

# Total War Strategy and its Implementation in Handling COVID-19 Outbreak in Indonesia

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## Abstract

Corona virus came into existence towards the end of 2019, and was declared a 21<sup>st</sup> century pandemic by the World Health Organization WHO in early 2020. Various countermeasures and management efforts are being carried out by governments worldwide, including Indonesia, to reduce its transmission. However, some researches stated that those measures were slowly implemented. Therefore, an alternative solution is using the total war strategy, which has remained a concern since the First World War. This study therefore, aims to analyze the implementation of the total war strategy in handling COVID-19 in Indonesia Data were obtained from studies related to the total war strategy and other handling strategies. The eight points analysis of the total war strategy proposed by Clausewitz were used in the analysis phase. In conclusion, the total war strategy needs to be considered in handling the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 handling, descriptive analysis, total war strategy, Indonesia

## 1. Introduction:

The corona virus disease 2019, also known as COVID-19, is present in nearly 199 countries since its discovery in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, the Republic of China on December 31, 2019 [1]. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a global pandemic [2]. The announcement reported more than 118,000 cases of infection with a total death of approximately 4,300 people, including Indonesia. Numerous cases of infection, recovery, and death due to the outbreak, were recorded worldwide in the first two months of 2020. On March 2, 2020, President Joko Widodo at the Presidential Palace of Jakarta officially announced two cases of infection[3]. However, on April 11, 2020, the Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling COVID-19 recorded approximately 3,842 confirmed positive cases, with 3,229 on treatment, 286 recovered, and 327 deaths as shown in Figure 1 [4]. Studies conducted by Boccaletti, et al. [5], Gates [6], and Lippi, et al. [7] reported this similar global effect as the Second World War due to its impact on various fields of human life, such as postponing and canceling of economic, political, social, cultural, educational, defense, and security activities (POLEKSOSBUDHANKAM). Similarly, the conditions also seem to be done in the COVID-19 pandemic case.

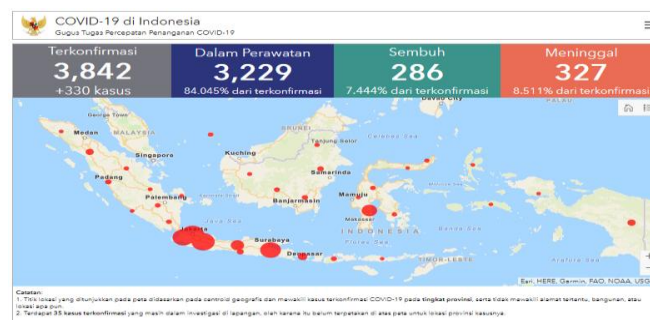


Fig. 1: Announcement of COVID-19 Pandemic on April 11, 2020 [4]

Therefore, online-based activities using information and communication technology (ICT) are considered the only visible options on the various fields of human life. It aims to prevent, mitigate, and break the chain of epidemics on a wider scale [8-10]. This process is one of the rational alternatives since other options such as vaccine or anti-virus are yet to be developed at the time of carrying out this research.

Studies of Djalante, et al. [8], Telaumbanua [10], Zahrotunnimah [11] described that the Indonesian government's efforts in handling this pandemic were considered slow. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the significant effect and disruption of the nation's life in the national unity of the country due to COVID-19.

In accordance with studies on modern war [12, 13], the outbreak can be categorized as a non-military threat that disrupts the stability of national life. Therefore, the total war strategy is the right alternative strategy to minimize its spread. However, the limited literature sources associated with the application of this strategy led to analytical study.

This study aims to analyze the efforts required by the government to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia. It aims to provide a descriptive explanation based on the viewpoint of the total war strategy theory. This research is also a source of practical reference for interested parties.

This paper is organized into five sections. The first section is associated with the introduction, background of the study, problems, objectives, methods, and expected results. The second section presents an overview of the total war strategy in handling the spread of the virus. A description of the strategy implementation to accelerate COVID-19 handling is then explained in the following section. Lastly, the conclusion section explains the inference from the review and analysis as well as the limitations, and recommendations.

## **2. Literature Review:**

### **COVID-19 Pandemic**

Coronavirus is an infectious virus that is transmitted between animals (birds and mammals) and humans (zoonotic). Between 2002-2003, a similar acute respiratory disease known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), emerged in China and spread to Vietnam killing hundreds of people. It took scientists approximately five months to identify this type of virus. Furthermore, an outbreak of the coronavirus was also known to occur as Middle East Respiratory Corona virus (MERS-CoV), which is transmitted from camels to humans [1]. MERS-CoV case was first identified around 2012 in Saudi Arabia.

In addition, Guo, et al. [1] have also reported that COVID-19 was first reported in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, the Republic of China, on December 31, 2019 (Guo et al., 2020). Due to the widespread of the virus in over 199 countries, the World Health Organization on March, 2020 declared it a global pandemic [2].

In general, the pandemic status is determined by the scope of the area affected by the spread and the speed of its transmission. Unfortunately, no vaccine has been developed for this type of virus as health experts are still carrying out researches. However, they have identified its patterns and mode of transmission with recommendations on identifying, preventing, and carrying out possible treatment based on the characteristics of this virus.

### **Total War Strategy**

Along with the development of science and technology, the understanding of the term war also changed. In this context, the term war is not related to the use of military force (hard power) or defense and security (HANKAM). However, it is more prominent towards the fields of ideology, politics, economy, society, and culture (IPOLEKSOSBUD) using diplomacy, total defense, and irregular warfare [14]. Referring to Elisabeth [12], Wattimena [13], and Sebastian [15], this phenomenon may tend to be related to the nature of war in the non-military context (soft power).

In this current context, war is related to the form that is not limited to the involvement of people. The victims are also invisible with a more systematic scope. War also had systemic impacts, such as intelligence, cyber, economic-trade,

and socio-cultural wars [13].

Referring to the explanation above and the COVID-19 pandemic phenomenon, the complete process, and the dimension of the total war strategy are as follows:

The first is the process associated with the input-process-output (IPO) [16]. The overall description is not limited to aspects before the war, such as knowledge of the causes, prevention efforts, planning, and strategy development. The process of war also involves all elements associated with the handling process such as the case of the COVID-19. This is followed by the post-war stage. The COVID-19 pandemic has a massive and systematic effect on all aspects of human lives. Therefore, adequate handling efforts are required.

The second dimension refers to the social structure theory of Macionis and Gerber [17] on the complexity of a society's organizational management. Robbins and Judge [18] presented that the total war strategy involves all components in both function and structure.

Total war has been discussed since the First World War. It starts with an opinion on how to use all elements of the military and the civilian resources in conventional war [12, 13, 15]. It also triggered the development of a non-military war in a broader direction with an invisible threat to the current disease.

Von Clausewitz [19] explains three main points that summarize the 17 strategic concepts used to achieve victory namely, the human and political dimensions, preparation, and the war strategies which is currently influenced by the development of science and technology as well as the different contexts of IPOLEKSOSBUDHANKAM in each country.

Eight out of seventeen characteristics of total war strategies are as follows: (1) approach, (2) use of force, strategy, and doctrine; (3) mobilization of forces; (4) involvement of citizens and the military elements; (5) diplomacy; (6) legal basis; (7) leadership; and (8) multi-sectorial policy.

In other words, although experts explain that total war is impossible, elements of this strategy, such as purpose, method, mobilizations, and overall control, are used as a reference.

### **Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia**

The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic due to its rapid spread within a relatively short time [2, 8]. Furthermore, based on the determination of this status, the relevant parties are expected to take an immediate part in handling the virus, to prevent its continued rapid spread. The prevention and mitigation needs to be carried out to cut off the spread of the virus.

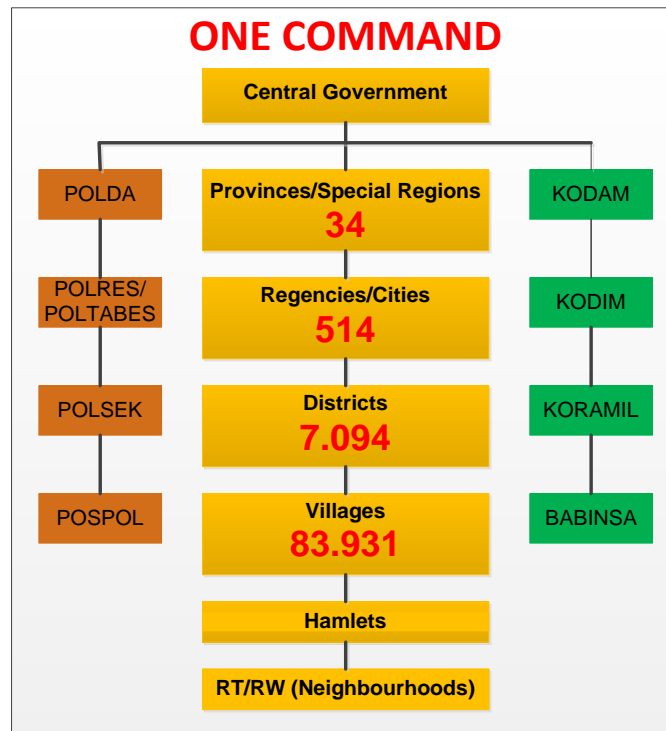
In accordance with the high mortality rate of this virus, Djalante, et al. [8] and Lippi, et al. [7] stated that significant efforts need to be carried out by all components of a state based on their respective portions and positions to deal with this outbreak quickly.

According to some studies, some of these strategies are delayed before being implemented [8, 10, 11]. This comprises of both civilian and military government at all levels with a clear command structure under the leadership of the President.

The three main agendas used to accelerate the handling process are to cut the spread chain of the epidemic, increase medical capacity, and maintain people's purchasing power [8]. This structure is under the President's leadership through the Special Task Force for COVID-19, in cooperation with the ministries and agencies/institutions at the state level, as shown in Figure 2 [3, 20].

This structure continues downward to the leadership level of the regional government with cooperation and coordination with the police and military agencies at the provincial, district/city, and sub-district levels [21, 22]. This

is in addition to the participation of social, religious, and professional organizations, industries/private companies, and other civil society components.



**Fig. 2: Command Structure for COVID-19 Handling [20]**

Efforts to break the chain of epidemics and quarantine efforts in the form of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) are also implemented with the support of civil emergency policies. In addition, efforts to increase health capacity are also carried out by building special hospitals and policies that support the improvement of other services. This is followed by improving the financial sector by launching stimulus in the form of social security networks to support the recovery of the country's economy [8, 20].

### 3. Methodology:

This qualitative study was carried out using a descriptive approach with a desk evaluation [23, 24]. The secondary data are related to the strategy used to handle COVID-19 in Indonesia. The descriptive analysis used were conducted by Rahman, et al. [25] and [26].

The used literature in this study were collected through mass media coverage, official news from related parties, laws and regulations, books, as well as scientific papers. The authors obtained the data above from the internet based on three main themes, namely, COVID-19 outbreak, COVID-19 handling in Indonesia, and the implementation of a total war strategy. The data quality criteria used is the renewal and validity of library sources from publishers or official institutions [27].

Furthermore, the secondary library sources are analyzed in eight characteristics of a total war strategy adopted from the 17 dimensions by Von Clausewitz [19]. It is then compared with related library data in Indonesia.

### 4. Findings and Discussion:

The eight characteristics of a total war strategy for handling COVID-19 in Indonesia were adopted from the 17 dimensions of total war from Von Clausewitz [19]. This is explained as follows:

The first is the approach. The intriguing question associated with this descriptive study "Is COVID-19 pandemic worth calling a war?" According to Wattimena [13], the virus is a visible war with a massive and widespread impact on various fields of human life. Moreover, it has also led to the death of more than 30 thousand people, and approximately 500 thousand are infected with the disease. Therefore, the authors argue that it is categorized as a war. Furthermore, due to its influence on almost all areas of a nation, the overall total war approach needs to be considered. An adequate strategy needs to be developed based on the characteristics of a total war outlined by Von Clausewitz [19]. In handling the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, the total war approach was adopted using elements of the TNI, POLRI, and civilians [22].

The second is related to the use of power, strategy, and doctrine. This is associated with the form of threats from this pandemic, the important role of the health sector actors, the availability of medical facilities and infrastructure, as well as their management policies. The deployment of medical forces on all fronts is supported by regulations, policies, and relevant parties. Besides, the doctrine of prevention, mitigation, and recovery based on the application of health protocols has also been conducted [8, 20].

The third is the mobilization of national power. Several forms of mobilization in dealing with COVID-19 are as follows: (1) mobilization of health workers as the frontline in mitigating and controlling, (2) the work from home movement, (3) large-scale social limitation (PSBB), (4) The formation of the pandemic handling task force, from the central and regional government using civil and military components is shown in Figure 2 [8, 20].

The fourth is the participation of civil and military elements by analyzing the Task Force's command structure for handling the virus from the central to regional levels. It involves government coordination supported by the police and army [21, 22].

The fifth is diplomacy, which is an essential form of strategy. It is related to the mobility of citizens from abroad, such as the case of repatriation of the WNI in Wuhan City responding to the emergence of COVID-19, and the repatriation of Indonesian workers (TKI) in Malaysia, etc. [8, 20].

Furthermore, diplomacy is needed in socializing and educating the public on the virus. Establishing a centralized and controlled web page as an official source of information has also become a form of indirect diplomacy to all components of the nation [28].

This aspect becomes important in the context of prevention, mitigation, and control of information distribution nationally and internationally using ICT tools.

The sixth is the legal principle associated with the management of states with several legal products issued by authorities as a basis for decision-making, policy, and control [8, 20, 29].

The seventh is national leadership in handling COVID-19, which led to the formation of the Task Force of Covid-19 Handling under the control of the national leadership and President. Furthermore, at the provincial, regency/city, sub-district, and sub-district levels of government, leadership is led by regional heads. Figure 2 shows a picture of the organizational structure of this task force [8, 11].

The eighth is a multi-sectorial policy, involving many ministries, government agencies/institutions. In addition to the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), which coordinates with COVID-19 Handling Task Force, several state ministries/agencies/institutions are directly involved. Besides, all institutions, companies, and other public and private organizations also play a role [8, 11].

The economy is one of the fields considered by the Indonesian government in responding to the pandemic. The Ministry of Finance issued the first four economic policies, namely, policies on providing tax incentives, protecting workforce, rescheduling loan payments for small and medium scale businesses (SMEs), and relocating fiscal policies at the local government level [8, 11].

## 5. Conclusion:

The COVID-19 pandemic is similar to the outbreak of the Second World War. However, in this case, the enemy is a disease caused by coronavirus, which has widely affected 199 countries and almost all areas of human life. In Indonesia, this is an extraordinary threat that requires adequate effort by involving all components of the nation structurally and functionally. This is related to the explanation of theories on the modern war, which is non-military. Therefore, due to this reason, a total war strategy can be applied in handling Covid-19.

This study presents the results of a review of the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia from the perspective of a total war strategy. Eight points of analysis on the characteristics of a total war strategy were used to prevent the spread of the virus. This is a descriptive presentation that is based on a desk evaluation method, derived from secondary data in the form of library document sources from the mass media, official news from related parties, laws, and regulations, books, and scientific papers related to the COVID 19 outbreak and total war strategy. However, the study is limited by the author's perspective, knowledge, and understanding related to the data and object of the study.

In conclusion, the use of the eight characteristic points of applying the total war strategy in handling COVID-19 is one of the successful efforts used to reduce its spread. Therefore, further studies are expected to improve the use of complete and appropriate data sources, as well as more comprehensive analysis methods and techniques.

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