

Indonesia's Strategy in Response to COVID-19: A Fragmented State Balancing Health and Economy

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to explain how the state's transformation influences Indonesia's strategy in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the strategy of the Indonesian government, which seeks to balance health and economic aspects when responding to a pandemic, the article focuses on Indonesia's strategy which is relatively different from the reference strategy suggested by the World Health Organization (WHO), which focuses more on health before recovering the economy, which has drawn criticism from various experts. Nevertheless, the Indonesian government's efforts to deal with the pandemic have experienced significant progress and have succeeded in reducing transmission rates and accelerating vaccination. Therefore, this research explains why Indonesia chose an adaptive balancing strategy. To answer this question, this article uses state transformation theory as an explanatory instrument in understanding the dynamics of the policy-making process at the domestic level in response to the pandemic. In particular, the findings of this article discuss how fragmentation in Indonesia explains the domestic dynamics behind the state's response to cross-border non-traditional security issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: *Indonesia, Adaptive Balancing Strategy, COVID-19 Pandemic, State Transformation, Fragmentation*

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana transformasi negara memengaruhi strategi Indonesia dalam menghadapi pandemi COVID-19. Berlatar belakang pada keputusan pemerintah Indonesia yang memilih strategi perimbangan adaptif yang menyeimbangkan aspek kesehatan dan ekonomi sebagai jalan keluar dalam merespons pandemi. Strategi tersebut relatif berbeda dengan acuan strategi yang disarankan oleh World Health Organization (WHO) yang lebih berfokus pada kesehatan sebelum memulihkan perekonomian sehingga sempat menuai kritik dari berbagai pakar. Walaupun demikian, upaya pemerintah Indonesia dalam menangani pandemi mengalami perkembangan yang signifikan dan berhasil menurunkan angka penularan serta mempercepat vaksinasi. Penelitian ini berusaha menjelaskan, dengan menggunakan teori transformasi negara sebagai instrumen penjelas dalam memahami dinamika proses pengambilan kebijakan di tingkat domestik untuk merespons pandemi. Secara khusus, temuan artikel ini membahas bagaimana fragmentasi di Indonesia menjelaskan dinamika domestik di balik respons negara terhadap isu keamanan non-tradisional lintas batas seperti pandemi COVID-19.

Kata-kata kunci: *Indonesia, Strategi Perimbangan Adaptif, Pandemi COVID-19, Transformasi Negara, Fragmentasi*

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As part of global efforts to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian government has implemented various national policies. In March 2020, the Joko Widodo (Jokowi) administration issued several policies to respond to the pandemic, such as Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), special budget allocations, and the establishment of a COVID-19 Task Force. However, the Indonesian government's initial response to COVID-19 drew criticism from various experts. For example, Rakhmat (2020a) considers that the characteristics of Indonesia's response to the pandemic were slow at the beginning. Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch (2021) highlights the weakness behind Indonesia's response due to low testing and tracing numbers. In another article, Rakhmat (2020b) argues that Indonesia should stop prioritizing the economy and start taking lessons from other countries. A critic from Sutarsa et al. (2020) reflects that after nine months since the first case of COVID-19 was encountered in March 2020, Indonesia has not shown good progress.

According to the COVID-19 Performance Index as of 9 January 2021 from the Lowy Institute (2021), Indonesia's performance in dealing with the pandemic is relatively low. Indonesia is ranked 85, with an average score of 24.7, out of 98 countries studied. In addition, the condition of health workers in Indonesia during the pandemic has received international scrutiny. In September, Amnesty International (2020) expressed their concern about the health workers in Indonesia who do not have adequate Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) due to the slow process of distribution and procurement. According to Pranita (2021), until 27 January 2021, Indonesia recorded 647 health workers who died from COVID-19, including doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, and medical laboratory personnel. This figure makes Indonesia occupy the first position in Asia and the top three worldwide regarding health worker deaths due to COVID-19. The death rate for health workers in Indonesia increased again in mid-2021. Referring to Mazrieva (2021), since the beginning of the pandemic in Indonesia, 545 doctors, 445 nurses, 42 pharmacists, 223 midwives, and 25 laboratory workers have died.

Although initially drawing criticism from various parties, the Indonesian government's response to the pandemic experienced significant progress. It earned praise from multiple parties for reducing transmission rates and accelerating vaccination. For instance, on 17 September 2021, Satu Kahkonen, World Bank Director for Indonesia and Timor Leste, praised Indonesia's

success in providing 100 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. Kahkonen and Somanathan (2021) highlight two substantial lessons from Indonesia's response to the pandemic. First, timely and decisive action, namely in terms of securing vaccine doses and significantly increasing the vaccination program. Second, adaptive, adequate, and flexible funding; the Indonesian government has made significant commitments to the health sector, economic recovery, and mitigating social impacts.

In addition, Kompas (2021) stated that Indonesia received appreciation from Johns Hopkins University for successfully reducing the number of COVID-19 significantly in September 2021, after reaching the peak of transmission on 15 July 2021. Minister of Health Budi Gunadi Sadikin in CNN Indonesia (2021a) also claims that Indonesia's success in reducing COVID-19 cases won praise from several health parties from other countries during the G20 meeting in Rome, Italy, on 5-6 September 2021. The latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has categorized Indonesia at level 1, namely a low risk of transmission of COVID-19 (COVID-19 Task Force 2021a). Furthermore, on 21 June 2022, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, during his visit to the Merdeka Palace, congratulated President Jokowi on Indonesia's achievements in handling the COVID-19 pandemic and stated that Indonesia is one of the countries with the best achievements in the vaccination sector compared to other countries (Cabinet Secretariat 2022a).

Indonesia's response to the pandemic balances health and economic aspects, known as the "gas and brake strategy" (Cabinet Secretariat 2020). Instead of focusing only on handling health or the economy first, Indonesia is trying to balance health management efforts and national economic recovery altogether. Steps to recover the national economy can be seen in the Jokowi government's decision to reopen the economy by imposing a 'New Normal' in June 2020 (Bean 2020). Bean's prediction regarding the New Normal, which would bring disaster to Indonesia, was proven in the June-July 2021 period, along with the entry of the Delta variant. During this period, the trend of positive cases increased sharply, reaching a peak of 56,757 daily cases on 15 July 2021, while the daily death rate reached 2,069 on 27 July 2021 (COVID-19 Task Force 2021b). However, the Indonesian government took decisive action when there was a trend of increasing cases by re-implementing the Emergency Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM Darurat) policy starting on 3 July for the islands of Java and Bali. This effort

has made the trend of positive cases, and the daily death rate in Indonesia has decreased since the end of August 2021 (COVID-19 Task Force 2021b). This phenomenon shows how the Indonesian government tries to balance economic and health aspects; when the number of COVID-19 cases increases, economic activities are limited, and health protocols are tightened, and vice versa. The author considers the Indonesian government's strategy in balancing health and economic aspects an adaptive balancing strategy. Therefore, this article explains why Indonesia chose an adaptive balancing strategy. To answer this question, researchers use state transformation theory as an explanatory instrument in understanding the dynamics of the policy-making process at the domestic level in response to a pandemic. In particular, the findings of this article discuss how fragmentation in Indonesia explains the domestic dynamics behind the state's response to non-traditional cross-border security issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

State Transformation and Indonesia's Contemporary Politics

The argument from state transformation theory is rooted in the assumption that a state is a place of social and political conflict and not just a collection of institutions and actors governing a particular area (Hameiri 2010, 3-4). There are governance dynamics in the global political economy that transform the state from within (Hameiri 2010, 91). Then, state transformation can be interpreted as a transformation of the ways political power is produced and reproduced in certain countries and societies (Hameiri 2009, 68-9). It is an attempt to reconfigure the social and political relations that shape the exercise of state power. This transformation includes shifts in three main dimensions: state power's purpose, location, and the actors who exercise state power.

Economic globalization has allowed non-traditional security issues, such as transboundary pollution, crime and terrorism, and pandemics, to emerge and become a global security agenda. Hence, Hameiri and Jones (2015, 4) argue that the state is also increasingly becoming non-traditional with the emergence of non-traditional security issues. Their approach focuses on how efforts to deal with cross-border security threats do not only involve efforts to strengthen supranational organizations but rather seek to transform state apparatus dealing with specific issues and integrate

them into multilevel, regional, or global regulatory governance networks. Political phenomena in state transformation become integral to efforts to govern the transnational issues through which global governance is formed. As Hameiri and Jones (2015, 52) believe, managing non-traditional security issues is inherently problematic and contentious because the scale at which issues are regulated is neither natural nor predetermined.

As a result, the outcome of managing non-traditional security issues depends on two main factors, namely the political economy context and state-society relations. These two factors cannot be separated from the fact that the state transformation approach draws insight from critical political geography thinking and Marxist state theory. In Marxist theory, the state is seen as a social power relation; political outputs, including outputs in the form of governance, are seen as results whose changes are determined by the struggle between the forces involved (Hameiri and Jones 2015, 52). In this case, because state transformation involves social and political forces, such as state apparatus, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and business actors, the outcome will be determined by the political economy context in the relationship between these forces and historical developments in the state-society relationship of a particular state.

State transformation theory views that globalization has affected the state by transforming its posture. Hameiri and Jones (2015) argue that non-traditional security issues are the main of attention in state transformation theory. State transformation theory is the nexus to approach economics, politics, and security studies. According to state transformation theory, there are three types of transformations experienced by states in the globalization era (Hameiri and Jones 2015). The first is fragmentation which is experienced by elements within the state, including the elite and the public. This fragmentation makes the state's response to non-traditional security issues varied because of various interests and power interactions. Second, there is decentralization which gives sub-national entities more power to organize and manage their government. This decentralization allows different responses between the central and regional governments due to competing interests. Third, there is internationalization which gives sub-national actors the power to carry out diplomacy, known as paradiplomacy. Internationalization allows local governments to pursue their interests at the international level actively. Broadly speaking, the state transformation process determines the state's

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response to non-traditional security issues. The political process of global governance ultimately does not only occur at the global level but also the local level (Hameiri and Jones 2016).

Several works of literature have discussed the phenomenon of state transformation in Indonesia in the post-Soeharto era. Along with the progress of the democratization agenda during the Reformation period, fragmentation, decentralization, and internationalization emerged as the characteristics of contemporary Indonesian politics. One expert who comprehensively discusses fragmentation in Indonesia is Aspinall (2013). In an article titled "A Nation in Fragments: Patronage and Neoliberalism in Contemporary Indonesia", Aspinall (2013) describes the fundamental nature of contemporary Indonesian politics and emphasizes that organizational fragmentation is a characteristic of the political landscape in Indonesia. Aspinall (2013) explains that this fragmentation stems from two sources: the ubiquity of patronage distribution as a means of cementing political affiliations and the broader neoliberal model of economic, social, and cultural life in which patronage distribution is increasingly embedded.

One of the latest pieces of literature that has comprehensively explained the effect of fragmentation on a cross-border issue can be found in Karim's work (2019). Karim (2019) argues that cross-border regionalism projects can be understood as a place of scalar contestation over regulatory control between the central and regional governments. In addition, scalar contestation in cross-border regional projects is characterized by struggles for control over relations with transnational capital between elites operating at various state levels. According to Karim, when elites at different scales have conflicting strategies and interests, incoherent policies can emerge that hinder the development of cross-border regionalism. On the contrary, cross-border regionalism can succeed when they align with and intersect with transnational business interests. The author then argues that this logic can also be applied to analyze the state's response to non-traditional security issues, such as Indonesia's strategy to respond COVID-19 pandemic. Because basically, a pandemic is also a cross-border issue that can become a site for policy contestation and strategies between actors at various governmental scales.

Fragmentation in Indonesia during the Pandemic

Fragmentation within the National Government

In the early period of the pandemic, the Indonesian government's responses appear dismissive and relatively slow in making decisions. Until February 2020, the Indonesian government seemed to be trying to de-securitize the COVID-19 issue (Chairil 2020). Governments seem to have neither a sense of crisis nor the capacity to respond to the crisis and tend to downplay this virus. In this regard, Agustino (2020) also argue that the narratives conveyed by the political elite before COVID-19 entered Indonesia showed no sense of crisis and consequently hindered their decision-making process.

The Indonesian government had shown different views, arguments, and policies across government departments when responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. For example, on 11 February 2020, Minister of Health, Terawan Agus Putranto, responded the COVID-19, which had not been detected in Indonesia, by stating that the situation should be grateful for, not even questioned (Purnamasari 2020). In line with the previous statement, on 29 February 2020, Vice President Ma'ruf Amin stated that COVID-19 did not enter Indonesia thanks to the prayers of *kiai* and *qunut* (Egeham 2020). In terms of policy, in February 2020, the Indonesian government budgeted IDR 72 billion to pay for influencer services and media promotion to boost Indonesia's sluggish tourism sector due to the spread of COVID-19 (Hakim 2020). According to the Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Airlangga Hartato, the budget is part of a total incentive of IDR 298.5 billion issued by the government to attract foreign tourists (Hakim 2020). Different responses can be found at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has been involved in discussions regarding the COVID-19 outbreak at the Special Meeting of the ASEAN and Chinese Foreign Ministers in Vientiane, Laos, on 20 February 2020. At the meeting, Foreign Minister Retno conveyed three critical steps to increase regional collaboration (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia 2020): (1) realizing the importance of close coordination between countries in the region to prevent, control, and minimize the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak; (2) strengthening the ASEAN-China mechanism in dealing with pandemic crises such as COVID-19; (3) strengthening public communication and education strategies related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

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As the outbreak's severity increased, the Indonesian government no longer underestimated the threat of COVID-19. The government started perceiving this issue as a threat in March 2020 after discovering the first case in Indonesia (Chairil 2020). However, because the government was late declaring the COVID-19 issue as an existential threat to state security, the audience did not fully accept the government's securitization efforts because public trust in its response was already low. The emergency measures taken by the government against the threat of COVID-19 are also limited, disproportionate to the threat of the disease (Chairil 2020). Until March 2020, the government's response was generally limited. One even argues that the Indonesian government is still taking the wrong priority in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic because it still adopts an economic developmentalist mindset at the expense of a global health emergency (Almuttaqi 2020). In other words, political economy considerations are still behind decision-making and strategies in responding to a pandemic.

The relationship between economic and health considerations in national government responses has been discussed further by Meckelburg and Bal (2020), who examine how competing social groups have used different institutions at different levels of government to pursue or defend their agenda and respective interests. Their analysis argues that the response to the pandemic at different government scales—national, sub-national, and community—is the product of different configurations of political coalitions and material conditions. In particular, Meckelburg and Bal (2020, 7) explain that on a national scale, the pandemic response agenda focuses on mitigating the risks and threats that pandemics pose to broad economic objectives rather than public health.

The national government's response focuses on remedying the economic contraction and difficulties that can lead to social unrest to avoid major disruptions to the national infrastructure and economic growth projections. It can also be seen from the statement of the Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani in Retnowati (2020), which stated that the government is not only trying to overcome the pandemic but is also trying to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on the humanitarian, social and economic sectors. In addition, based on the results of interviews with Dr. Suko Widodo (2022), one of the experts involved in the National COVID-19 Task Force in the field of Behavior Transformation, the author also found that the decision to restore the economy

and deal with the pandemic at the same time had indeed been agreed upon. Even so, the decision still raises concerns among epidemiologists. Thus, the author emphasizes the fragmentation behind the national government's response, consistent with Aspinall's argument (2013). It is also apparent in the government's efforts in responding to the pandemic, which simultaneously aims to maintain patronage and political economy interests, namely economic growth and infrastructure development.

Fragmentation on Public Level

The signs of fragmentation did not only appear at the national level but also at the public level. It is apparent in the community's response which is divided between those who call for the urgency of handling the pandemic and those who tend to worry about the impact of the pandemic on the economy. Faedlulloh et al. (2021) have examined how urban communities use social capital in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic through cooperation on various digital platforms. They have summarized various digital cooperation initiatives in Indonesia during the pandemic. Some of them are Bagirata, Kawal COVID-19, Kawalrumahsakit.id, Ayobergerak.id, Sejutates.id, Lapor COVID-19 (Faedlulloh et al. 2021, 203). Cooperation groups such as Bagirata and Ayobergerak.id focus on raising funds or donations to be distributed to those in need, from medical personnel to workers in the tourism and creative industries affected by the pandemic. Meanwhile, platforms such as Kawalrumahsakit.id focus on collecting data regarding the need for medical appliances in hospitals, and Sejutates.id focuses on gathering information regarding access to antigen tests for the wider community. Then, platforms such as LaporCOVID-19 and KawalCOVID-19 provide the latest information regarding developments in the COVID-19 case in Indonesia.

In particular, the author highlights the existence of KawalCOVID-19 and LaporCovid-19, which have played an active role as information channels since the beginning of the pandemic. KawalCOVID-19 was launched on 1 March 2020 by some KawalPemilu volunteers and aims to be a trusted source of information related to COVID-19 (KawalCOVID-19 2022). This initiative was driven by concerns about the confusion of information circulating in Indonesia regarding COVID-19. KawalCOVID-19 actively uses the website platform kawalCovid19.id and social media accounts such as [@kawalCovid19.id](https://www.instagram.com/kawalCovid19.id) on Instagram and [@KawalCOVID19](https://twitter.com/KawalCOVID19) on Twitter. The essence of KawalCOVID-19 is to curate and analyze

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circulating information; verify confusing information; educate the public regarding things that can and should be done, things that need to be avoided, and other health tips. In addition, there is LaporCOVID-19 which was formed by a group of individuals concerned with citizens' human rights and public health issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic (LaporCovid-19 2022). LaporCovid-19 acts as a citizen reporting platform that is used to share information about COVID-19 found by residents but which escapes the reach of the government. Data collected on the LaporCovid-19 channel is then used as input for the government to formulate policies and steps for handling COVID-19.

Both platforms actively sound the public health urgency in handling COVID-19 in Indonesia. For example, on 29 March 2020, KawalCOVID-19 called for a regional quarantine in areas considered red zones for COVID-19 infection (Fachriansyah 2020). This call is based on the consideration that the steps taken by the government in overcoming the spread of COVID-19 have proven to be ineffective, characterized by high rates of spread and mobility of the population, low test and tracking rates, and skepticism about the number of official positive cases which are believed to be lower than the actual number of undetected cases (KawalCOVID-19 in Fachriansyah 2020). In addition, on 5 June 2020, LaporCovid-19 announced their survey results, which concluded that Jakarta was not ready to enter a "new normal" (Adjie 2020). The group expressed concern that the "new normal" policy could lead to a significant increase in the number of positive cases because, based on the results of the survey, the Jakarta population's risk perception index on COVID-19 is at 3.46 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating the lowest.

On the other hand, some elements in the public were more concerned about the impact of the pandemic on the economy. For example, the General Chairperson of the Indonesian Employers' Association, Hariyadi Sukamdani, on 11 May 2020, suggested that the PSBB be relaxed, but health protocols were optimized (Sukamdani in Widyastuti 2020). This suggestion was made so that employers, who have to think about their employees and operational costs, would not be further pressured during the pandemic and would not lay off employees. A similar view also came from the Chairman of the Indonesian Food and Beverage Entrepreneurs Association (GAPMMI), Adhi S Lukman, who was worried that economic activity had stopped for a long time after more than two months since the start of the pandemic. In June

2020, GAPMMI also supported the gradual opening of economic activity because they believed it would restore the Indonesian economy (Cakti 2020). Previously, the business community welcomed the research results published by the Indonesian Survey Circle (LSI) Denny JA (CNN Indonesia 2020). In research entitled 'Indonesia Kembali Bekerja: Lima Kisi-kisi', LSI predicts that economic activity in Indonesia will resume operations starting in June 2020, even though a pandemic will still occur as long as strict health protocols are obeyed. However, the Head of the Labors Union Association, Mirah Sumirat, refused and suspected that the research was an 'order' from a particular faction and did not fully represent the facts on the field.

The Effect of Fragmentation on Indonesia's COVID-19 Strategy

This section discusses the impact of fragmentation at various scales in Indonesia on Indonesia's strategy in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The discussion in this section confirms that there has been an expansion of the focus of the strategy for handling the pandemic in Indonesia, from initially focusing on health to health and the economy. The expansion of this strategy was caused by the pandemic's effect on health, social, and economic aspects. In addition, the author also discusses the Indonesian government's policy in responding to the increase in COVID-19 cases due to two variants, namely Delta and Omicron, to prove the implementation of an adaptive balancing strategy.

First, regarding the expansion of strategy for handling the pandemic, on 13 March 2020, President Jokowi signed Presidential Decree Number 7 of 2020 on the Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling COVID-19. Initially, the formation of the Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling Covid-19 was not planned (Gitiyarko 2020a). However, the emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic, with its massive outbreak, required structured handling. The task force was formed to carry out structured coordination among related institutions to deal with the spread of COVID-19 cases. The task force was led by the Head of the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), Doni Monardo (Gitiyarko 2020b).

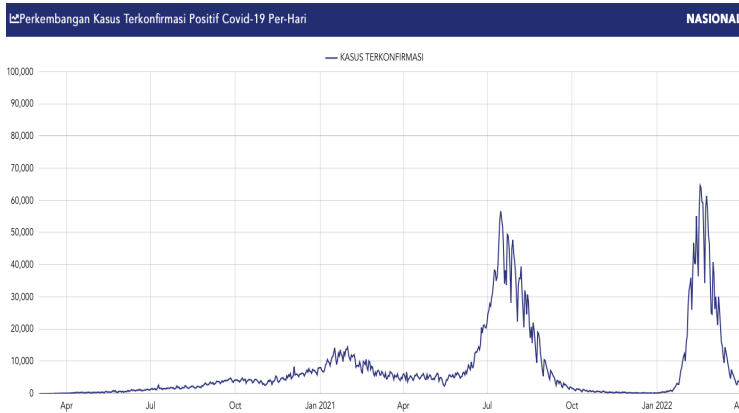
In addition to forming the task force, President Jokowi also issued Government Regulation (PP) Number 21 of 2020 on Large-

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Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) in the Context of Accelerating the Handling of COVID-19, and Presidential Decree Number 11 of 2020 concerning Establishing a Public Health Emergency for Covid-19. The formation of a task force along with regulations on PSBB and public health emergencies showed an initial focus on the health sector. However, this focus was expanded when the COVID-19 pandemic had a broad impact, especially on the social and economic sectors. Considering this situation, the government realized that handling the COVID-19 pandemic and national economic recovery required strategic and integrated policies (Chryshna 2020). Therefore, through Presidential Regulation Number 82 of 2020 which was stipulated in Jakarta on 20 July 2020, the President of the Republic of Indonesia formed the Committee for Handling Covid-19 and National Economic Recovery. The committee comprised three factions: the Policy Committee, the Task Force for Handling COVID-19, and the Task Force for National Economic Recovery and Transformation.

The establishment of this committee simultaneously changed the name of the COVID-19 Task Force to the COVID-19 Handling Task Force, with the same function and structure (Gitiyarko 2020c). Through the formation of this committee, there was an expansion of the scope and tasks previously carried out by the COVID-19 Task Force, from initially focusing on public health only to health and economic recovery. Furthermore, the interview with Dr. Suko Widodo (2022) also strengthens the author's argument regarding expanding the Indonesian government's strategic focus. He stated that the Indonesian government's strategy was a compromise strategy, namely encouraging economic movement but also tightening health regulations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 simultaneously. It was apparent in the government's efforts not only to ease off the restrictions on community activities but also to speed up the distribution of vaccines, educate people on changing their behavior, and emphasize health protocol rules during a pandemic.

Figure 1.
Daily Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in Indonesia



Source: COVID-19 Task Force (2022)

Second, regarding the Indonesian government's strategy in dealing with the Delta and Omicron variants of COVID-19. When the Delta variant began to result in a spike in cases on July 2021, President Joko Widodo stated that the government was imposing emergency Community Activity Restrictions or emergency PPKM in Java and Bali (Gitiyarko 2021). It was done to reduce the surge in COVID-19 cases. Restrictions on activities that apply during the emergency PPKM (3-25 July 2021) are stricter than Micro PPKM, including blocking entrances between cities and provinces, to closing shopping centers or malls (Permatasari 2021). Then, from 25 July to 2 August 2021, the Indonesian government established Emergency PPKM and Level 3 and 4 PPKM to reduce the rate of increase in positive cases and death rates due to the Delta variant of COVID-19 from June to August 2021, as apparent in Figure 1 and 2.

Figure 2
Daily Death Cases due to COVID-19 in Indonesia



Source: COVID-19 Task Force (2022)

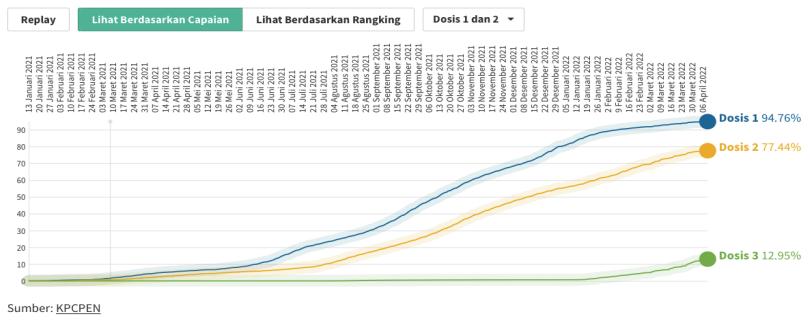
The author argues that during this period, the Indonesian government was taking decisive action by limiting community activities and focusing on dealing with the spike in positive cases and death rates. This argument is supported by Dr. Suko Widodo (2022), who also views this period as critical, and the government decided to apply a sudden brake. However, when the positive cases began to show a downward trend in August 2021, the government also relaxed PPKM regulations so that the economy could run again (CNN Indonesia 2021b). The relaxation of the PPKM rules included the reopening of face-to-face schools with a maximum capacity of 50 percent, as well as malls and places of worship with a maximum capacity of 25 percent.

The Indonesian government also implemented Community Activity Restriction, or PPKM, when the Omicron variant began to spread in early 2022. However, when facing the Omicron variant, the Indonesian government did not enforce emergency PPKM like when it faced the Delta variant (Mulyana 2022). The government has only made adjustments to the rules for PPKM Level 3, such as supermarkets, malls, restaurants, cafes, and food stalls, which are allowed to open until 21.00 at 60 percent capacity; places of worship that are filled to a maximum of 50 percent of their capacity; as well as public facilities and cultural arts activities which may be filled 25 percent of the maximum visitor capacity (Cabinet Secretariat 2022b). The decision was made based on the finding that although the Omicron variant is more easily spread, the infection severity is not as high as the Delta variant.

Referring to Figure 1, it is apparent that there was an increase in positive cases due to the Omicron variant from February to

March 2022. However, the fatalities in that period (Figure 2) did not increase as significantly as in the Delta variant wave from June to August 2020. In addition, the author also believes that the coverage of COVID-19 vaccinations in Indonesia influences the government’s response to the Delta and Omicron variants. Furthermore, Figure 3 shows that during the Delta variant wave in June-August 2021, coverage of COVID-19 doses 1 and 2 in Indonesia was still at a relatively low rate, less than 20 percent of the total population. Meanwhile, when the Omicron variant spread in February-March 2022, the coverage of vaccinations for doses 1 and 2 was much better; dose 1 is more than 80 percent, and dose 2 is more than 60 percent of the total population. The author argues that higher vaccination coverage when the Omicron variant spreads and the preparedness of health facilities convince the government not to implement emergency PPKM.

Figure 3
Vaccination Coverage of COVID-19 Doses 1 and 2 in Indonesia
Cakupan Vaksinasi COVID-19 Dosis 1 dan 2 di Indonesia



Source: Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (2022)

Thus, the author argues that there is a pattern of Indonesian government policies when faced with the waves of the Delta and Omicron variants. When the Delta variant spread, the Indonesian government tightened PPKM and focused on reducing the positive cases and death rates. However, after a downward trend in positive cases and death rates, the government began to ease PPKM and encourage economic activity. The same thing happened when the Omicron variant spread, although the policy restrictions adopted to respond to the Omicron variant were not as strict as when faced with the Delta variant. This response pattern aligns with the gas and brake strategy, or as the author calls the adaptive balancing strategy.

Conclusions

Indonesia's adaptive balancing strategy, which seeks to balance health and economic aspects in dealing with a pandemic, is relatively different from the global health governance guidelines and has raised questions and debates, especially regarding the reasons behind this strategy. In this article, the author confirms that Indonesia has chosen an adaptive balancing strategy and explains the dynamics that shape this strategy. The main argument in this article is that Indonesia has chosen an adaptive balancing strategy because the state's transformation has affected the posture of sub-national actors and shaped a pandemic response based on health and economic considerations. The response was driven by political economy factors in the face of cross-border non-traditional security threats. Furthermore, the political economy and public health considerations are elucidated through state transformation theory which observes the contestation of interests that occur at the level of the national government, political party elites, regional governments, and the public.

The fragmentation at the central government and public levels reinforces the existence of political economy and public health interests, as well as the polarization between the two. From the fragmentation, the author found that patron-client domination is a characteristic of contemporary political conditions in Indonesia. By looking at two different scales, namely the central government and civil society, researchers found that economic and public health debates dominated the Indonesian government's response to the pandemic. Mapping the level of fragmentation in Indonesia, which includes national government elites and the public, shows a contestation of health and political economy interests at every level. The author argues that fragmentation is the most influential process in determining the direction of Indonesia's strategy in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Indonesia chose an adaptive balancing strategy to compromise amid debate and contestation of health or economic interests.

The author believes the adaptive balancing strategy suits Indonesia because it considers the political economy conditions and existing health services. This strategy also brought Indonesia out of difficult times due to the pandemic, both from a health and economic perspective. Through this research, the author emphasizes the importance of state transformation theory to explain domestic dynamics and the contestation of political economy interests

at various levels within a state when faced with non-traditional cross-border security issues. This research also proves that in the contemporary era, a state's response to cross-border threats can no longer be seen as the decision of a single actor but rather the result of the contestation of political economy interests involving various sub-national actors in the state. However, this research has limitations, mainly because this paper only covers the fragmentation aspect of state transformation. Therefore, this analysis is limited to only one part of state transformation in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the Indonesian government has undergone decentralization and internationalization, which enabled the sub-national governments to take a more proactive role in handling non-traditional security issues. Further analysis and discussion on the effect of decentralization and internationalization in Indonesia on governing non-traditional security issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, might be necessary to complete the puzzle.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Vinsensio Dugis, Ph.D., and Baiq Wardhani, Ph.D., as the author's thesis supervisors who gave fruitful feedback for the author's Master Thesis, which this paper is based on. The author would also thank Universitas Amikom Yogyakarta for their support and sponsorship to publish this paper.

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