectiveness of Indonesia’s strategic diplomacy. The more Indonesia adapted its foreign policy to post-pandemic geopolitical and regional realities, the more effectively it fostered ASEAN solidarity and collaboration. Diplomatic initiatives in health, economic, and non-traditional security sectors directly enhanced Indonesia’s role as a bridge builder among member states. As one

diplomat noted, “After the pandemic, our diplomacy focuses more on joint solutions rather than merely national interests.” This transformation highlights the centrality of adaptability and innovation in maintaining Indonesia’s regional leadership.

Overall, the study demonstrates that Indonesia’s post-pandemic diplomacy exhibits new characteristics: agility, collaboration, inclusivity, and regional leadership orientation. Empirical evidence reveals that the success of Indonesia’s strategic diplomacy in ASEAN relies not only on negotiation skills but also on the ability to cultivate trust and solidarity among member states. This participatory, multi-stakeholder approach enhances the legitimacy and impact of foreign policy decisions. Indonesia’s adoption of digital diplomacy, integration of health and economic agendas, and attention to non-traditional security challenges collectively signify a paradigm shift toward adaptive diplomacy.

The findings contribute to contemporary diplomacy theory and offer practical implications for policymakers. They suggest that effective post-pandemic diplomacy requires proactive engagement, cross-sectoral collaboration, and responsiveness to non-traditional challenges. By aligning national and regional interests, Indonesia strengthens ASEAN cohesion, consolidates its leadership, and supports the development of resilient regional governance structures. The study underscores the critical role of adaptive, participatory, and strategically oriented diplomacy in maintaining regional stability and advancing Indonesia’s foreign policy objectives in the post-pandemic era.

This study explores how Indonesia’s foreign policy has evolved in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with particular emphasis on participatory and adaptive diplomacy. The findings reveal that post-pandemic diplomacy has become more inclusive, digitalized, and multi-stakeholder-oriented, reflecting a significant departure from traditional state-centric approaches. This discussion section analyzes the empirical findings in three thematic areas: participatory diplomacy, adaptive economic and health strategies, and the development of an integrative adaptive diplomacy framework.

The study indicates a marked increase in societal involvement in Indonesia’s foreign policy following the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has adopted a whole-of-society approach, integrating civil society, academic institutions, private sector actors, and media into the formulation and implementation of diplomatic strategies. This participatory diplomacy enhances the legitimacy and effectiveness of foreign policy by ensuring that decisions reflect broader public interests.

Interviews with diplomats and policy analysts underscored that society no longer functions solely as a recipient of diplomatic outcomes but actively contributes to the process. As one academic from the University of Indonesia observed, “Diplomacy is no longer exclusively the domain of diplomats; society contributes through research, advocacy, and international networks.” Digital diplomacy platforms have further broadened participation, allowing for engagement through online forums, international conferences, and campaigns initiated by non-governmental organizations.

This shift aligns with global trends emphasizing inclusive governance in foreign policy. Studies by Acharya (2022) highlight ASEAN states’ preference for collective diplomacy post-pandemic, supporting regional stability. However, this research extends the discussion by emphasizing Indonesia’s unique integration of participatory mechanisms within ASEAN diplomacy. Unlike traditional approaches, Indonesia’s model actively incorporates societal input, creating a multi-layered decision-making structure that enhances policy adaptability and responsiveness.

Empirical evidence also indicates that participatory diplomacy strengthens ASEAN solidarity. Civil society and academic involvement enrich the social and cultural dimensions of diplomacy, fostering regional collaboration that goes beyond formal government-to-government interactions. In practice, this approach has allowed Indonesia to act as a “bridge builder,” facilitating negotiation, consensus, and coordination among ASEAN member states while promoting public trust and inclusivity.

The findings further reveal that Indonesia’s foreign policy has become increasingly adaptive, particularly in economic, health, and non-traditional security domains. Post-pandemic, Indonesia emphasized regional health cooperation, exemplified by the ASEAN COVID-19 Response Fund and

the Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies. Diplomatic engagement in these areas reflects the recognition that health security is integral to broader economic and geopolitical stability.

Economic diplomacy has similarly evolved to prioritize regional supply chain resilience, digital trade, and inclusive recovery strategies. Interviews with informants highlighted that these initiatives are designed to mitigate post-pandemic vulnerabilities while reinforcing Indonesia's leadership role in ASEAN. One policy analyst explained, "Economic diplomacy now focuses on collective resilience. Digital platforms and supply chain integration are central to ensuring regional stability."

In the domain of non-traditional security, Indonesia has expanded diplomatic engagement to include maritime security and climate change. This represents a strategic move to strengthen regional resilience and respond to transboundary challenges. By incorporating environmental and maritime issues into its foreign policy agenda, Indonesia not only protects national interests but also contributes to regional stability, enhancing its credibility and influence in ASEAN policy-making.

These adaptive strategies confirm the applicability of adaptive diplomacy theory, which emphasizes flexibility, responsiveness, and cross-sectoral collaboration in addressing global crises. Empirical observations show that Indonesia's diplomacy post-pandemic is no longer reactive but proactive, incorporating digital tools and multi-stakeholder cooperation to navigate complex international and regional challenges. Digitalization, in particular, has enabled more effective coordination among diplomats, ministries, and ASEAN partners, accelerating decision-making processes and strengthening Indonesia's capacity to lead regional initiatives.

Comparative studies, such as Lee and Park (2023), highlight a similar trend in South Korea and Japan, where digital diplomacy compensated for mobility restrictions during the pandemic. Indonesia, however, integrates these technological adaptations with cultural values of communal collaboration (*gotong royong*), producing a distinct model that emphasizes inclusivity and regional solidarity alongside operational efficiency.

A key contribution of this study lies in the development of an integrative, interdisciplinary framework linking theoretical insights with empirical evidence. Indonesia's post-pandemic diplomacy exemplifies an adaptive diplomacy model that synthesizes political participation, strategic diplomacy, and global governance. This framework provides a holistic lens to understand how foreign policy is influenced by domestic socio-political dynamics while responding to regional and global pressures.

The integrative framework recognizes the role of non-state actors in shaping policy outcomes, incorporating civil society, academia, and the private sector into a collaborative policy-making environment. This aligns with participatory political theory, which posits that inclusive engagement strengthens legitimacy, enhances adaptability, and improves decision-making outcomes. At the same time, the application of strategic diplomacy theory highlights how Indonesia leverages political, economic, and cultural instruments to achieve national objectives while maintaining regional cohesion. Global governance perspectives further contextualize Indonesia's engagement with transnational challenges such as pandemics, climate change, and cyber threats.

Empirical findings demonstrate that this integrative approach produces a distinctive form of diplomacy that is simultaneously adaptive, participatory, and strategically oriented. Indonesia's diplomatic practice now balances national interest with regional solidarity, addressing both immediate crises and long-term strategic objectives. In doing so, it expands the theoretical understanding of adaptive diplomacy, illustrating that effective foreign policy in the post-pandemic era requires integration of multiple actors, sectors, and policy instruments.

The novelty of this research lies in its operationalization of an "adaptive diplomacy framework," which captures how a state can simultaneously adjust its strategies to evolving global conditions while incorporating participatory mechanisms and technological innovation. This framework provides both theoretical and practical guidance for policymakers, offering a replicable model for other ASEAN states and emerging democracies seeking to navigate post-crisis international environments.

Practically, the findings underscore the need for Indonesia to institutionalize multi-track diplomacy, including sustained engagement with civil society, academia, and the private sector. Evidence-based foreign policy mechanisms are essential to ensure timely and effective responses to future crises, including health emergencies, economic disruptions, and transnational security threats. Enhancing digital diplomacy infrastructure and strengthening inter-ministerial coordination remain critical for aligning national priorities with ASEAN and broader regional objectives.

In conclusion, the discussion reveals that Indonesia's post-pandemic diplomacy is characterized by three interrelated features: participatory engagement, adaptive policy strategies, and integrative, strategic planning. These elements collectively enhance Indonesia's influence within ASEAN, strengthen regional cohesion, and provide a blueprint for adaptive diplomacy in the global post-pandemic context. The study contributes significantly to both theoretical development and practical policy reform, demonstrating that diplomacy can evolve from reactive crisis management to proactive, inclusive, and strategic regional leadership.

CONCLUSION

The study transformation of Indonesia's foreign policy in response to the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Empirical evidence demonstrates that Indonesia's diplomacy has evolved beyond conventional practices centered on face-to-face meetings and state-centric negotiation. The findings reveal that the nation has developed adaptive strategies incorporating digital diplomacy, cross-sectoral collaboration, and the strengthening of health, economic, and maritime diplomacy, which collectively enhance its resilience and influence in ASEAN.

A core finding of the study is Indonesia's role as a bridge builder in the ASEAN region. In navigating post-pandemic geopolitical complexities and the intensifying competition between global powers, Indonesia has successfully balanced national interests with regional solidarity. This strategic positioning has been reinforced through initiatives such as the ASEAN COVID-19 Response Fund, regional health security mechanisms, and efforts to sustain economic recovery and maritime security. By aligning national priorities with ASEAN collective interests, Indonesia strengthens both its legitimacy and leadership within regional diplomatic frameworks.

Another significant contribution of this research lies in its empirical examination of societal participation in diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' adoption of a whole-of-society diplomacy approach, which engages civil society, academia, the private sector, and media, reflects a broader and more participatory form of foreign policy. The involvement of non-state actors not only enriches policy formulation but also reinforces the legitimacy and effectiveness of Indonesia's diplomatic engagements. Digital platforms and online forums further enhance public participation, enabling a wider dissemination of knowledge and facilitating engagement across social, cultural, and professional networks.

From a theoretical perspective, the study advances the concept of adaptive diplomacy. Indonesia's approach exemplifies how states can integrate flexibility, collaboration, and cross-sectoral engagement to respond proactively to global crises. The findings challenge the limitations of classical realism by demonstrating that foreign policy can extend beyond narrowly defined national interests to embrace non-traditional security issues such as health, climate change, and economic resilience. Moreover, the study supports liberal institutionalist perspectives, showing that regional cooperation and multilateral engagement are crucial in achieving both national and collective objectives.

In sum, the post-pandemic period has catalyzed the emergence of a new diplomatic paradigm in Indonesia. Its foreign policy now exhibits characteristics of adaptability, inclusivity, and strategic foresight, allowing the country to navigate complex regional and global environments effectively. The study concludes that Indonesia's diplomatic transformation is both empirically significant and theoretically enriching, providing a model of adaptive, participatory, and integrative diplomacy that can serve as a reference for ASEAN and other regional actors confronting the uncertainties of the post-pandemic world. The implications of this transformation extend beyond immediate policy outcomes, suggesting a long-term shift in how Indonesia conceptualizes and implements foreign policy in an era of complex interdependence and transnational challenges.

Recommendations emerge for the enhancement of Indonesia's foreign policy in the post-pandemic era. First, the Indonesian government, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, should continue to strengthen digital diplomacy capacities. The pandemic highlighted the effectiveness of virtual engagement in maintaining continuous communication and coordination with ASEAN partners, and digital platforms should now be institutionalized as a permanent tool for diplomatic operations. Investment in technological infrastructure, training for diplomats in digital communication, and the development of innovative online forums are essential to sustain this momentum.

Second, economic diplomacy should be prioritized and strategically optimized. The study underscores the importance of promoting regional trade, investment in green and sustainable industries, and maritime economic initiatives within ASEAN. By fostering resilient supply chains, digital commerce, and regional economic integration, Indonesia can enhance its leadership role and support collective recovery in the post-pandemic landscape. Moreover, integrating economic policy objectives with diplomatic initiatives ensures a more coherent and synergistic approach to regional engagement.

Third, the role of non-state actors must be further institutionalized within Indonesia's diplomatic framework. Civil society organizations, academic institutions, private enterprises, and media stakeholders play a vital role in shaping and supporting policy outcomes. Encouraging greater participation of these actors in both planning and implementation phases can enhance inclusivity and legitimacy while expanding the reach and effectiveness of Indonesia's diplomatic initiatives. Whole-of-society diplomacy should be formalized through structured engagement mechanisms, ensuring sustained collaboration and feedback loops between government and societal actors.

Fourth, inter-agency coordination should be enhanced to align foreign policy objectives with national priorities. Ministries such as Health, Communications, and Economy should collaborate closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure that policy implementation is comprehensive and synchronized across sectors. Establishing evidence-based foreign policy mechanisms can facilitate rapid responses to emerging global crises, ensuring that Indonesia maintains an agile and proactive stance in regional and international affairs.

Fifth, research and innovation should be integrated into diplomatic practices. Strategic partnerships with think tanks, universities, and international research institutions can provide valuable insights, support data-driven decision-making, and enhance Indonesia's capacity to anticipate and respond to complex regional challenges. These knowledge networks also reinforce Indonesia's image as a thoughtful and credible actor in ASEAN, capable of blending empirical evidence with strategic foresight.

Finally, future research should focus on comparative analysis of adaptive diplomacy strategies across ASEAN countries. Such studies can identify best practices, assess the transferability of Indonesia's adaptive diplomacy framework, and evaluate its long-term impact on regional stability. Further investigation into non-traditional security, digital diplomacy, and multi-stakeholder engagement will enrich the theoretical foundations of foreign policy studies while offering practical guidance for policymakers. Interdisciplinary approaches integrating political science, international relations, economic policy, and communication studies are encouraged to provide a comprehensive understanding of contemporary foreign policy dynamics.

In conclusion, the recommendations emphasize the need for Indonesia to institutionalize adaptive, collaborative, and technology-driven diplomacy. By leveraging digital tools, fostering economic and maritime cooperation, engaging societal actors, and enhancing inter-agency coordination, Indonesia can consolidate its role as a strategic leader in ASEAN. These measures will not only strengthen Indonesia's regional influence but also ensure that its foreign policy remains resilient, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving challenges of the post-pandemic global environment.

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