

# SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES' DIPLOMACY AMIDST COVID-19: ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES

**Novian Uticha Sally**

IAIN Kudus, Kudus, Indonesia

uticha@iainkudus.ac.id

## ABSTRACT

The emergence of COVID-19 at the end of 2019 became the starting point for a new multidimensional threat to the world. This pandemic situation is an obstacle to relationship maintenance among nations which is generally carried out traditionally. Various innovations are needed because there is a rapidly-shifting paradigm in different life sectors. Some countries have made several adjustments related to their diplomacy with other countries to ensure the continuity of relations between countries and the welfare of their citizens in this pandemic era. In the Islamic world, controlling pandemics has been done before, so that it can be one of the solution options. This study begins by describing the changes in diplomacy carried out by Southeast Asian countries with Muslim majority populations during the pandemic. The next step was analyzing the changes in diplomacy that those countries with Islamic diplomacy have carried out. This study aims to determine the extent to which the diplomatic changes carried out by these countries are viewed from the Islamic perspective. The results obtained show that several diplomatic activities carried out by those Southeast Asian countries are in accordance with Islamic diplomacy. However, there are still some aspects of Islamic diplomacy that these countries can adapt to in the future.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Islamic Diplomacy, Southeast Asia

## INTRODUCTION

Since 2020, the world has struggled to fight one of the most pandemic diseases. Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) has been in the limelight for some time now, with no evidence of its cure soon found. In late 2019, there was big news that shocked the world. The Chinese government announced the founding a new trait of the virus, named Novel Corona Virus. At first, some countries take this news lightly. The news of the COVID-19 outbreak was preceded by the Singapore flu virus. The success of the Singapore government in curbing the flu virus gave international countries confidence to face COVID-19. But apparently, the COVID-19 virus is more contagious, and the effect is more dangerous, some of which lead to mortality. Countries' efforts to curb the virus vary. Some countries took fast and measurable action to mitigate the spread of the virus. At the same time, some others are a bit late in realizing the pandemic's toll and made loose policies regarding the COVID-19 measurement. The policies affected how soon the country managed the spread of the disease. Nevertheless, at the end of time, the world has entered a new era that agrees to close the border of its countries and restricts the movement of its citizen.

The world has since entered a new age in which all activities are strictly limited. With this new situation comes a new challenge in country-to-country relations. Limited access to cooperation and the fearsome of spreading the pandemic are two of the main reasons that obstruct the relation among countries. Some countries have imposed travel restrictions and travel bubbles to protect its citizen from the danger of this pandemic. Governments face a dilemma in which it has to ensure their citizens are protected from this pandemic. Still, on the other hand, it needs to keep country-to-country relations going well despite the situation.

The use of traditional diplomacy is hard, if not impossible, given the current situation. In response to this problem, some countries have already made an advancement to seek cooperation with their allies using non-conventional ways. Many countries successfully reverse the tide, turning the challenges into opportunities. The pandemic has brought calamity to once peaceful countries. The effect of this pandemic is inevitable. The damage has already struck many vital aspects of a country, ranging from health, social, economic, and security.

To overcome the effect of this pandemic, countries must work together, helping to ease the crisis. There is a serious note on the diplomatic ways in the pandemic era. While human physical and close contact is restricted, communication and cooperation between countries are in high demand now more than ever. Changes that occur in the interaction process between countries during this pandemic are interesting to review to find the most effective and efficient way to deal with this situation.

This paper will observe the diplomacy in some Southeast Asian countries amidst the pandemic. The countries that will be monitored are Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam. These countries are chosen as the object of observation because these countries' majority of citizens denomination in Islam. The Muslim population in Indonesia makes up 87,2% of its total population accounting for 227 million people. In Brunei Darussalam, Islam is the country's official religion, and 82,7% of its citizens are Muslim. In Malaysia, the percentage of Moslem in this country is 61,3%. These countries are chosen to become objects of research because the theory will observe the diplomacy used by these countries from the Islamic perspective. The total of Muslim citizens in those countries makes up more than half of the total population. Moreover, these countries are geographically located near each other, with shared values and cultures.

This research aims to find out governments' policies used by Southeast Asian countries amidst the pandemic from the Islamic perspective. The Islamic paradigm can give a new perspective to observing this issue. The other goal of this research is to seek the relation between the diplomacy used by these countries and the Islamic paradigm of diplomacy.

This research will benefit the countries observed to know the diplomacy used during the pandemic in the Islamic view. Other than that, the findings could give more

insight into the types of diplomacy different than what is conventionally used. This research will benefit future research in the Islamic diplomacy field.

The main questions are what measures these countries do to cope during the pandemic and whether the type of diplomacy is congruent with the ones used in the time of Khalifah. To answer these questions, this article will start by describing any collaborative relations made by these countries with other countries. The fields of collaboration are varied, ranging from economic, socio-cultural, educational, and tourism to the health department. Then, it will elaborate on the ideal type of diplomacy used from the Islamic perspective.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses the descriptive qualitative method. A qualitative approach is a social research approach that describes and interprets the meaning of any symptom in a social context. It is the root of many concepts, including interviews (group or one-on-one), participant observation (in person or online), and textual analysis (paper or electronic). Unlike the quantitative approach, the qualitative approach does not require long-term immersion in a culture or a holistic examination of all social practices. (TRACY, 2020)

There are three core concepts of the qualitative approach. The three concepts are self-reflexivity, context, and thickness description. Self-reflexivity means making interpretations of people's rations using their past experiences, points of view, and roles that impact their interactions. The context in the qualitative approach is engaging in a scene and trying to get a sense of it. The qualitative approach attempts to understand an issue by examining and taking notes of small cues to draw a bigger picture. In the thickness description, the qualitative approach uses clear diction to inform and interpret a situation to convey its meaning. In the qualitative approach, meaning cannot be separated from this thick contextual description. By using qualitative methods, researchers are expected to obtain comprehensive data about the situation studied; this qualitative method will be used to analyze the Islamic diplomacy of ASEAN countries in the COVID-19 pandemic.

The primary purposes of this article are to find out what kind of diplomacy these countries used during the pandemic and whether the type of diplomacy is congruent with the ones used in the time of Khalifah. To answer these questions, this article will start by describing any collaborative relations made by these countries with other countries. The fields of collaboration are varied, ranging from economic, socio-cultural, educational, and tourism to the health department. Then, it will elaborate on the ideal type of diplomacy used from the Islamic perspective.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **Islamic Diplomacy**

Diplomacy is the institutionalized communication among internationally recognized representatives of internationally recognized entities through which these representatives produce, manage and distribute public goods (Maiti & Bidinger, 1981). More simply, diplomacy is the art of establishing relations with other countries. In a literal sense, diplomacy comes from the words Diplo and ma, which can mean assignment documents for envoys of the king or government (Saptomo, n.d.). In international relations between nations, diplomacy becomes a negotiating tool for various nations to achieve the nation's goals.

The structure of the international world, which is full of hierarchies of power, makes relations between one country and another based on specific goals and objectives. For this reason, diplomacy, a means of interaction between countries, is often assumed with various negative labels (Rahman, 2000). Diplomacy is often misunderstood as a negative endeavor full of covert tactics to deceive other countries. The art of diplomacy is misperceived as the art of distorting facts and changing the ideas of others just to achieve the speaker's goals.

However, learning from the past, it will be seen that diplomacy is an attempt to establish relations with other countries with great goals and reciprocal attitudes. Therefore, there is what is called clean diplomacy and open diplomacy. The positive qualities of those diplomacies are also found in Islamic diplomacy.

Islamic diplomacy can generally be interpreted as cooperation between countries according to Islamic religious principles. Islam states that the prophet Muhammad is the best of people in behavior. Therefore, everything Prophet Muhammad SAW does, especially about nations' relations, can be a good reference.

In Islam, the practice of diplomacy has long been done. This can be proven by Surah An Naml 27: 23-44, which contains the cooperation between the Prophet Solomon and Queen Balqis. In addition, the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. also sent its ambassadors to the Arabs, Abyssinians, Persians, and Byzantium. This proves that diplomatic relations between nations have long been formed in the history of Islam.

According to Rahman, essential points in Islamic Diplomacy can support an excellent diplomatic process. These points include:

#### **a. Public Opinion**

Accountability to God does not merely free a leader from responsibility to human beings. The transcendental relation of a person with God is private for that person's goodness. In contrast, the relation between a person and the others, called *hablum minannas*, must hold its accountability to the other counterpart before their

God. "People will see your work and always criticize you," warned Caliph Ali Bin Abu Talib.

b. Justice

Islam always brings forward justice for all people. Do justice for the sake of Allah and do justice to human beings as you do to yourself and your relatives whom you love. For if you do not pass, it means you have oppressed others, and while someone oppresses God's creatures, God will be the enemy of the oppressor in place of the oppressed. And if Allah becomes the enemy of a person, then He will answer the supplications and prayers of the oppressed, He will punish the oppressors.

c. Selection of Advisors

The governors were commanded not to choose traitors and greedy people as advisers. "A minister (assistant) who is worst for you is someone who helps you commit despicable acts in front of your eyes," said the caliph's warning. The best people are those who speak openly and do not support oppressive actions (dhalim).

d. An Integral Society

The rulers were always ordered to have direct contact with the people. They are commanded not to engage in acts of nepotism and favoritism. And don't just express approval for those around him and get rid of those whose rights are being trampled on.

e. Fulfilling Promises

If a peace treaty has been agreed with the enemy, it should be executed as best as possible. Keeping promises is sacred work. The betrayal of the peace treaty will have dangerous consequences. (Rahman, 2000)

### **Pandemic Plague in Islamic History**

There have been three major epidemics in the history of the world. The first was the Plague of Justinian (mid-sixth century), the second was the Plague of the Black Death (mid-fourteenth century), and the last was the Bombay Plague in the late nineteenth century (Society & Society, 1974). Historically, these epidemics have significantly impacted deaths in the Middle East. As an area that is the epicenter of Islam, various efforts have been made by Islamic leaders to stop the spread of the epidemic.

In addition to these three plagues, in Islamic history, there are two more plagues, namely the Shirawayh Plague and the Amwas Plague. The last epidemic mentioned will be widely discussed in this study because it is related to the efforts of Caliph Umar R.A. in handling it. Caliph Umar R.A. was one of the Khulafaur Rashidin's leaders after the Prophet Muhammad's death. The closeness of Caliph Umar

with the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his success in eradicating the Amwas Plague under his leadership can be a reference for handling pandemics in the current era.

Three aspects can be considered in handling epidemics according to Islamic history; these aspects are: (a) Plague is forgiveness from Allah; people who die due to plague are included as martyrdom; (b) A Muslim is not allowed to enter or leave an area affected by the plague; (c) All disease comes from Allah.

Moreover, some lessons can be learned from handling the Amwas outbreak by Caliph Umar R.A. The first Caliph, Umar R.A., ordered to destroy the residences of those who died of the plague. With the advancement of science now, it is only known that this is the right decision because the plague in ancient times was carried by rats hiding in houses. In addition, viruses present and attached to inanimate objects can still live on these objects and potentially infect the next host. Caliph Umar was also ordered to live in the mountains and keep the distance from one house to another. Maintaining this distance was one of the critical aspects of overcoming the Amwas Plague at that time.

## **PREVIOUS STUDY**

Other previous studies have widely discussed the topic of diplomacy in the pandemic era. An example is a study by Albert Triwibowo entitled: *Diplomacy and COVID-19: A Reflection*. In this study, it is explained that the essence of diplomacy is communication. It is also hoped that diplomacy can provide a way out of the current pandemic. It was described in the study that the diplomacy carried out by countries had adapted to the existing conditions (Triwibowo & Sharp, 2020). This study also discusses the importance of regional cooperation in overcoming the pandemic crisis.

This research is necessary because it shows the diplomatic efforts taken by Indonesia to overcome the prevailing pandemic crisis. This study also describes the efforts of other regional and international groups to cooperate with various adaptations related to the limitations faced due to the pandemic. The research presentation was apparent and provided multiple inputs on the effectiveness of the diplomacy methods other countries had taken during the pandemic.

However, this research only offers perspective from one country, Indonesia. The research is also in the realm of general diplomacy. This is what distinguishes this research from the previous study. This research focuses more on Islamic diplomacy. Islamic paradigm in diplomacy may give a new perspective as an option to learn.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Indonesia

Indonesia, as a country with the most Muslim citizen in the world, faces a late yet destructive effect of the corona. The predicate as the most populous country in Southeast Asia comes with its challenge: public health control. When other countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Australia, the closest countries to Indonesia, admitted the spread of COVID-19 in their territories in January 2020, Indonesia just registered the first case on March 26, 2020 (Martha, 2020). President Joko Widodo carried out the news in a press conference aired by several national television channels. The first case happened due to close contact with a Japanese man, who was confirmed positive after he arrived in Malaysia. Since then, the cases of COVID-19 infection in Indonesia have been accumulating. At first, the curve of COVID-19 infected cases in Indonesia is sloping. But the peak of the case happened in January 2021. The case reached more than 14.000 cases, probably because of Delta variant infection.

The effect of COVID-19 in Indonesia was multi-dimensional. It affected the health sector, economy, tourism, education, and social activities. There was a slowdown in Indonesia's domestic economic growth year on year from 4.97 % to 2.97% (Iswardhana, 2021). Developing countries that have large populations and large territories face significant challenges because they have only limited financial capacity. Despite all the difficulties, Indonesia still managed to do its part as an international actor. Indonesia offered help to many countries which have been hit hard by COVID-19. In July, Indonesia provided USD 1 million to the Palestinian Authority and USD 500,000 to The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the context of humanitarian assistance in Palestine during the Pandemic era. And then, in December, Indonesia assisted Fiji, Timor Leste, and Solomon Island in handling COVID-19. The international solidarity shown by Indonesia was proof of Indonesia's commitment to act as a part of a global society.

Some of the measurements that the government of Indonesia has put to curb the spread of COVID are:

1. Attempting to do contact tracing
2. Preparing some hospitals for COVID-19 cases treatment and isolation
3. Enforcing PPKM/PSBB (social movement restriction)
4. Creating a special task force to handle the spread of the virus (Gugus Tugas Percepatan Penanganan COVID-19)
5. Continuously broadcasting the data of COVID-19 through social media

Since it is impossible to do traditional meetings for diplomacy, digital diplomacy was used by the Indonesian government during the pandemic. Several international meetings were held to ensure that cooperation with other countries was

well maintained. Most meeting held by the Embassy and Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in the United States, and so is United Nations Security Council meeting, are held online (Ilmu et al., 2020). During the challenging time, diplomacy should act as a set of practices rather than merely being a communication channel (Triwibowo & Sharp, 2020). The diplomacy runs by some countries focuses on strengthening bilateral relations instead of acting together as an international society. Regarding this issue, many countries make use of their resources to help other countries in need to develop better relationships. Indonesia has already received support from other countries, such as Singapore, China, and South Korea (Triwibowo & Sharp, 2020). The help offered by these countries, including when South Korea only provides coronavirus test kits to Indonesia and the United States. As a producer of chloroquine raw materials, India only provides its raw materials to Indonesia. Meanwhile, apart from assisting Iran and Italy, China offered assistance to Indonesia (Aos Yuli Firdaus, 2020). The practice of diplomacy done by Indonesia can be seen in its role in the UNGA to promote the first resolution about coronavirus entitled "Global Solidarity to Fight COVID-19". Another international cooperation was the G-20 Extraordinary Summit on March 26, 2020, 2 Ministerial Meeting of the Alliance for Multilateralism (AoM) Group on April 16, 2020 (Martha, 2020).

Indonesia is currently the Chair of the Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative. This forum discusses and initiates health issues and multilateral political policies, consisting of Brazil, Norway, France, Senegal, Thailand, and Indonesia. Also, Indonesia is currently a member of the WHO Executive Board. This WHO executive body discusses and decides on the direction of policies and the world health agency's work plan (Aos Yuli Firdaus, 2020). These opportunities open the doors for successful vaccine diplomacy and health support. Indonesian vaccine diplomacy is aimed mainly at opening market access, paving the way, and overcoming various obstacles through bilateral approaches involving all stakeholders (Wangke, 2021). Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi has visited many countries such as China, England, and Switzerland to ensure the availability of vaccines for the Indonesian people. Thanks to the bilateral approaches, Indonesia has successfully obtained vaccines for Sinovac (China), Pfizer (US), and AstraZeneca (UK). Indonesia's main bilateral vaccine diplomacy is to ensure the availability of the 20 percent quota of the population provided by WHO. According to the Indonesian COVID-19 national website (COVID-19.go.id), there has been 49,801,823 Indonesian have already received 1st dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. It makes up 18,35% of the total population, while the WHO recommendation is 20%.

There are some aspects of Islamic perspectives in government pandemic policies in Indonesia. The most apparent one is integral society. It was proven by some aid given by Indonesia to its surrounding. Indonesia realized that it is a part of a bigger society. The actors in this society are interconnected. In Islam, Moslems are told to help each other, as written in Surah Al Maidah verse 2, "...And cooperate in

righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression.” This practice can lead to ideal Islamic diplomacy if it is well enforced.

Social distancing is another government policy in concordance with the Islamic paradigm. Indonesia has some movement restriction protocols to ensure social distancing. This practice was also done by Khalifah Umar Bin Khattab R.A. when he fought the Amwas pandemic. But since the virus can also be transferred through bad personal hygiene, social distancing should have been followed by strict health protocol.

Indonesia's pandemic management can evaluate some things from the Islamic paradigm. The first is public opinion in managing the pandemic and strengthening society's trust. The government may invite some prominent social figures to share their ideas regarding the situation. The ministry of health can carry out two-way communication live on national television to better understand the case to the society.

The selection of advisors also plays an essential role in improving conditions. Indonesia has many potential brilliant figures who can give some good advice to the government. Choosing a well-respected and educated figure will provide a good idea for pandemic management. Still, it will make people feel more confident, thus increasing people's trust in the government's ability to control the situation.

## **Malaysia**

Geographically, Malaysia is located next to Indonesia. Both countries share national borders and have almost the same culture and language because they come from the same ancestor. Thus, it is no wonder that both countries share similar ways of combating the pandemic. Malaysia has a fewer population than Indonesia, but this country also faces some challenges in slowing the outbreak.

The first case of COVID-19 in Malaysia was an imported case from Wuhan, China, on January 25, 2020. There were only a few cases in Malaysia afterward. Malaysia even tabulated zero new cases until February 27, 2020. However, this date marked the beginning of the second wave that observed an exponential rise of daily positive cases (Ganasegeran et al., 2020). Malaysia has been through three major waves of COVID-19 outbreaks since the announcement of the pandemic in March 2020. The first wave spanned from 25 January to 16 February 2020; the second wave lasted from February 27 and June 30, 2020; and the third has been ongoing since 8 September 2020. This situation called for an effective solution by the Malaysian government.

To flatten the curve of infection, the Malaysian government has imposed some movement restrictions for its citizen. Since the virus might quickly transfer through airborne droplets and fomites, it is wise for the government to enforce movement restrictions for more than 32 million people in Malaysia. The first Movement Control Order (MCO) and its subsequent phases, the Conditional Movement Control Order

(CMCO) and Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO), succeeded in lowering the curve of COVID-19 cases down to low-double or single-digit reports daily by June 2020 (Aw et al., 2021).

The Malaysian government also introduced some measures to contain the outbreak that was formulated based on three principal strategies: (1) slowing the introduction of global infections; (2) slowing infection of local outbreaks; and (3) executing community mitigation strategies. Under MCO, the following measures were implemented: (1) prohibition of mass movements, religious, sports, social and cultural activities; (2) closure of business premises except for daily necessities and needs services; (3) self-quarantine and health check measures for those who returned from abroad; (4) restrictions on tourists and visitors; (5) closure of schools, kindergartens and higher institutions of learning; and (6) closure of all government and private premises except for essential services like water, electricity, telecommunications. If one disobeys the MCO, that person will be fined or detained. Unfortunately, relying on rigorous social distancing methods, like MCO, will not be adequate in controlling the outbreak. Basic measures in infectious disease control must be strengthened as these measures play the most critical role in this epidemic (Altahir et al., 2020). The government tried to control and limit activities and mass assembly in religious, business, education, sports, cultural, and social activities except for supermarkets, public markets, grocery stores, and stores selling necessities. For community-based control measures, outdoor restriction measures were also enforced, whereby only one resident from a family was allowed to go out at one time and within 10 km of the residence. Moreover, the government also shared some advice on community mitigation measures, including (1) obeying the cancellation or postponements of ad hoc or planned events, sports, and religious activities; (2) high compliance with the practice of physical distancing measures and the usage of face mask; (3) reducing flight and public transportation services; (4) self-quarantine at home; (5) changes to vital essential services like funerals to minimize crowd size and exposure to body fluids; and (6) avoidance of misinformation. For the last measurement, the government has made some official websites to tackle hoaxes regarding the virus. Besides the website, the government has also made use of social media to share the news, including the Official Portal of the MoH, a particular Facebook user account called the Crisis Preparedness and Response Centre (CRPC), Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM), and CRPC KKM Telegram. To ensure mental health maintenance during the pandemic with some strict movement restriction rules, Malaysia has introduced psychological services by establishing care lines and virtual counseling sessions. The use of digitalization in improving the health care system in Malaysia was maximized as a solution to movement restriction. Malaysia has adopted the carefully crafted Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) based on the avoidance of 3Cs (Crowded places, Confined spaces, Close conversation) and the practice of 3Ws (Wash hands, Wear masks, Warn against risks, symptoms, prevention, and treatment) (Ganasegeran

et al., 2020).

Aside from controlling the movement of Malaysians, the government tried to reduce the effect of the pandemic from several aspects. An alliance involving 38 professional medical societies was established on March 1, 2020, to support the Ministry of Health (MoH) in healthcare. Another measure the MoH took to cushion the impact of COVID-19 was setting up a special fund known as the COVID-19 Fund. In its effort to counter COVID-19 infection, the MoH also set up a provisional hospital in the Agro Exposition Park Serdang (MAEPS) in coordination with The National Disaster Management Agency (Shah et al., 2020).

In international relations, Malaysia works closely with China, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, and its ASEAN neighbors to maintain the supply of essential goods and services (Umair et al., 2021). Other forms of cooperation with other countries can be found in bilateral or multilateral online meetings. Some help comes from international allies to ease the COVID-19 condition in Malaysia. Some of which were from China which sent 50,000 PPE and 500 ventilators, and the European Union's commitment to helping Malaysia during this difficult time.

From an Islamic perspective on diplomacy, Malaysia has done exactly like what has been thought by Amwas pandemic management in Islamic Era. The strict measures applied by the Malaysian government can reduce the outbreak. The government heard the public opinion through some state representatives. The justice part of Islamic diplomacy was given by some health funds provided by the Malaysian government to unfortunate citizens affected by the pandemic.

### **Brunei Darussalam**

Despite being often called a tiny country, Brunei Darussalam has proved to be the most resilient country amidst COVID-19 compared to its neighboring countries. This success is earned by the synchronous effort of governments and its citizen. The first case in Brunei was derived from Malaysia's case. It was from the Tablighi Jamaat cluster. Of 81 people from Brunei Darussalam who attended the event in Malaysia, 19 of them were confirmed to contract the disease. It was not long before this super-spreader event became the first COVID-19 cluster in Brunei Darussalam.

The Brunei Darussalam government took fast and effective actions regarding the outbreak. The government uses many media to spread information effectively. The public communication done by the government was more transparent and responsive than usual (Wong et al., 2020). The government's efforts to do public diplomacy are arranging press conferences regarding the issues through national television and social media channels. Governments also invited newspaper reporters and some social media influencers to a closed press conference session. A practical contact tracing application, The BruHealth, also played a vital role in flattening the curve (Case, 2021). Moreover, the contract tracing teams are teaming with police officers to ensure

investigation safety. Brunei Darussalam also adopted a policy of RT-PCR testing in the absence of symptoms (Wong et al., 2020). This policy helps reduce the possibility of disease transmission in close contact with the infected people and the suspected cases.

While trying to minimize the spread of the virus, the government also ensured public diplomacy ran well by eliminating discrimination. Cases of discrimination have happened since the early spread of the disease. Since China was the first epicentrum of the pandemic, a glance of xenophobia happened in Brunei Darussalam. The following case occurred to the family whose member attended the tabligh in Malaysia. To address this problem, join cabinet ministers held a press conference.

In international relations, the Brunei Darussalam government donated COVID-19 test kits to the Malaysian and Philippines governments. At the same time, the Brunei Darussalam government also received medical equipment such as test kits, face masks, and hand sanitizers from China, Singapore, and Vietnam.

From the Islamic point of view, Brunei Darussalam scores high on some issues. The most impressive aspect is integral society, in this case, integrating Bruneian through the digitalization of health. The app launched by the government facilitated contact tracing, which was important to notify other citizens about nearby cases. Brunei Darussalam also made a great decision in selecting advisors. A good and reputable doctor was chosen to inform society about the updates on pandemics. This gives society a feeling of security and trust. Moreover, public opinion was also heard through live conferences by the special task force. This table shows the success of Brunei Darussalam in controlling the outbreaks.

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOTAL CASE</b>
<b>Indonesia</b>	22 March 2020	514
<b>Malaysia</b>		1.306
<b>Brunei Darussalam</b>		83
<b>Indonesia</b>	15 October 2020	349.160
<b>Malaysia</b>		18.128
<b>Brunei Darussalam</b>		147
<b>Indonesia</b>	2 August 2021	3,409,658
<b>Malaysia</b>		1,113,272
<b>Brunei Darussalam</b>		337

**Table 1.** Data of COVID-19 Cases in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei

## CONCLUSION

From the data and discussion above, it can be concluded that Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei face the same threat in different manners. Among the three

countries, Indonesia is the one that makes the most international cooperation to fight the pandemic. Each of these countries has another underlying condition that needs a different approach to control the pandemic. Indonesia is an extensive and populous country, making citizen control harder. Under the Islamic diplomacy paradigm, Indonesia can choose a better representative figure to maximize public opinion. Indonesia and Malaysia can learn from Brunei to advance their health digital and choose a good and respected advisor to guide the public so that they will obey the government. Overall, these countries have done their best to follow the teaching of Khalifah Umar Bin Khattab regarding the pandemic. A social movement is restricted everywhere. This ensures infected people cannot escape from isolation and spread the virus.

## REFERENCES

- Altahir, A., Mathur, N., Thiruchelvam, L., Mustafa Abro, G., Radzi, S., Dass, S., Gill, B. S., Zulkifli, S., & Asirvadam, V. (2020). *Modeling the Impact of Lock-down on COVID-19 Spread in Malaysia*. May. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.07.17.208371>
- Aos Yuli Firdaus. (2020). Multi-Tracing Diplomacy As Indonesia's Strategy In. *Journal of Social Political Sciences*, 1(3), 168–177.
- Aw, S. B., Teh, B. T., Ling, G. H. T., Leng, P. C., Chan, W. H., & Ahmad, M. H. (2021). The COVID-19 pandemic situation in Malaysia: Lessons learned from the perspective of population density. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(12). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126566>
- Case, C.-T. (2021). *Leadership and Crisis Communication During*. May.
- Ganasegeran, K., Hock Ch'ng, A. S., & Looi, I. (2020). COVID-19 In Malaysia: Crucial Measures in Critical Times. *Journal of Global Health*, 10(2), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.7189/jogh.10.020333>
- Ilmu, J., Internasional, H., Indonesia, D., Perserikatan, D., Jepang, K. W., Kajian, S., & Indonesia, U. (2020). *MANDALA : Diplomasi Digital Sebagai Dampak Pandemi Global COVID-19 : Studi Kasus MANDALA* : 1–6.
- Iswardhana, M. R. (2021). Indonesia's South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) as the Future of Diplomacy for World Solidarity to Overcome the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Global South Review*, 2(1), 25. <https://doi.org/10.22146/globalsouth.62532>
- Martha, J. (2020). Pemanfaatan Diplomasi Publik Oleh Indonesia Dalam Krisis COVID-19. *Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional*, 0(0), 121–130. <https://doi.org/10.26593/jihi.v0i0.3859.121-130>
- Rahman, S. (2000). *Diplomasi ISLAM* (Issue 021).
- Saptomo, B. (n.d.). *Penguatan diplomasi islam*. 15–20.

- Shah, A. U. M., Safri, S. N. A., Thevadas, R., Noordin, N. K., Rahman, A. A., Sekawi, Z., Ideris, A., & Sultan, M. T. H. (2020). COVID-19 outbreak in Malaysia: Actions taken by the Malaysian government. *International Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 97, 108–116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijid.2020.05.093>
- Society, A. O., & Society, A. O. (1974). *Plague in Early Islamic History* Author ( s ): Michael W . Dols Published by: American Oriental Society Stable URL : <https://www.jstor.org/stable/600071> REFERENCES Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article : reference # references \_ tab \_ . 94(3), 371–383.
- Triwibowo, A., & Sharp, P. (2020). Diplomacy and COVID-19: a Reflection. *Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional*, 0(0), 103–112. <https://doi.org/10.26593/jihi.v0i0.3861.103-112>
- Umair, S., Waqas, U., & Faheem, M. (2021). COVID-19 pandemic: Stringent measures of Malaysia and implications for other countries. *Postgraduate Medical Journal*, 97(1144), 130–132. <https://doi.org/10.1136/postgradmedj-2020-138079>
- Wangke, H. (2021). Indonesia ' S Vaccine Diplomacy for the World Health. *International Relations Division: Info Singkat, A Brief Study of Actual and Strategic Issues*, XIII(1), 17–12. [https://berkas.dpr.go.id/puslit/files/info\\_singkat/Info\\_Singkat-XIII-1-I-P3DI-Januari-2021-170-EN.pdf](https://berkas.dpr.go.id/puslit/files/info_singkat/Info_Singkat-XIII-1-I-P3DI-Januari-2021-170-EN.pdf)
- Wong, J., Koh, W. C., Alikhan, M. F., Abdul Aziz, A. B. Z., & Naing, L. (2020). Responding to COVID-19 in Brunei Darussalam: Lessons for small countries. *Journal of Global Health*, 10(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.7189/JOGH.10.010363>