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# COVID-19: A Nontraditional Threat

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**Abstract.**
The development of security studies in international relations since its origin has usually been related to safeguarding a country's sovereignty from military and traditional threats from others. However, in this information and technological era, the essence of security has shifted from its distinctive meaning. The threats the world is facing today are subtle in form, difficult to predict, and intangible in most cases. Military might is no longer a threat. The COVID-19 pandemic is an excellent example that shows that future security threats can not only come as a large-scale military invasion but could be as tiny as an airborne virus. Battling these threats does not require conventional weapons but an obedient public attitude toward the government policies. For this reason, state security must be built not just by the state but also by the people. This article discusses COVID-19 as a nontraditional threat that has a profound impact on state and human security.

**Keywords:** security, nontraditional threats, COVID-19

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## 1. Introduction

Corona Virus disease or Covid-19 has started to become epidemic in all corners of the world since December 2019. The disease outbreak which is now designated as a pandemic by the International Health Organization or WHO is a sign that this virus has a higher level of risk. The virus which is categorized is still in the family of the SARS virus, a virus that has hit several countries as well but the SARS virus is still at an epidemic level. Meanwhile, Covid- 19 has succeeded in crippling the entire world without exception, from phery-phery countries to countries with strong military defenses. This shows that conventional weapons such as missiles and nuclear weapons are not able to ward off non-traditional threats.

Traditional threats are threats that are oriented towards military power which include protecting the territory of the country's territorial sovereignty from conflicts that lead to a ceasefire or war, while non-traditional threats are extensions of traditional threats which are included in the realm of human and state survival but are beyond the reach of

weapons. conventional methods covering climate change, environmental issues, illegal immigrants, people smuggling, drug trafficking, transnational crimes, natural disasters, and infectious diseases or disease outbreaks[1].

In a non-traditional threat situation such as the Covid-19 pandemic, it is not only countries that are at war to suppress the spread of this disease outbreak. But the awareness of the community is also influential. However, on the other hand, this situation automatically becomes shock therapy for the community where the implementation of health protocols is being reactivated at this time, such as frequent hand washing, wearing masks and others. In addition, various activities that should be carried out in the office or workplace, outside the home or in other public places must now be limited. This phenomenon often causes various public reactions, not infrequently there are several parties who are less cooperative with the policies that have been set by the government. The lack of public trust in government ranks is one of the triggers. In addition, the pressure due to disease outbreaks that result in limited space for movement creates feelings of anxiety and stress. On that basis, public self-awareness is a factor supporting the success of this war against Covid-19.

## 2. States Response to Pandemic

Countries place communicable diseases into substantive issues, where the resulting negative impact on non-traditional security is enormous. Countries such as the US that have global influence in collaboration with its security agency, namely the National International Council (NIC), produce official documents related to the security threats that a pandemic can pose to the general public, so that this can create domestic and global awareness of the potential spread infectious diseases such as SARS, H1N1, HIV/AIDS and others.

The pandemic affects human security in carrying out normal social activities. This pandemic is also understood in terms of security and socio-political consequences. According to John Wyn Owen and Olivia Roberts, the SARS epidemic highlighted the need for global coordination in infectious disease control and the importance of effective review and reform of the international health regulatory system. Since September 2011, the issue of health is scheduled to expand the scope of its policies as a global priority to improve global security and prevent state failures in handling it[2].

At the beginning of the 20th century, health issues could be said to be still a low politics issue because at that time, health issues were considered to have no relevance to International Relations and Security Studies. Then in the early 1990s post-Cold War,

analysts discovered that the United States had attacked in the form of persistent infections and terrorism using biological and chemical weapons. Then, the strategy focused on eradicating microbes, using powerful medical weaponry developed during the post-war period; antibiotics, antimalarials

and vaccines. The goal is none other than pushing humanity through the so-called 'health transition'[3].

Bioterrorism is now transformed into the responsibility of various actors, both state and foreign, in line with the level of urgency and danger of Covid-19 as a pandemic. So that the same steps as in handling SARS should be applied on a global scale as well. Political priority is placed on public health because of the impact on the socio-political damage wrought by the current re-emerging infectious disease outbreak.

The Covid-19 outbreak has created a huge drag on international business and travel. On the other hand, the country's response to the pandemic is different, from countries that have large, medium, and small powers. However, each country has the same pattern in taking preventive steps against the spread of infectious disease outbreaks, where each country announces comprehensive information related to the disease outbreak in their respective countries and the efforts that will be taken to overcome them.

## 3. Non-Traditional Threat

Apart from wreaking havoc around the world, the Covid-19 pandemic has spawned several other security risks that the world will face. Among them, first and foremost is health security. The inability to develop a safe vaccine immediately to combat the spread of the virus automatically causes the death toll from this virus to continue to increase, which has implications for the threat of population decline and the quality of public health. Furthermore, the economic impact due to the lockdown caused is very fatal to the global order. The fact that the economic market in developing countries is the most vulnerable to the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, plus various asset prices have decreased drastically[4]. These two factors indirectly threaten the sustainability of a country

Now, security issues are growing and are not only focused on the state and territory and the use of military force as an instrument for state stability, but security issues themselves have expanded to the political, health, and even individual sectors. Security issues have now changed from the state to the individual and not only come from the military but also non-military. Security threats are now no longer only in the form of military invasions from other countries, and the definition of security threats has now

expanded to transnational sectors and phenomena such as terrorism, drugs, human trafficking, to refugees, which means that the nature of the threat is not always physical. Security itself is freedom from fear. Today, global security is the new measure of the global agenda for global action. On the other hand, the issue of non- traditional security threats has become one of the agendas of many countries. This is because after the end of the Cold War there was a strengthening of non-traditional security threats that were borderless[5].

That's why the COVID-19 pandemic is not only a health crisis, it is a human security crisis, depriving our freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live with dignity. The pandemic demands a human security approach of comprehensive, across-the-board human protection and empowerment. When the concept of human security was introduced in policy discussions in the 1990s, the approach was criticised for broadening security threats beyond war. In 2020, we are learning that an epidemic, which has killed close to 120,000 around the world as of 14 April, undermines our security and safety. In responding, a medical solution alone is not enough. Measures should also address knock-on effects in health, economics, politics, society and culture.

On the economic front, stock markets have plummeted as the global outbreak intensifies. The pandemic has caused an economic contraction more serious than the global financial crisis in 2008. The global value chain has been hard hit. The economic effect is not elsewhere but everywhere. The closures and lockdowns have affected both goods and services industries. The entire world population is suffering from fear and want. The pandemic also impacts politics, both domestic and international. Some seek to gain from the pandemic, leading to further competition and confrontation among nation states. For example, former US diplomat Kurt M Campbell and Brookings program lead Rush Doshi have remarked that China, after failing to take immediate steps during the initial outbreak, is now claiming success in battling the virus and is spearheading the provision of medical assistance to other nations, including Italy, Serbia and Iran.

The COVID-19 pandemic also risks affecting traditional security by sending the wrong signal to those keen to develop biological weapons. The virus does not respect national borders in its transmission. No nation can get out of the pandemic alone. If nation states tilt for competition and confrontation, we will certainly lose this war. The only option is to cooperate to shape a globally and regionally coordinated response.

Human security according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is a condition in which people feel free from the traumas that surround human development, which include chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and oppression. Ensuring human

security is protected requires economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security approaches. Human security becomes a new benchmark for global security and also a new agenda for global action. Security is the hallmark of freedom from fear where well-being is the target of freedom from deprivation. The nature and threat of security itself is not always

physical, so of course the definition of this is very ambiguous and also very dynamic. The increasing number of countries that have experienced political turmoil to failed states, has increased the danger posed by disease. The spread of disease caused by lifestyle illnesses caused by the unhealthful effects of modernization is also one of the real non-traditional security threats[5].

Corona virus is a large family or family of viruses that cause disease with a wide severity. Corona virus is a term for a variety of viruses that usually infect animals which are also called zoonotic because they can be transmitted from animals to humans, although until now it is not known for certain the animal that causes this outbreak[6].

The Corona virus which is now known as Corona Virus Disease 2019 or COVID-19 was reported by the Municipal Health Commission of China in Hubei Province as a case of pheumonia in Wuhan on December 31, 2019. Based on the rapid spread of the epidemic, on January 1, 2020 World Health Organization or WHO formed an Incident Management Support Team (IMST) with three organizational levels, namely headquarters, regional headquarters and country level and put the organization in an emergency position to handle and investigate this outbreak[7].

The spread of the virus, which was confirmed to be transmitted using human-to-human transmission, in which humans are the medium of transmission, accompanied by the continued increase in new cases, led WHO to declare the COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, which was followed by the issuance of Strategic Preparedness. and Response Plan, COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund and Solidarity Trial as part of efforts to prevent, educate and analyze accurate preventive measures in finding effective treatments to cure patients infected with COVID-19[7].

On March 11, 2020, WHO officially declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. The definition of a pandemic itself is the designation of an infectious disease that spreads to a wide area which means it has exceeded the boundaries between countries in the world[7]. Meanwhile, the United Nations World Food Program warns that there will be a spike in acute food insecurity that will reach 265 million as a result of the pandemic, including border closures [8]. The anxiety that is felt is rooted in the security threat from COVID-19 itself.

In the study of security studies (Security Studies) COVID-19 is now a part of non-traditional security threats for global peace and security, many countries and international organizations are now increasing consolidation because COVID-19 is no longer just a health issue but has expanded into non-traditional security threats. -traditional. This non-traditional security threat is itself a non-military threat of various nature. In this case, the state certainly needs cooperation with various parties, both civil and military, as well as various national and cross-country actors[5].

The COVID-19 epidemic has entered as a form of health threat (virus, disease outbreak, urbanization, migration) which is a threat to the sovereignty and security of a country. The threat in this new form is one of the real threats that has occurred, and is no longer a latent threat. The 'modern day' war is a war that is difficult to track who is friend, foe, but its impact is felt[5].

According to the author, security threats that include health threats are felt directly by the wider community, especially for those who have the ability and need for inter-country mobility which then has the potential to spread to various parts of the world as one of the side effects of COVID-19. In non-traditional security, the focus of attention is more on human security. Thus, the spread of COVID-19 depends on contact between humans and living things, of course, various preventive efforts are needed in terms of reducing direct contact with individuals who are indicated to be one of the urgency of policies from many countries. So for the author, the urgency of this cross-border threat certainly makes COVID-19 a serious health problem and global cooperation is needed from all countries in the world and this certainly has an impact on the conditions of various global aspects. Viewed from a security perspective, the spread of an infectious disease is now transforming into an important problem that must be addressed quickly and accurately, given the swift currents of globalization and cross-border that are increasingly difficult to contain.

In the current era, for the author, globalization and mobility are activities that cannot be avoided by each individual but are now indirectly contributing to accelerating the process of spreading epidemics that are a threat to global health security. Human mobility in the millennial era not only has an impact on the speed of information delivery and technological innovation, but also has an impact on global security threats if these living things indirectly become intermediaries that deliver epidemics that are at risk of infecting humans, animals and the environment. Thus, the dynamic and widespread aspects of global health security threats are certainly a serious threat to the national security system and have an impact on economic losses, state stability, demographic stability and a decline in the welfare of the people of a country or the global community.

On the other hand, the shift in the focus of traditional security studies to non-traditional ones is actually a transformation of a new role for each actor that threatens the existence of human security. Attention to human security is a new form of attention to how important global security is. New wars or future wars will be triggered by new things that are non-traditional threats.

With the fading of the boundaries between countries, now security problems in a country certainly have many effects for many countries that experience interconnection with one another. On the other hand, the very rapid development of globalization in the last few decades has also resulted in the development of non-traditional security issues becoming part of global problems. A widespread epidemic in a country will certainly weaken the system and capacity of government in a country and have an impact on the country's development program.

In the author's perspective, global health security has now transformed into a serious threat to the national health system and this problem has had a profound impact on the economic sector and public welfare. For the author, health security is the main thing because health security is sustainable and affects the stability of a country's national security because the country's and global economy is strongly influenced by public health. Although a health issue is an individual's internal health condition, if analyzed more deeply it has social effects that cannot be avoided. This effect then crosses national boundaries due to the effectiveness of human mobility in the millennial era and becomes a global phenomenon. Health problems that initially only afflicted individuals now have a huge impact on the interests and activities of the community.

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