

Indonesian Government's COVID-19 Measures, January–May 2020: Late Response and Public Health Securitization

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Abstract

The Indonesian government's measures to control the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic can be characterized by late response due to initial de-securitization of the issue, and later securitization that limits its very efficacy in restricting the spread of the pandemic. This article uses securitization theory to analyze the government's measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic and discusses how the government's increasing reliance on military figures and national security agencies influences the measures used to control the COVID-19 pandemic. This study finds that initially, the government seemed to be trying to de-securitize the issue, denying warnings that the virus might have existed undetected in Indonesia. Then, after the first cases were confirmed in March 2020, the government responded by securitizing the issue. The delay in the government's response to COVID-19 caused the audience to not fully accept the government's securitization efforts because public trust in the government's measures was already low, while the means of emergency action taken by the government against the threat of COVID-19 are also limited. The government has also been overly reliant on influential military figures and national security agencies. The government also tended to downgrade the threats, lack transparency, and even use the pandemic to crack down on anti-government smears. This article concludes that the government needs to change their approach to COVID-19 measures and prioritize the human security dimension by not downgrading the threats and upholding transparency.

Keywords:

coronavirus; COVID-19; public health security; Indonesia; securitization

Introduction

As the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic spread to Indonesia, there are notes which can be taken from the Indonesian government's handling of the pandemic. First, until February 2020, the Indonesian government seemed to be attempting to de-securitize the issue, denying warnings that the virus might have already existed undetected in Indonesia. The Minister of Health, Terawan Agus Putranto (hereinafter Terawan) infamously told the public not to panic over the virus and "just 'enjoy' it" (Warta Ekonomi, 2020, January 27). Other government officials also made public statements which

underestimated the COVID-19 issue, some of which this article presents in the results section. In this period, the government seemed more concerned of the economic impacts, as the President Joko Widodo (hereinafter Jokowi) announced that the government was considering providing incentives for the tourism and aviation industry (Presiden RI, 2020, February 17).

Second, only since the first cases were confirmed in March 2020 has the Indonesian government responded by securitizing the issue. In terms of public health measures, the government announced the implementation of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) and strict

physical distancing to restrict the spread of the pandemic. Meanwhile, in terms of economic mitigation, the government announced several social protections, tax stimulus, and other economic measures. Despite the restrictions, by April the pandemic had spread to all 34 provinces.

Third, so far, the Indonesian government's measures to the pandemic has apparently relied on influential military figures – both retired generals in the Cabinet and active officers in national security agencies. The Minister of Health, Terawan, was a military doctor. The government's COVID-19 Mitigation Acceleration Task Force is led by the Chief of the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), Lt. Gen. Doni Monardo (hereinafter Doni), who is an active three-star general. Other military figures fill up the positions in the government's COVID-19 measures. However, the reliance on military figures seemed not to correlate with the human security dimension of the pandemic, as the government could not restrict the spread of the pandemic and the number of cases and death keeps rising.

This article thus discusses the Indonesian government's measures to the COVID-19 pandemic in January to May 2020 using securitization (and de-securitization) theory in International Relations. The author chose to use this theory because it provides a useful tool to analyze the dynamics of the government's COVID-19 measures: The initial lack of response to the pandemic is seen as the government's de-securitizing attempts, while the emergency measures conducted after the first confirmed cases is viewed as securitization of the pandemic. Securitization theory also enables examining the government's communication about the COVID-19 pandemic, which initially tended to underestimate the issue.

The author chose the period of January–May 2020 to provide a timely comparison between before the official confirmation of the

pandemic in Indonesia (January–February 2020) and after the pandemic began in the country (since March 2020). The author chose to study only three months after the start of the pandemic (March–May 2020) because the onset of the pandemic response is considered the best period to note the drastic shift from the normal/non-emergency politics to the government's emergency measures.

The structure is as follows: This article first reviews literature on securitization (and militarization, as the concept which is often linked with securitization), then focusing on the securitization of public health issues. This article then reviews literature on the Indonesian government's increasing reliance on military figures, before discussing how these military figures influence the government's measures to the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, this article discusses the government's COVID-19 measures using securitization theory. The author expects that this article contributes to the understanding that the government needs to change its security-heavy approach to the pandemic, as it is a public health issue.

Literature Review

Securitization Theory

Securitization theory was developed by Copenhagen School scholars, such as Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, who are mainly concerned on how security is socially constructed in international politics, and the extent to which political actors view and construct certain issues as security threats. Securitization theory examines the process in which actors declare certain issues as “existential threats” to a certain referent object. If accepted by the audience, the securitization process allows the state to suspend normal political methods and use emergency measures in response to the crisis. In this sense, security is a place of negotiation between securitizing actors and the audience (Wæver, 1995; McSweeney, 1996; Buzan & Wæver, 1997; Buzan, Wæver,

& de Wilde, 1998; Huysmans, 1998; C. A. S. E. Collective, 2006).

In the securitization process, threats are articulated in “speech act”. In this process, the securitizing actors use the language of security and threats to claim that the state needs to use whatever means necessary to block a threat. An issue is successfully securitized if the audience accepts it as an existential threat and agrees that the state needs to use emergency methods in responding to it. The audience will accept securitization if there is a series of “facilitating conditions”, including the grammar of security, social capital of the securitizing actors, condition related to threat (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998; Wæver, 2000), and conditions related to audience (Vuori, 2008). These conditions allow the audience to accept securitization carried out by the securitizing actors, who are usually political leaders.

According to John R. Searle (1975), Daniel Vanderveken (2002), and Juha A. Vuori, (2008), there are five types of speech acts: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declaration. Assertive speech acts take forms such as statements, explanations, and assertions. Directive speech acts take forms such as orders, requests, and commands. Commissive speech acts take forms such as vows, threats, and guarantees. Expressive speech acts take forms such as apologies, thanks, and congratulations. Finally, declarations take forms such as declaring war, pronouncing wedlock, and adjourning a meeting.

The opposite of securitization is de-securitization, a process in which actors keep certain issues away from the security realm and re-enter it into the normal political sphere. Once an issue is de-securitized, it will not be dealt with by security logic and not be declared a threat but returned to the ordinary public sphere. De-securitization can be done by not discussing an issue as a threat at all, managing the issue so that it does not spiral, and moving the issue back to normal politics

(Wæver, 1995; Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998).

According to Lene Hansen (2012), there are four forms of de-securitization: change through stabilization, replacement, re-articulation, and silencing. The first form of de-securitization is indicated by explicit change in the security discourse. Replacement is when one issue is excluded, while another is securitized. Re-articulation is indicated by the offering of a political solution to the threat and addressing the source of conflict. Finally, silencing is when an issue disappears or does not register in a security discourse.

Securitization and Militarization

A concept that is often linked with securitization is militarization, in terms of the emergency methods used by the state to respond to an existential threat. While the emergency methods are not entirely and focused only on military means, some of the ways the state uses to block a threat are indeed military mobilization. To avoid equalizing securitization with militarization, it is necessary to define militarization.

Scholars have defined militarization as “military build-up”. M. V. Naidu (1985), for example, defines militarization as “the gathering of arms, the raising of armies, the seeking of military bases and allies, etc.”. Andrew L. Ross (1987) differentiate two forms of militarization: the first one is “the process ... that results in militarism” and the second one is “military build-up”. Similar to Ross’ second form of militarization, Alexander Wendt and Michael Barnett (1993) define militarization as “the accumulation of capacity for organized violence”. Julian Schofield (2007, p. 11) defines militarization as “the measure of the extent of use of military structures and procedures in a state’s decision-making process”. Peter B. Kraska (2007) defines militarization as “the implementation of the ideology [of] militarism”, “the process of arming, organizing, planning,

issues and political support for suppressing the health problems, scholars also warn against the risks of subordinating health issues to national security needs.

Securitization (and Militarization) in Indonesia

Scholars have used securitization theory to explain various cases of Indonesia's security policy, including the South China Sea disputes (Meyer, Nurmandi, & Agustiyara, 2019), the Aceh insurgency (Geri, 2018; Kurniawan, 2018), the Maluku conflict (Kurniawan, 2018), terrorism (Van Damme, 2008; Febrica, 2010), illicit drugs (Widiyono, 2018), migrants and refugees (Zayzda, Ash-Shafikh, & Kusuma, 2019), migrant workers (Arifianto, 2009), as well as online hoaxes (Lee, 2020). However, there is still a lack of literature on public health securitization in Indonesia, which this article seeks to fill the gap.

Related to securitization in Indonesia, scholars have also discussed the militarization of Indonesian government in post-Suharto democratic Indonesia, especially during Jokowi administration. President Jokowi has been heavily relying on active-duty and retired military figures, giving the military perspective greater influence on policy issues. The Armed Forces (TNI) has also gained relatively greater influence during Jokowi administration. TNI has been involved in non-military domains, including counterterrorism (Singh, 2016), food security, wildfire, and various other civil domains (Gunawan, 2017; Sebastian, Syailendra, & Marzuki, 2018; Laksmana, 2019a; Laksmana, 2019b). Scholars have argued that it happened because Jokowi is a president without his own political party and therefore needs the support of a wider national security establishment to carry out his agenda (Laksmana, 2019a). This article also touches upon militarization in Indonesia, especially on how the securitization of the government's COVID-19 measures had been fed from the

ongoing militarization of the government, and how the public health securitization had been enabling the continuation of the militarization.

Methods

This article discusses the Indonesian government's measures to the COVID-19 pandemic in January to May 2020 using securitization theory as discussed above. It explains how the government, as the securitizing actor, de-securitized the pandemic in January to February 2020 and then securitized the issue in March to May 2020 by looking at the speech acts and facilitating conditions in the de-securitizing and securitizing attempts.

In analyzing the speech act, this article uses content analysis to explain whether the language used by the government in the securitizing attempts are assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declaration, as classified by Searle (1975), Vanderveken (2002), and Vuori (2008). The author chooses to use content analysis to enable examining the patterns in the government's communication about the COVID-19 measures.

The government's communication analyzed in this study is obtained from official communication channels of the government ministries and agencies related to the COVID-19 measures, including web sites and social media:

This article also uses data from secondary sources which are publicly accessible, including media sources. To validate the data obtained from non-official government sources, the author checked the correctness and meaningfulness of all data by triangulating it with several sources. Due to self-quarantine amid social/physical distancing during the pandemic, the author did not collect primary data using surveys or interviews.

Results

January to February 2020: Lack of Response

The first COVID-19 cases in Indonesia were confirmed on 2 March 2020, but experts

Table 1.
Sources of Government's Communication Analyzed

Government Institutions	Web Sites	Social Media (Twitter) of Institutions and Office Holders
President	https://www.presidentri.go.id/	@jokowi
Cabinet Secretariat	https://setkab.go.id/	@setkabgoid
Coordinating Ministry of Political, Legal, and Security Affairs	https://polkam.go.id/	@PolhukamRI @mohmahfudmd
Ministry of Health	https://www.kemkes.go.id/	@KemenkesRI
Ministry of Transportation	http://dephub.go.id/	@kemenhub151 @BudiKaryaS
Ministry of Finance	https://www.kemenkeu.go.id/	@KemenkeuRI
Police (Polri)	https://www.polri.go.id/	@DivHumas_Polri
BNPB	https://bnpb.go.id/	@BNPB_Indonesia
Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysical Agency (BMKG)	https://www.bmkg.go.id/	@infoBMKG
COVID-19 Mitigation Acceleration Task Force	https://covid19.go.id/	

Source: Author

had been warning that the coronavirus might have already existed undetected in Indonesia since January. For example, in January 2020, Chairman of the Eijkman Institute for Molecular Biology in Central Jakarta, Prof. Amin Soebandrio, said that Indonesia lacked the specific reagents to detect the virus (The Age, 2020, January 31; Sydney Morning Herald, 2020, January 31). In February 2020, Chairman of the Indonesian Red Cross Society (PMI), Jusuf Kalla, said that the disease might have entered Indonesia, but Indonesian people might not recognize the symptoms (The New York Times, 2020, February 11). A study by Pablo M. De Salazar et al. (2020) also concluded that the coronavirus could have arrived in Indonesia and Cambodia due to direct flights from Wuhan during the outbreak.

However, the Indonesian government denied these warnings and tended to show no sense of crisis or even to underestimate the threat of coronavirus, until February 2020. For example, on 7 February 2020, the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Mahfud MD, announced that Indonesia was the only major country in Asia that did not yet have a positive case of the coronavirus (CNN Indonesia, 2020, February 7). On 11 February 2020, the Minister of Health,

Terawan, discredited the study by De Salazar et al., challenging the researchers to come to Indonesia to directly prove the results of their research (CNN Indonesia, 2020, February 11). On 26 February 2020, Vice President Ma'ruf Amin (hereinafter Ma'ruf) said that the coronavirus did not dare to come to Indonesia because of the prayers and *istigasah* (a form of Islamic prayer) of the *ulama* (Muslim scholars) (Tempo, 2020, February 27). Some of the statements that underestimated the COVID-19 issue in this period are summarized in Table 2.

In facing this public health issue, the government seemed more concerned of the economic dimension, especially of the impacts on the tourism and aviation industries. For example, on 24 February 2020, the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, Airlangga Hartarto (hereinafter Airlangga), announced that the government would budget IDR 72 billion for influencers to encourage the tourism sector, IDR 98.5 billion for airlines and travel agents, IDR 103 billion for promotional activities, and IDR 25 billion for tourism activities (Liputan 6, 2020, February 26). On 25 February 2020, the Minister of Finance, Sri Mulyani, announced that the government would provide a stimulus package worth IDR 10.3 trillion, which focused on the tourism,

Table 2.
Indonesian Government Officials' Statements Which Underestimated COVID-19 Issue, Until February 2020

Date	Government Officials	Statements	Sources
2020, January 27	Minister of Health, Terawan	"The prevention of coronavirus is to not panic and fret, just 'enjoy' it, and eat sufficiently".	Warta Ekonomi (2020, January 27)
2020, February 07	Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Mahfud MD	"Indonesia is the only major country in Asia that does not yet have a positive case of the coronavirus".	CNN Indonesia (2020, February 7)
2020, February 11	Minister of Health, Terawan	Discredited the study that concluded that the coronavirus should already exist undetected in Indonesia and challenged the researchers to come to Indonesia to directly prove the results of their research.	CNN Indonesia (2020, February 11)
2020, February 15	Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Mahfud MD	"The coronavirus cannot enter Indonesia due to complicated licensing".	Mahfud MD (@mohmahfudmd), (2020, February 15)
2020, February 17	Minister of Transportation, Budi Karya Sumadi	"There is no coronavirus in Indonesia because the people are immune from eating <i>nasi kucing</i> " (an Indonesian rice dish).	Republika (2020, February 17)
2020, February 24	Secretary of the Directorate General of Disease Prevention and Control of the Ministry of Health, Achmad Yurianto	Said that the Japanese citizen who tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus after returning from a trip to Indonesia was not a COVID-19 case, insisting that SARS-CoV-2 was different from COVID-19. (Note: COVID-19 is the name of the disease, while SARS-CoV-2 is the name of the virus that caused it.)	The Jakarta Post (The Jakarta Post, 2020, February 25)
2020, February 26	Vice President Ma'ruf	"The coronavirus does not dare to come to Indonesia because of the prayer and <i>istigashah</i> of the <i>ulama</i> , Muslim scholars".	Tempo (2020, February 27)
2020, February 29	Main Expert Staff of Presidential Staff Office (KSP), Ali Mochtar Ngabalin	"There is no coronavirus in Indonesia because it does not develop strongly in tropical countries".	Tribun News (2020, February 29)

Source: collected from various media sources

airline, and housing sector (Kemenkeu, 2020, February 26). Some of the statements which are more concerned of economic aspects in dealing with covid-19 issues in this period are summarized in Table 3.

As discussed above, in January to February 2020 the Indonesian government seemed to be trying to de-securitize the COVID-19 pandemic, in the form of silencing. It is indicated by the fact that the issue failed to register in the government's security discourse. In fact, this article views that the government might have strived for a strategy of exclusion, when there are other security and

political issues which the government needed to address. For example, in this period the government was preoccupied with tension with China in the Natuna waters, issue of repatriation of former Indonesian foreign terrorist fighters from the Middle East, flash floods throughout Jakarta metropolitan area, alleged corruption in state-owned insurance company PT Asuransi Jiwasraya, as well as the Omnibus Bill on Job Creation. As illustration of how the last example might have led the government to exclude the pandemic issue, on 15 February 2020 the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Mahfud

Table 3.
Indonesian Government Officials' Statements Which Are More Concerned of Economic Aspects in Dealing with COVID-19 Issues, Until February 2020

Date	Government Officials	Statements	Sources
2020, February 07	Special Staff of the Minister of Transportation, Adita Irawati	The government had asked domestic airlines to offer cheaper flight tickets to Bali, North Sulawesi, and Bintan to anticipate the decline in tourists from China.	Kabar Bisnis (2020, February 7)
2020, February 12	Minister of Transportation, Budi Karya Sumadi	The government was considering incentives for the tourism and aviation industry, including cutting the amount of non-tax revenue collection, instructing airport authority companies PT Angkasa Pura I and II to lower landing costs, and calling on hotels to give room rental discounts.	Ministry of Transportation (2020, February 13)
2020, February 17	President Jokowi	The government was considering providing incentives for tourists and travel agents.	Presiden RI (2020, February 17)
2020, February 20	President Jokowi	The government decided to intensify investment to spur economic growth.	Presiden RI (2020, February 20)
2020, February 20	Coordinating Minister for Maritime and Investment Affairs, Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan	Wanted foreign workers from China to return to Indonesia immediately after the coronavirus subsidies.	Tirto (2020, February 21)
2020, February 20	Minister of Transportation, Budi Karya Sumadi	The government would provide financial assistance measures to revitalize the economy and support airline operators.	AIN Online (2020, February 20)
2020, February 24	Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, Airlangga	The government would budget IDR 72 billion for influencers to encourage the tourism sector, IDR 98.5 billion for airlines and travel agents, IDR 103 billion for promotional activities, and IDR 25 billion for tourism activities.	Liputan 6 (2020, February 26)
2020, February 25	President Jokowi	The government gave discounts on plane ticket prices and exempted hotel and restaurant taxes.	Presiden RI (2020, February 25)
2020, February 25	Minister of Finance, Sri Mulyani	The government would provide a stimulus package worth IDR 10.3 trillion, which focuses on the tourism, airline, and housing sector.	Kemenkeu (2020, February 26)

Source: collected from various media sources

MD, tweeted, “The coronavirus cannot enter Indonesia due to complicated licensing. But the Omnibus Bill on Job Creation needs to continue” (Mahfud MD (@mohmahfudmd), 2020, February 15).

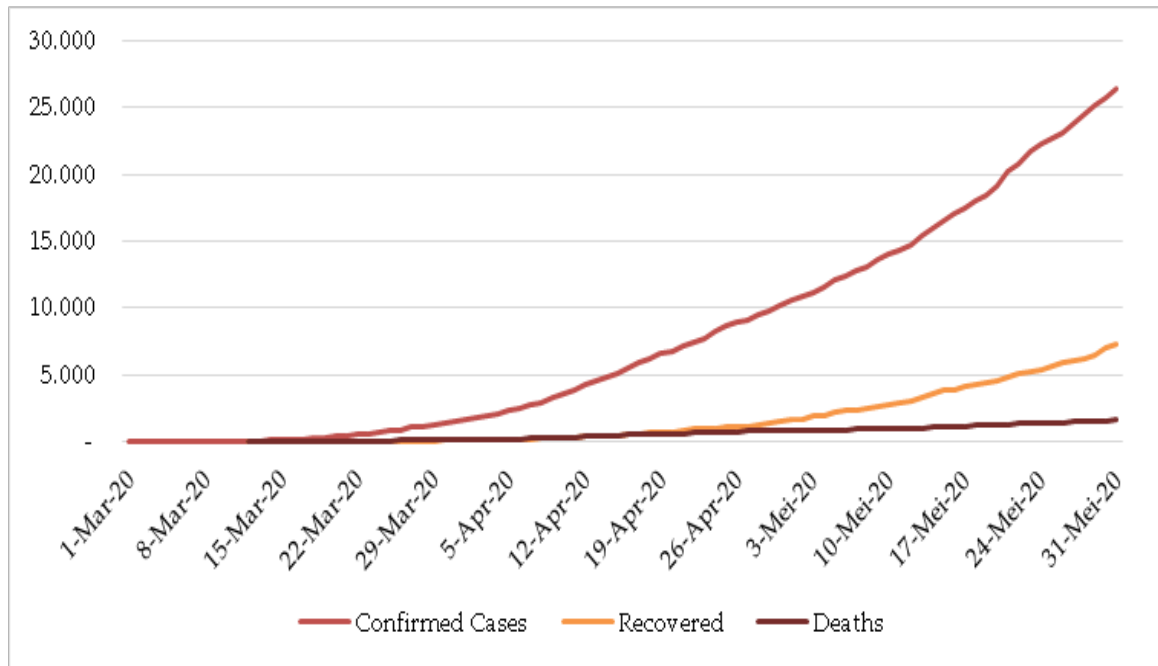
Despite the initial de-securitization, there are also forms of speech acts related to the COVID-19 pandemic in this period, in the form of declaration. For example, on 28 January 2020 the Chief of BNPB, Lt. Gen. Doni, issued Chief of BNPB Decree No. A of 2020, which declared the status of coronavirus disease outbreak disaster emergency in Indonesia. Then, on 4 February 2020 the Minister of Health Terawan issued Minister of Health Decree No. HK.01.07/

Menkes/104/2020, which declared the novel coronavirus infection as a disease that could cause a plague. However, there are no other forms of speech acts (assertive, directive, nor commissive) related to the pandemic in this period which could construct the issue as a threat. Even not all the declaration is presented to the audience; for example, the Chief of BNPB Decree was only informed to the public on 17 March 2020, seven weeks after it was initially issued.

March to May 2020: Public Health Securitization

The first COVID-19 cases in Indonesia were confirmed on 2 March 2020. As of 31 May

Figure 1.
Indonesia Cumulative COVID-19 Data (as of 31 May 2020)



Source: COVID-19 Task Force, 2020

2020, there are 26,473 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country, of which 7,308 have been declared cured, while 1,613 have died. The Java Island, especially Jakarta Province, is the most affected by this pandemic. However, the disease has spread to all 34 provinces.

Riyanti Djalante et al. (2020) has provided a detailed review and analysis of the responses to COVID-19 in Indonesia from January to March 2020, including the government's, non-governmental organizations' and the community's responses. In reporting the government's response, Djalante et al. includes all related government ministries and agencies: the COVID-19 Mitigation Acceleration Task Force, National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Bank Indonesia (BI), TNI, Polri, as well as Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration. While Djalante et al.'s article discusses the overall government's COVID-19 measures, this article focuses on the measures which might be seen as the emergency measures in the

securitization of COVID-19, including health response and economic mitigation, in March to May 2020.

In terms of health response, the government is implementing large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) and strict physical distancing to restrict the spread of the pandemic. PSBB is regulated in the Minister of Health Regulation No. 9 of 2020, which was issued on 3 April 2020. Governors or regents and mayors can propose PSBB in their regions to the Minister of Health for approval. By 31 May 2020, the Minister of Health Terawan had approved province wide PSBB in Jakarta Province (approved on 7 April 2020), West Sumatra Province (17 April 2020), Gorontalo Province (28 April 2020), and West Java Province (1 May 2020), as well as PSBB in 37 regencies and cities. However, on 21 May 2020, the government announced that Indonesia had entered the new normal condition, relaxing the PSBB (Detik, 2020, May 21).

Meanwhile, in terms of economic mitigation, the government is implementing several social protections, tax stimulus and

had only then decided to ban *mudik*, the Coordinating Minister for Maritime and Investment Affairs, Luhut, explained that the government decided to take gradual steps, which is “a military strategy” (Detik, 2020, April 21). The next day, when criticized for the lack of inter-ministerial coordination, Minister Luhut denied it saying he was “educated in the military”, wherein there is tight coordination between the commanders and staff (Tribun News, 2020, April 22). Meanwhile, on 28 April 2020 the Minister of Defense, Prabowo, likened the government’s measures to the COVID-19 pandemic to “a war against an invisible enemy which has no ideology and no other agenda than to threaten human safety” (Kumparan, 2020, April 28).

As Yağanoğlu (2006, pp. 24-30) again has argued, securitization enables the continuation of militarization. Similarly, the securitization of COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened the militarization by giving way to several military elements in the Indonesian government’s measures to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the spokesman of COVID-19 Task Force, who was appointed on 3 March 2020, is the Secretary of the Directorate General of Disease Prevention and Control of the Ministry of Health, Achmad Yurianto (hereinafter Yurianto), who was also a military physician. Meanwhile, the government’s COVID-19 Mitigation Acceleration Task Force, established on 13 March 2020, is led by the Chief of BNPB, Lt. Gen. Doni, who is an active three-star general whose military service included being the General Commander of Kopassus.

The COVID-19 Task Force which Lt. Gen. Doni leads is under and responsible directly to the President. It has a steering committee and an executive committee, with a secretariat at the BNPB. It was reorganized a week after its establishment and gained more ministries and agencies to increase coordination. It also coordinates local COVID-19 task forces established by local leaders (governors, regents,

and mayors). The national Task Force also involves many military figures. Among the members of its steering committee are the retired military figures of the cabinet: Terawan, Tito, Prabowo, Fachrul, and Moeldoko. Aside from ministers, there are also Chief of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) Budi Gunawan, Commander of TNI A.C.M. Hadi Tjahjanto, and Chief of Polri Pol. Gen. Idham Azis. Meanwhile, among those under Lt. Gen. Doni’s command in the executive committee are the Operations Assistant of the Commander of TNI and the Operations Assistant of the Chief of Polri as deputy chairpersons. The organization of the COVID-19 Task Force is summarized in Table 4.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 Task Forces at the local level also involve security actors. The task forces are led by governors at the province level and regents or mayors at the regency or city levels. As with the national COVID-19 Task Force, the military and police elements are appointed as deputy chairpersons of the local task forces. The organization of the local COVID-19 Task Force is summarized in Table 5.

At least three national security agencies are deeply involved in the government’s COVID-19 measures: TNI, Polri and BIN. TNI’s supposed role in the government’s COVID-19 measures is to provide assets to support the COVID-19 Task Force in terms of logistics, supply and transport. By 11 April 2020, TNI was confirmed to have distributed medical equipment to all provincial capitals, led by the Deputy Operations Assistant of the Commander of TNI (Antara, 2020, April 11). On 23 March 2020, TNI announced the formation of four Integrated Joint Task Commands (*Kogasgab*) as sub-units of the government’s COVID-19 Task Force (Kompas, 2020, March 23). They were involved in the preparation of COVID-19 emergency hospitals in Kemayoran, Jakarta and Galang Island, Riau Islands. Meanwhile, Polri’s supposed role is to enforce social distancing and other mitigation measures. On 19 March 2020, Chief of Polri, Pol.

Table 4.
Organization of the Indonesian Government's COVID-19 Task Force

Structures	13–19 March 2020	Since 20 March 2020
Steering Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Cultural Affairs • Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs • Minister of Health • Minister of Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson: Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Cultural Affairs • Deputy Chairpersons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs ◦ Minister of Health • Secretary: Minister of Finance • Members: Chief executives of 26 ministries and agencies as well as governors throughout Indonesia
Executive Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson: Chief of BNPB • Deputy Chairpersons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Operations Assistant of the Commander of TNI ◦ Operations Assistant of the Chief of Polri • Members: Elements of 12 ministries and agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson: Chief of BNPB • Deputy Chairpersons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Secretary General of the Ministry of Health ◦ Secretary of the Minister of State-Owned Enterprises ◦ Secretary General of National Resilience Council (Wantannas) ◦ Operations Assistant of the Commander of TNI ◦ Operations Assistant of the Chief of Polri • Members: Elements of 33 ministries and agencies

Source: Presidential Decree No. 7 of 2020 and Presidential Decree No. 9 of 2020

Table 5.
Organization of the Local COVID-19 Task Forces

Structures	Province-Level	Regency/City-Level
Chairperson	Governor	Regent/Mayor
Deputy Chairpersons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commander of Regional Military Command (Kodam) or Military Area Command (Korem) • Chief Regional Police (Polda) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commander of Military District Command (Kodim) or Military District Command Sector (Koramil) • Chief of Departmental Police (Polres)
Secretariat	Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD)	Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD)
Members	Elements of various local government offices and agencies	Elements of various local government offices and agencies

Source: Minister of Home Affairs Circular No. 440/2622/SJ dated 29 March 2020

Gen. Idham Azis, issued Chief of Polri Notice No. Mak/2/III/2020 to prohibit social activities that could create crowds. Since then, until 12 April 2020, Polri claimed to have dissolved as many as 205,502 mass gatherings across the country (Kompas, 2020, April 13). Finally, BIN's supposed role is to conduct contact tracing to track the spread of COVID-19.

While the TNI, Polri, and BIN's involvement in the COVID-19 measures is necessary, soon their roles extend beyond the

supposed roles. For example, TNI – not public health authorities – operates the COVID-19 emergency hospitals in Kemayoran, Jakarta and Galang Island, Riau Islands, despite the commanders having no medical background. However, it is fair to say that the TNI has not been the definitive leading actor of the COVID-19 measures. Evan A. Laksmana and Rage Taufika (2020) even argued that the TNI as an organizational actor was not yet fully mobilized, finding that the various TNI operations thus

far in support of the government's COVID-19 measures only utilized a small number and localized military assets and personnel.

On the other hand, Polri's role extends to crackdown against criticism of the government. On 4 April 2020, Chief of Polri, Pol. Gen. Idham Azis, issued Telegram Letter No. ST/1100/IV/HUK.7.1.2020 containing law enforcement guidelines in dealing with criminal activities amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which listed insult to the president and government officials as one of the crimes in cyberspace. They will use the Criminal Code (KUHP) Article 207 against offenders – a problematic article that is widely described as a “rubber provision”, meaning that it can be broadly interpreted and tends to weaken human rights protection. On 13 April 2020, Polri said that there were already two people named as suspects of insulting the president (Antara, 2020, April 13). On April 23, the police arrested Raviyo Patra, a public policy researcher and democracy activist who had been critical of the government, due to a message sent from his WhatsApp number, which he claimed was hacked (CNN Indonesia, 2020, April 23). He was freed the next day, after undergoing an investigation and being named a witness in the case. These crackdowns hint that the government is not only fighting the pandemic, but also defending the political regime.

BIN's extended role is arguably the most problematic. For example, on 13 March 2020, BIN announced that they had made a modelling of the spread of COVID-19, which predicted that the peak would occur in May, making intelligence data a public domain (Detik, 2020, March 13). On 6 April 2020, Chief of COVID-19 Task Force, Lt. Gen. Doni, announced that BIN's prediction on the number of COVID-19 cases was “99 percent accurate” (Tirto, 2020, April 6). Amid concern of a very low testing rate in Indonesia, there is a growing suspicion that the government is basing its testing rate on BIN's prediction.

Prior to the pandemic, BIN did not have an entity tasked with health intelligence. Amid

the COVID-19 pandemic, BIN established a medical intelligence unit and recruited medical personnel volunteers for handling COVID-19, who were inaugurated on 22 April 2020. Since then, BIN has conducted several COVID-19 tests, including in Kendal Tunnel area, Central Jakarta (CNN Indonesia, 2020, May 6), and Dukuh Atas area, South Jakarta on 6 May 2020 (Okezone, 2020, May 6); in Blok M MRT Station, South Jakarta on 8 May 2020 (Viva, 2020, May 8); in Pondok Aren district, South Tangerang on 14–15 May 2020 (RMOL Banten, 2020, May 15); in several areas in Surabaya starting 29 May 2020 (Tribun News, 2020 May, 29); and in Ciledug CBD area, Tangerang on 31 May 2020 (Tribun News, 2020, May 30). Aside from conducting tests, BIN also sprayed disinfectants to several areas and educated the community on the dangers of COVID-19.

BIN's role in the COVID-19 measures is problematic because of three reasons: First, BIN did not have specialization in epidemiology and public health. Therefore, the fact that they made a modeling of COVID-19 is something that is out of their competence, let alone claiming that the prediction is accurate. Second, even if we assume that BIN has competence in making predictions of COVID-19, intelligence work should only be delivered to the President as a single client; it should be confidential and not open to the public. Therefore, the act of announcing their prediction of COVID-19 to the public is contrary to BIN's very essence as an intelligence agency. Third, as an intelligence agency, BIN's actions should be clandestine; its role in the COVID-19 measures is no exception. Therefore, even if they are conducting tests and other actions in public, BIN should not publicly put out their name and cover their acts on behalf of the name of other institutions.

Tendency to Downgrade the Threats

The over-reliance on influential military figures and the national security agencies might be related to the tendency of the Indonesian

become the epicenter area (Kompas, 2020, April 16).

Lack of Transparency

Finally, instead of upholding transparency of COVID-19 data in Indonesia, at first the Indonesian government deliberately withheld information. On 13 March 2020, President Jokowi argued that lack of transparency is necessary to prevent people from panicking (Presiden RI, 2020, March 13). The spokesman of COVID-19 Task Force, Yurianto, also said that the government indeed controls which information is provided to the public (Merdeka, 2020, March 17). A month after admitting the deliberate lack of transparency, finally on 13 April 2020, President Jokowi instructed that all COVID-19 data must be open for access (Presiden RI, 2020, April 13).

Despite the course correction after a month, the initial lack of transparency had eroded public trust. This happened because the COVID-19 data presented by the central government does not match some local governments' data. For example, the number of COVID-19 deaths in Banten and Jakarta on 20 March 2020 as announced by the central government and the respective provincial governments was different. Similarly, the number of COVID-19 cases in Yogyakarta on the same day as announced by the central government and the Yogyakarta government was also different (Detik, 2020, March 20). Initially, the spokesman of COVID-19 Task Force, Yurianto, argued that the difference was due to the central government grouping case data by province based on the location of the hospital where each patient was treated or died, not based on the address at the patient's ID card (Detik, 2020, March 20). However, the media kept scrutinizing the difference, especially in regard of COVID-19 mortality data in the Jakarta Province (Jawa Pos, 2020, March 30). Finally, the BNPB spokesperson acknowledged that the difference occurred because the data

input from the Ministry of Health, which was referred by the COVID-19 Task Force, was also limited (Tempo, 2020, April 5).

As discussed above, since the first cases were confirmed in March 2020 the Indonesian government has securitized the COVID-19 pandemic. There are various forms of speech acts related to the COVID-19 pandemic in this period: assertive speech acts in the forms of statements and explanations of the data of COVID-19 in Indonesia; directive speech acts in the forms of orders and requests of PSBB and physical distancing, as well as the ban on *mudik*; commissive speech acts in the forms of vows and threats of sanctions for violation of PSBB order and the *mudik* ban; expressive speech acts in the forms of statements of "military strategy" and "war against an invisible enemy"; and finally declarations of various policies and regulations that the government took as measures to the pandemic. The speech acts are accompanied with emergency measures, including the reliance on military figures and national security actors, as well as lack of transparency. Unfortunately, the government's tendency to downgrade the threats limited the efficacy of their limited efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19. As of 31 May 2020, Indonesia recorded the second highest cases in Southeast Asia and the highest deaths (WHO, 2020).

It is fair to say that the audience did not accept the government's securitization of the COVID-19 pandemic due to lack of facilitating conditions. First, the government's grammar of security was complicated because of the tendency to downgrade the threats. Second, the government's social capital was low due to the lack of transparency. Third, the audience's condition was not ideal to accept the security discourse and justify the government's emergency measures to the pandemic (PSBB and physical distancing) because of the various human insecurities they faced amid the enforcement of those measures,

including financial loss due to unemployment and hunger due to food insecurity.

Finally, it is important to note that the securitization of the COVID-19 pandemic is not typical of Indonesia, but a global phenomenon (Nunes, 2020; Daoudi, 2020). Scholars have also studied other governments' securitization of the COVID-19 pandemic at home, such as in Brazil (Hoffmann Pfrimer & Barbosa Jr., 2020), the United Kingdom (Stott, West, & Harrison, 2020), Hungary (Molnár, Takács, & Harnos, 2020), China (Liu & Bennett, 2020), as well as in regions such as Europe (Vankovska, 2020), the Middle East (Hoffman, 2020), and Southeast Asia (Baysa-Barredo, 2020).

In the Southeast Asian region, the Philippines experience provided arguably the most similar case with Indonesia. The Philippine government has also been over-reliant on influential military and police figures in its COVID-19 response, as well as on national security agencies, especially the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP). Arguably even worse than the Indonesian case, the Philippine government has been criticized for violation of basic civil liberties and human rights in their COVID-19 measures (Vallejo Jr. & Ong, 2020, p. 6). President Rodrigo Duterte infamously ordered AFP and PNP to shoot dead protesters who breached quarantine rules (Amnesty International, 2020), as well as other statements which undermined human security. Indeed, analysts have pointed out the similarity between Indonesia's and the Philippines' COVID-19 securitization and militarization (Chandran, 2020; Esmaguél II, 2020).

The comparison shows that Indonesia is not a unique case. However, Indonesia still provides a good case for the study of public health securitization, especially the COVID-19 pandemic, due to its geographical and population size as well as militarized government. With 17,508 officially listed islands, Indonesia is the world's largest island

country in the world, making it arguably easier to restrict the spread of the coronavirus from one island with confirmed cases to other islands by measures like border closures. The military influence on the government should also make them more effective at restricting the pandemic spread with maximum coercion. Nevertheless, the virus persisted spreading to all major islands and 34 provinces. This makes the study of the Indonesian case, albeit not distinctive, still an important one.

Conclusion

As discussed above, the Indonesian government has been unable to respond proportionate to the threat of COVID-19 because, until February 2020, the government tried to de-securitize this pandemic, and only began viewing this issue as a threat after the first cases were confirmed in March 2020. Because the government was late in declaring COVID-19 as an existential threat to national security, the audience does not fully accept the government's securitization efforts because public trust in the government's measures was already low. In addition, the means of emergency action taken by the government against the threat of COVID-19 are also limited, disproportionate to the threat of the disease.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian government's securitization of COVID-19 has been characterized by the over-reliance on influential military figures and national security agencies, the tendency to downgrade the threats, lack of transparency, and even crackdown on anti-government smears. This finding shows that future studies should analyze how the number of military figures in the government influence the success or failure of securitization. In short, the government is bringing the COVID-19 measures under control of national security agencies, whose state security perspective prevails over health and epidemiological perspective. These security actors then are subordinating the human security dimension to the national security approach in

the COVID-19 measures, which in turn restricting its very efficacy.

The Indonesian government needs to change their approach to COVID-19 measures and prioritize the human security dimension by not downgrading the threats and upholding transparency. The government also needs to restrict statements which complicate the communication of COVID-19 issues. The government also needs to restore public confidence by improving its COVID-19 measures. Finally, it helps to put the COVID-19 measures under control of public health agencies with expertise on health care and epidemiology – and not putting them under leadership of military figures in the first place.

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