CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, the writer will be discussing the rapid development of technological tools as the response to the unprecedented global COVID-19 outbreak that ruins many aspects of human life. In this study, the writer also would like to examine the diplomacy process conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia to maintain a position on the global stage and secure many strategic positions in the multilateral-based cooperation consisting of states worldwide to secure the COVID-19 vaccine doses and to promote equal vaccine access.

A. Background

State interdependence is a must in this globalisation stage. As the unprecedented global pandemic COVID-19 hit at the beginning of 2020, public diplomacy faces a new phase by way of government officials communicating with each other with a strict health protocol daily. Furthermore, the robust development of the internet, followed by the emergence of social media, has reshaped and mapped human behaviour worldwide.

The existence of COVID-19, which has become a global pandemic, has impacted the economy. COVID-19 causes world economic growth to be uncertain. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of countries worldwide is estimated to fall by 2.4% in 2020 (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2020). With this, the world economic growth is 0.5% lower than in 2019. Furthermore, COVID-19 has an impact in the form of disruptions to the financial sector, tourism and the global supply chain, especially for countries that are interconnected with China. It was predicted that the economic impact caused by COVID-19 could only be overcome in 2021

when global GDP growth has recovered to 3.25%. However, if the global COVID-19 pandemic remains severe, global economic growth will decline by 1.5% in 2020 (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2020).

Although it presents various challenges in the economic field, the global COVID-19 pandemic also offers multiple opportunities in using information and communication technology (ICT) tools. This pandemic supports the acceleration of changes in various activities to be online based on social media. According to Vieru et al. (2020), ICT can be adapted more quickly to overcome this pandemic's human and information mobility obstacles. Furthermore, proficiency in using ICT is vital during a pandemic because it ensures that individuals and groups from various sectors continue to operate (Vieru, 2020). Various short-term and long-term strategies have been developed to optimally carry out various online activities. In short, the spread of COVID-19 globally has made online-based activities crucial compared to the previous period (Vieru, 2020).

Diplomacy is a process of negotiation and communication between countries with the aim of resolving conflicts without using war (Heywood, 2011). Diplomacy is also an instrument of foreign policy. Additionally, diplomacy is an integral part of international politics because it is the main form of state interaction. Besides, all international political activities have implications for the international system, consisting of sovereign states as independent and autonomous entities. As a matter of fact, diplomacy is an integral part of international organisations. International organisations are institutions with formal procedures and membership consisting of at least three countries. The existence of international organisations facilitates countries with a permanent arena for conducting diplomacy. Diplomacy can take the form of debate on issues, exchange of information, and exploration of agreements (Heywood, 2011).

Digital diplomacy is broadly defined as using internet-based information and communication technology to assist state and non-state actors in managing international dynamics. Internet-based information and communication technology can range from online video conferencing to social media. The term digital diplomacy is often used interchangeably with e-diplomacy. However, Bjola (2016) states that the word digital in digital diplomacy refers to internet-based communication media. Meanwhile, e-diplomacy refers to using electronic-based communication media such as radio and television, which is different from traditional forms of communication such as letters. In other words, the use of the term digital in digital diplomacy indicates the difference between internet-based communication media and electronic-based communication media in general (Bjola, 2016).

Information and communication technology development has brought global connectivity that supports more effective and innovative diplomatic practices (Gilboa, 2016). This connectivity facilitates two-way communication between the government and the government as well as the government and the foreign public. Diplomats at this time can reach and involve themselves to a broader audience with information and communication technology. Diplomats can pay more attention to domestic and foreign audiences' hopes, praise, criticism, and suggestions on international issues. Governments from various countries are currently adjusting to utilising information and communication technology to implement foreign relations. These multiple things lead to the creation and development of digital diplomacy (Gilboa, 2016).

Holmes (2016) states that digital diplomacy consists of three main components. First, digital diplomacy refers to the way actors engage with external audiences to convey a specific message or image. The first component relates to relations between actors or foreign publics from different countries. Second, digital diplomacy is related to the accessibility of information as a diplomatic resource. The foreign ministry and

related government or private agencies need a structure and organisation to manage information for diplomats to carry out digital diplomacy effectively. Third, digital diplomacy refers to data analysis activities on international issues. In digital diplomacy, actors need to acquire and process data to monitor various international dynamics based on political structures or public opinion (Holmes, Digital Diplomacy and International Change Management, 2016a).

Digital diplomacy, according to Sotiriu (2016), promises several things that traditional diplomacy cannot easily do. First, digital diplomacy enables broader participation and interests in foreign policymaking. Second, digital diplomacy expands the arena for promoting countries globally. Third, digital diplomacy increases the popularity of diplomats as sending national messages for home country policies. Fourth, digital diplomacy facilitates the acquisition and distribution of knowledge among adolescents. Despite these promises, Sotiriu (2016) argues that digital diplomacy has its obstacles. First, digital diplomacy faces the challenge of reliability in providing short-term and long-term impacts. Second, countries that carry out digital diplomacy only have benchmarks of nothing more than connectivity and activeness of social media users. These two things cannot correctly describe the country's digital diplomacy ability (Sotiriu, 2016).

Holmes (2016b) argues that two things describe digital diplomacy. First, digital diplomacy at the policy level shows the impact of social media on the way diplomats do their jobs. Digital diplomacy is changing how information gathering, negotiating, day-to-day responses, and diplomacy are practised in the future. These various things allow diplomats to evaluate how to respond to and predict international dynamics through digital means. Second, digital diplomacy at the institutional level brings about a transformation of governance. From the foreign ministry, embassy offices to international organisations are being reformed with digital diplomacy implementation. With this description, Holmes (2016b) states that digital

diplomacy will never disappear into the future. However, digital diplomacy needs to be carried out by the state while still considering financing and its benefits. Also, the aspects of openness and confidentiality amid the abundant data on the internet need to be considered by the state in carrying out digital diplomacy (Holmes, Conclusion: The Future of Digital Diplomacy, 2016b).

All being said, this paper seeks Indonesia's Government effort to adapt to the digital dynamics. As the fast-growing sectors, information, communication, and technology (ICT) bring challenges to the diplomacy process. However, in the previous months, Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has taken proper steps in strategising these technology tools as it gives a huge of benefits in terms of the audience range by the MoFA establishment of the Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy in 2002 and Digital Command Center (DCC) in 2017 with synergism by National Cyber and Encryption Agency (BSSN) to assist and filtering the government's classified information and data. Furthermore, it can also prevent the spread of hoaxes and disinformation specifically for Indonesian citizens.

Since the beginning of the outbreak, the Indonesian government has kept looking for an alternative way to keep up with the new updates on the modern diplomacy process, including the utilisation of online communication tools. In addition, Indonesia's Minister of Foreign Affairs also actively made phone calls and other online-based meetings with the foreign ministry from other countries, especially those with strong COVID vaccine research and solid pharmaceutical equipment related to COVID-19 (Gusti, 2021). And as for the diplomacy process, the Indonesian government promotes equal vaccine access as the core value of the vaccine multilateral diplomacy.

B. Research Question

Based on the background above, the research question proposed by the writer is, *"How does the Indonesian government uses digital diplomacy to secure vaccine distribution and access at the international level?"*

C. Theoretical Framework

In an effort to answer the research question and draw conclusions, the writer will use public diplomacy and the e-diplomacy concept to understand the case.

1. Public Diplomacy

According to Nicholas J. Cull, public diplomacy is a process carried out by a country or an actor non-state to influence each other or mutual-influence in shaping policies to map positive public opinions in other countries (Cull, 2010). According to Tuch's goals, public diplomacy attempts to make the public and governments of other countries understand values, institutions, and culture in line with interests and foreign policy (Tuch, 1990). This proves that diplomacy functions as a means of a country's foreign policy in interacting with other countries.

John Robert Kelley classified the implementation of public diplomacy as three parts: (1) Information; the state can manage or regulate related matters by delivering information with an emphasis on an event or conflict that occurs within a period certain. (2) Influence; the state can influence change attitudes or public opinion in the destination country. (3) Engagement; a country can increase the public's sense of trust and understanding in other countries in carrying out the same cooperative relationship long term oriented (Rasmussen, 2009). The three sections above explain that public diplomacy is an effort to build relations with other states. Thus, the state can

6

assist the government in achieving foreign policy objectives and increase the suitable image of other countries.

Mark Leonard identifies three dimensions of public diplomacy: reactive, proactive and relationship building (Leonard, 2002). Time is the core element in this categorisation. These dimensions work jointly with three different' spheres': political/military, economic and societal/cultural, describing the type of activities in place. With these broader identifications, public diplomacy will be beneficial for the states to conduct their foreign policy and achieve their interest.

In the light development of technology and information, public diplomacy is experiencing a shift to the digital system. Technological influence is one of the main contributions to the revolution of public diplomacy. Van Ham stated that public diplomacy is an endeavouring postmodern tool of the state to regain legitimacy and recognition amid the global political competition, which has lost its monopoly in the information process. This acknowledgement of the effect of progress communication technology provides new forms of interaction to the broader public (Rachmawati, 2016).

The development of information flow indicates that public diplomacy is not only focused on one direction. Thus, the new public diplomacy is a significant pattern change in international political communication, making diplomacy a new public dialogue. This is a breakthrough from the broadcasting model and leveraging social media to build engagement in two directions with the public. First, through social media and the internet, the country can communicate its foreign policy and can create a positive image to the international community (Pamment, 2017).

2. E-Diplomacy

The speed of technology and information growth is changing the diplomatic procedures of a country. Once a

country can only negotiate through face-to-face meetings, conferences, and events involving the state, send its envoys to other countries to achieve its goals and interests. Nevertheless, now, because of technology, the activity diplomacy of a country changes, from diplomacy traditional diplomacy into modern using technology and Internet network. All being said, e-Diplomacy is also known as digital diplomacy.

In his book, Dizart explains three trends: the role of a country in digital diplomacy as an effort to be implemented in foreign policy a country (Dizart, 2011). The existence of foreign policy issues involve communication resources and sophisticated information. This change is partially significant, driven by the advancement of development technology and information—the emergence of public diplomacy with digital technology to influence public opinion.

Additionally, Cornelius Bjola (2016) explained that in order to conduct digital diplomacy, there were several requirements that the state should fulfil: (1) agenda-setting; the ability of the news media) to influence the importance placed on the topics of the public agenda, (2) presence expansion; how a country should adapt its online presence to expand overseas, and (3) conversation generating where a country should be interconnected with each other and compose multilateral/bilateral conversation.

Furthermore, social media capabilities can provide convenient connectivity to international politics and social activities that happened. Social media can also resolve governance issues globally and relations between countries and link each individual, state, and non-state actors (Funk, 2013). The advantage of using social media is that we can connect its users, which causes the existence of exchange of ideas across regions. In addition, it can create two-way communication; these advantages can make the reach of information wider and cheap in terms of cost of usability.

Based on some of the explanations above, we can generally define e-diplomacy as a diplomatic practice that is well implemented by actors, state and non-state in their efforts to establish foreign and domestic relations using information technology media. Therefore, e-diplomacy will be closely related to second track diplomacy and multitrack diplomacy.

In this research, the concept of e-diplomacy was done by the Indonesian government with the usage of digital tools in conducting the negotiation virtually as the COVID-19 pandemic unabled in-person activities worldwide. At the beginning of the COVID-19 transmission, the scientific knowledge about the virus was under identification process. Thus, any preventive measure to avoid physical contact was massively important. In the light of this limited in-person contact, the concept of e-diplomacy becomes significantly crucial to find any possible solutions to tackle COVID-19 challenges collectively. Hence, the author will be highlighting how the Indonesian government uses e-diplomacy concept, particularly in using digital diplomacy to influence international actors to gain vaccines doses.

D. Hypothesis

Indonesia's Government uses digital diplomacy at the international level by actively joining the COVAX Engagement Group with digital tools to gain vaccine doses in the multilateral forum and using international experiences in digital diplomacy to influence international actors. As the COVID-19 outbreak knocked down the whole human activity, especially that involved foreign travel, traditional diplomacy became a hard way to go. All in all, the robust development of advanced technological tools contributed a lot towards the diplomacy process undertaken by all governments worldwide in the time of the COVID-19 outbreak.

E. Research Methodology

In compiling this thesis, the author used the descriptive qualitative method. The form of the method used is a literature review or library research. Literature review or library research method is a data collection technique or information from various sources, both printed media including books, papers, newspapers, journals, and electronic media such as the internet or websites relevant to the research title, which used secondary data. After collecting the data, the writer will analyse using explanatory research and take a conclusion.

F. Scope of Research

To form the research and compose this thesis not widespread and make the ultimate meaning equivocal and unclear, the author will constrain the scope of composing the subject of implementation of digital diplomacy because it has shown the dynamic. The time limit of the research will apply only in 2020, which is the year the COVID-19 pandemic emerges; the author determined that the discussion in this is centred on the execution of digital diplomacy. However, the author will proceed to imply data and facts beyond the scope of the study if required to bolster this research.

G. Writing Systematics

This research thesis writing plan is divided into three chapters with the following scope of discussion:

Chapter I: This chapter is an introduction that contains the background of the problem under study, problem identification or research question, theoretical framework, hypothesis, research methods, the scope of research, and the writing systematics.

Chapter II: This chapter discusses the dynamics of digital diplomacy implementation conducted by the Indonesian government amid the COVID-19 pandemic, including the role of digital diplomacy, the Indonesian digital diplomacy process, the results of the diplomacy, and the obstacle factors of doing the digital diplomacy.

Chapter III: This chapter is the closing remarks and a summary of the research finding.