

# Panel Proposal: Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic in (Southeast)<sup>1</sup> Asia

## Conveners:

1. Dr. Surachanee Sriyai, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
2. Dr. Sartika Soesilowati, Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia

**Discussant:** Dr. Naruemon Thabchumpon, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

**Format:** Double panel with 6 participants from various institutions and a discussant

**Panel Description:** It has been about two years since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic that disrupted the world as we knew it. For scholars to develop more sensible solutions and policy suggestions that would be taken up by the governments, it is only crucial that we first discuss and share our empirical findings about the implications of the first couple of waves of the pandemic on governance; particularly in Asia—the largest continent of the world. ASEAN is also an interesting region to study the issue due to its diverse socioeconomic and political contexts.

This panel includes research that touch upon several areas affected by the pandemic including politics, economics, and migration from an interdisciplinary perspective through various theoretical and methodological approaches. At the domestic level, we are curating works that focus on governmental responses of (Southeast) Asian countries to the COVID-19 on the issues aforementioned. We are also interested in foreign policy of Asia/ASEAN countries as well. Particularly, in health diplomacy, which refers to the use of health-related assistance for international cooperation or compliance. The consequences and efficacy of these policies will also be discussed. The expected outcome of this panel is to become a place where scholars come and share ideas that would enrich the knowledge about the implications of the pandemic and how the governments have responded to them in various countries in Asia, as we hope that they would help us become more informed and prepared for the next global crisis yet to come.

## Tentative Presenters and Abstracts:

1. *ASEAN Health Diplomacy and its Impact in Indonesia during COVID-19 Period*

By Fadhila Inas Pratiwi, Department of International Relations, Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to examine ASEAN Health Diplomacy and how its impact to Indonesia during COVID-19. Indonesia leadership can be seen how Indonesia try to push ASEAN in playing a central role through multilateral framework in handling COVID-19 crisis. The method that are using in this article is literature review by examining data from journals, books, mass media, official statement and document from ASEAN and relevant governments. This article

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<sup>1</sup> We put “Southeast” in the parentheses as it is contingent to the panelists who would end up participating in the session. I’m hoping to broaden the scope beyond ASEAN, but the region will definitely be the prime focus.

unfolds in two sections, first explaining how these multilateral diplomacies capable to assist Indonesia in combating COVID-19. The second is to explain how this cooperation help Indonesia recover in the post COVID-19. From preliminary findings, it concludes that ASEAN has significantly contributes in channeling and connecting cooperation both within the ASEAN members' state as well as beyond this regional organization and Indonesia could grasp these opportunities to handle the COVID-19 crisis both in securing the vaccines doses and economic cooperation.

2. *The Health Diplomacy Experience of the EU and ASEAN*

By Neriman Hocaoglu Bahadır, International Relations Department, School of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Kırklareli University, Kırklareli, Turkey.

Abstract: Covid-19 is the name of a virus which spread in a short time from China to all the world. It became one of the most research issue according to many different aspects. In this research it is aimed to research Covid-19 in terms of two international organizations: the EU and the ASEAN. These two organizations have regional members, and they are classified in various ways. They are both evaluate as a soft power, and they use diplomacy as an instrument to cause the wanted changes in the international relations. Health diplomacy can also be seen as a crucial instrument of a soft power especially in today's world. During Covid-19 both EU and ASEAN have used health diplomacy. In this research, it is aimed to compare and evaluate the health diplomacy experiences of these organizations.

3. *China – ASEAN Health Diplomacy*

By Sartika Soesilowati, International Relations Department, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia.

Abstract: This paper aims to examine China's policies and strategies in conducting health diplomacy during COVID-19 in ASEAN as countries that have received its assistance. Besides China's position in the world, which has always been associated with the early spread of COVID-19, this country was also one of the first to be successful in dealing with COVID-19 cases. China has also been tactically and extensively able to send aid to countries like ASEAN that need medical assistance when major countries like the United States and their allies in Europe still have to concentrate on dealing with this pandemic at domestic level. What exactly is the nature of this Chinese aid towards ASEAN? What is the intensity of this assistance? What effect will China's policy have on its relationship with ASEAN member states? What is China's international standing as a result of the assistance it has provided during the pandemic? How far have these strategies and policies advanced China's image as a "responsible great power? For ASEAN"

4. *Coronationalism and Limits of Health Diplomacy: The Marginalization of Migrant Workers in Thailand during the COVID-19 Outbreaks*

By Bhanubhatra Jittiang, Department of International Relations, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University

Abstract: This article explores the rise of coronationalism—a form of nationalism manifested in national discourse and policy direction prioritizing assistance and support for the native over immigrants during the pandemic—and its impacts on migrant workers in Thailand. I argue that, in Thailand, coronationalism had emerged during the second wave of the COVID-19 outbreak in late 2020 and was on its full display when the Thai government was desperate to curb the spread of the Delta variant during mid-2021. Thailand's coronationalism exploited public grieves to scapegoat immigrants, mainly migrant workers from Thailand's neighboring countries, for causing the second wave of COVID-19 outbreak, institutionally limiting them from essential

medical assistance, vaccination program, and other livelihood support. The effects of coronationalism have been especially disastrous for migrant workers, who are undocumented and marginalized in urban corners. Some of them experience endless quarantine in limited spaces, creating a lack of trust between the local and migrant workers who are one of the main drivers of the Thai economy.

5. *The ASEAN Miracle? Political Accountability in Economic Responses of ASEAN Countries to the COVID-19 Pandemic*

By Surachanee Sriyai, Department of Government, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University

Abstract: This paper examines the connection between ASEAN governments' accountability and their responses to the global economic crisis caused by COVID-19 through the lens of principal-agent approach. By using the ever-growing data corpus on economic response to COVID-19 such as the COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Index (CESI), The Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT), and several measures for political accountability, regime types, and COVID-related public health, this study finds that political accountability has an impact on governments' decision to enact more apparent stimulus packages during the pandemic. For ASEAN countries, it appears that diagonal accountability through media and CSOs mechanisms has the most prominent role in determining economic policies in response to this pandemic compared to other types of accountabilities. These findings illustrate the dilemma faced by the governments as an agent in a multi-principal scenario and the uniqueness of ASEAN as a region in comparison to other regions in the world.

6. *Governing the virus: Health Border, Bio-power and Migrant Bodies in Thailand*

By Jiraporn Laocharoenwong, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

Abstract: When Covid-19 hit Thailand in January 2020, the Thai government initially resorted to a zero-Covid policy. A new 'health border' erected to compliment the geographical/political border. This paper interrogates the workings and the consequences of this Thai Covid-19 health border policy, which has at every step placed health concerns over any economic or other concerns. It argues, firstly, that the (Thai) state's biopower gaze, reducing both citizens and non-citizens to merely healthy or sick bodies and leading to a withdrawal of rights and privacy of both citizens and non-citizens, connects to long-standing notions of the purity of the Thai nation and the dangers of contaminating it. Secondly, whereas labor migrants in Thailand generally lack any welfare provisions and are often seen as 'disposable', I argue that under the guise of health and bio-security, a shift in the perception of migrants actually resulted in more care towards them. The health border considered everybody, citizen or non-citizen, as potentially dangerous and more importantly, dangerous to the purity of the nation as a whole. Therefore, when subsequent waves of Covid-19 overflowed hospitals, both Thai citizens and (undocumented) migrants made their way to newly established field hospitals, which effectively combined policies of control and care.