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Siti Nurhasanah

*American Studies, School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia,*  
husna.rifa04@gmail.com

Marthen Napang

*Faculty of Law Universitas Hasanuddin, marthennapang57@gmail.com*

Syaiful Rohman

*National Resilience Studies, School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia,*  
syaifulrohman71@gmail.com

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# Covid-19 As A Non-Traditional Threat to Human Security

Siti Nurhasanah<sup>1\*</sup>, Marthen Napang<sup>2</sup>, and Syaiful Rohman<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> American Studies, School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Law, Universitas Hasanuddin

<sup>3</sup> National Resilience Studies, School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia

## ABSTRACT

December 2019 marks a change in the perception of security itself because the enemy is invisible in the form of a virus that can endanger human survival. In this article, the author wants to discuss changes in the perception of "threat" in security from a "visible" threat to an "invisible" threat. Library research was used by the author in this article. The author uses three concepts as the development of security, namely traditional security concept, non-traditional security concept, and national security concept to analyze the case. The findings show that invisible threat in the form of virus or pandemic does not need military readiness as in traditional security. It rather needs a good healthcare system as part of the national resilience of a country in facing threat.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, non-traditional security, pandemic, national security, and technology.

## 1. Introduction

The atomic bomb attacked Hiroshima and Nagasaki killing more than 200,000 people. Yet it is not the deadliest weapon in the military world. The world was focusing on North Korea that was suspiciously producing its H-bomb. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was introduced in 1970 and signed by 189 countries (Army Technology, 2018). While North Korea withdrew in 2003. The deadliest nuclear is known as Tsar Bomb (RDS-220). On 30 October 1961, the Soviet Union exploded over Novaya Zemlya in the Russian Arctic Sea.

Biological weaponry is known to be more dangerous than nuclear, the capacity for damage is huge. Nuclear has physically eye-visible that can be recognized by people. But the biological weapon is invisible, it is in the form of a powder that could spread quickly into the target population. While aggressors could create vaccines to provide immunity to their population (Army Technology, 2018). During World War II, anthrax was mass-produced as weapon reserve but it was never deployed. Anthrax is infectious but not contagious. It is used to kill a specific group. Another biological weapon in history was smallpox-infected blankets that distributed to native Americans by the British Army in the 18<sup>th</sup> century during the conflict between the UK and French colonists. Then in 1972, the UN has banned biological weapon and have never been deployed in modern warfare.

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\* Corresponding author : Siti Nurhasanah  
E-mail : husna.rifa04@gmail.com

After that, the issue of biological weapons for warfare has not heard much. The world was busy with the news about the nuclear competition. How the US manages its strategies with countries that develop nuclear and other related issues. For decades, the US and international community have mobilized to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran. That is because of a belief that nuclear weapons in the hands of the Iranian regime would threaten Israel, present a security risk to the US, Europe, and other allies. During the 1940s and 1950s, the pioneer of a nuclear club with the technological know-how, size, and money to build nukes. By the 1970s, realities had changed. Scientifically sophisticated nations such as China (1964), Israel (1967), and India (1974) went nuclear with the help of pro-Western or pro-Soviet patrons and sponsors (Hanson, 2017). While the world was busy with the nuclear issue, the biological weapon was being forgotten. Before COVID-19, it existed other infectious diseases include influenza, SARS, MERS, bird flu, and others. Those viruses threaten the world but the majority were spreading locale and were not as worldwide as COVID-19.

Since December 2019, the world was shocked by the emergence of a virus originating from the animal market in Wuhan. COVID-19 had a massive impact on society as a whole at the start of 2020. The coronavirus does not only endanger human lives but also tearing down the joints of the economy. The virus was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei, China in December 2019 (Markotter, 2020). Subsequently, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, the virus has been classified by the World Health Organization (WHO) (World Health Organization, 2020). Until now it is still unknown exactly how the origin of the virus. According to Isroil Samiharjo, a well-known biological weapons expert in Indonesia at the Homeland Security Indonesia 2020 conference, stated that until now no research has proven that COVID-19 is a "naturally occurring" virus.

Before coronavirus broke out, there were at least 7 other deadly viruses:

1. Spanish Flu

Spanish flu is included in the category of the deadliest flu in human history. This virus spread in 1917-1918 and killed around 50 million people or a third of the human population at that time.

2. HIV

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is no less deadly than the flu. HIV has occurred since the early 1980s, 75 million people have been infected with HIV and 32 million people have died.

3. Rabies

Rabies entered into the list of one of the deadly viruses. Fortunately, in 1920 the rabies vaccine was introduced. Although the vaccine has been found, rabies is still a serious problem in Africa.

4. Ebola

Ebola first appeared in Sudan and the Republic of the Congo in 1976. The biggest outbreak occurred in West Africa 2013-2016 with 28,000 cases and 11,000 people died.

5. Variola

Variola is a virus that causes smallpox. According to historians, Native Americans died of smallpox brought by European invaders in the 20th century. Smallpox killed around 300 million people.

6. Dengue

Dengue is a virus that causes Dengue Fever (DHF). Dengue infects 50-100 million people every year.

7. SARS-CoV

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) first appeared in 2002 in Guangdong, Southern China. This virus is carried by bats that are transmitted to mammals and then transmitted to humans. SARS spread to 26 countries, infected 8,000 people, and killed 770 people in two years (CNN Indonesia, 2020).

Meanwhile, according to the official National Geographic website, other viruses that are no less deadly than the 7 viruses above include MERS, H1N1 flu, and Zika. MERS which has emerged in 2012 has spread 2,494 cases with a 34% mortality rate. H1N1 flu emerged in 2009 with 284,000 people dead. Zika appeared in 2015-2016, this virus occurred due to mosquito bites with 175,063 positive cases (National Geographic, 2020). According to information from the Official Account of COVID19.GO.ID, on April 21, 2020, it was recorded that co-19 had attacked 213 countries with 2,686,785 confirmed cases and a mortality rate of 184,681 on a global scale.

The data above shows that a threat not seen as a virus can come at any time and become an enemy that must be fought to maintain human survival. Since the outbreak of coronavirus, the concept of human security has been touted as an essential paradigm for understanding global vulnerabilities as part of changes that move beyond security concerns.

According to this paradigm, the main focus of security should be human beings rather than political entities such as states and proposals a multidisciplinary understanding of security covering many fields, such as international relations, strategic studies, human rights, and development studies (SETA, 2020).

By the existence of COVID-19 virus which has spread into 213 countries, the world starts to worry about bioterrorism. The attack using nuclear weapons as a visible type of weapon was reliable during World War II. But it does not mean that the other type of weapon will not be used in the future. The strategic use of biological weapons has presented some difficulties (Galamas, 2008). The uncertainty might be seen from the incubation period, no wonder it has been tricky to use this kind of weapon. However, when it does not emerge now does now mean it won't in the future. A biological weapon as an invisible weapon has gained its value. This weapon can be used for deterrence against nuclear weapon. The suspect of the nuclear attacker is obvious while in case of biological weapon the suspect might be still unknown while many lives have lost by the virus.

In this article, the author will discuss the transformation of threat from visible into the invisible one. The author also wants to elaborate on the traditional and non-traditional threat along with the readiness of countries in dealing with new threats concerning national security in the future. The author also wants to emphasize technology as a solution in solving the pandemic problem which not only threatens lives but also weakens the economy, the social, and political conditions of a country.

## **2. Literature Review**

This topic has become a wide concerns to academics and researchers. To sum up, there are some extensive discussions related to Covid-19 in relation to non-traditional security issues:

- a. *“COVID-19: National Security and Defense Strategy”* written by Congressional Research Service

It implies that the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic has caused challenges about US national security and crisis preparedness (Congressional Research Services, 2020). This paper tells about the debate about “realist” security and “human” security. The realist perspective perceives that security is synonymous with mitigation of military risk and deterrence. At the same time, human security is a security concept that uses individuals as its referent point. It

also focuses on the safety of people within society. It becomes an alternative way for scholars to begin evaluating the security concept and its relevance.

b. *“The Militarization Of COVID-19: Mixing Traditional And Non-Traditional Security?” written by Rage Taufika*

Taufika (2020) discusses the management of countries in overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic. Taufika states that countries should not militarize the Covid-19 administration because it is a war of humans against the virus not war among humans (Taufika, 2020, p. 3). The national defense comprises any efforts to uphold national sovereignty, maintain territorial integrity, and secure people from armed threats. Taufika also states that in Indonesia, there are no relations between global health and the military. However, the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be seen from the traditional security perspective. There are two possibilities of whether the security has shifted or it turns into mixing security. In mixing security, there should be a dialogue between defense and security institutions, as in the case of COVID-19, it is not a military threat. It rather a security challenge in which public health can present danger to human security.

By understanding these two discussions above, the author realizes that there has not been a discussion that focuses on COVID-19 as non-traditional security threatens human lives, which relates to the national security of a state. Therefore, in this paper, the author will focus on describing why Covid-19 is non-traditional security. This paper also will reveal how human security relates to national state resilience.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The author uses a qualitative approach in this study with data from reliable sources include international and national journals, proceedings, and information from websites. The research object focuses on the shift of threat in security from visible threat to invisible threat and the strategy on how humans deal with possible bioterrorism attacks in the future. The data collection method is library research. The research data are collected, selected, categorized, interpreted, to be able to be explained and described the shift of threat in security by the existence of COVID-19.

In this article, the author uses the national security concept. Before talking about national security, let us see the definition of security. According to William, security is most

commonly associated with the alleviation of threats to cherish values, especially those threats which threaten the survival of a particular reference object (Williams, 2008). In line with William, Imobighe states that:

*Security has to do with freedom from danger or threats to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance the well-being of its people. Thus internal security could be seen as the freedom from or the absence of those tendencies, which could undermine internal cohesion, and corporate existence of a country and its ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspirations of the people (Oche, 2010, pp. 35-36).*

From those statements above, it can be inferred that security whether in traditional or non-traditional security is all about protection of assets including living and non-living resources from loss or damage. From this basic security understanding, the author is going to extend the security concept into three other concepts namely Traditional Security, Non-Traditional Security, and National Security.

### *3.1 Traditional Security*

In the traditional concept, the enemy is a visible entity that must be eradicated. However, as time went by, the concept of the enemy itself changed. Historically, national security was perceived within a traditional framework by keeping the nation-state at the center. At the same time, the genre of foreign policy always remained traditional where the emphasis was laid on the conventional methods in pursuing national security. In traditional security, territorial wars were used as a significant tool to pursue national security purposes. Security is seen as a concept of equipping oneself with arms and warfare techniques to increase the strength and capability to face threat in the form of foreign military invasion. Traditional security was adversely against individual-oriented security. It aimed at the populist end of security. The proponents of traditional security always created a picture of 'nation under attack' and ignored the human side of security (Shodhganga, 2016).

### *3.2 Non-Traditional Security*

Opposite to traditional security, non-traditional security started in the post-Cold War concentrates on its non-traditional security dimension. Non-traditional security does not concentrate on states, it rather concentrates on human security. This non-traditional security has influenced states in formulating foreign policy. Non-traditional security tries to widen

and deepen the definition of security. It argues that other issues like environment, political, economic, and social threats endanger the lives and properties of individuals rather than the concentration on the survival of the state (Afolabi, 2016). It also implies that predominantly military power does not appreciate the fact that the greatest threat to a human might not military but environmental, health, social, political, and economic. Therefore, COVID-19 as a health issue is considered a threat to human security.

### *3.3. National Security*

The concept of national security has been mainly on the preservation of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and internal stability with the focus on the coercive power of the state (Chandra & Bhonsle, 2015). In this complex and interdependent era, the threat comes in much a broader way. Non-traditional threats are in the form of pandemics, climate change, etc. The perspective on national security demands that the determinant of security is not only coercive elements from state power but in a more comprehensive frame comprises of many factors in all aspects of national life.

Another source related to this is the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) with its advocacy to human security elements to acquire a wider dimension to go beyond military protection and engage threats to human dignity. OCHA's expanded definition of security covers a wide range of security areas:

1. Economic: Creation of employment and measures against poverty.
2. Food: Measures against hunger and famine.
3. Health: Measures against disease, unsafe food, malnutrition, and lack of access to basic health care.
4. Environmental: Measures against environmental degradation, pollution, natural disasters, and resource depletion.
5. Personal: Measures against inter-ethnic, religious, and other identity tensions.
6. Community: Measures against physical violence, terrorism, crime, domestic violence, and child labor.
7. Political: Measures against political repression and human rights abuses (Human Security Unit, 2009).

Accordingly, it has become necessary for states to make conscious efforts towards building links with other states to consciously engage in global security initiatives. The holistic nature



of national security demands that proper structures are in place to manage it. In this article, the author focuses on coronavirus as the worst pandemic in the century which has become a global threat within the recent three months. The author wants to analyze the future security system by the existence of coronavirus as a pandemic.

#### **4. Result**

To be able to assess this case, we have to see coronavirus in a bigger picture of how it becomes a threat as deadly as nuclear. What shows COVID-19 as a threat that is equally deadly with the 9/11 attacks is this statement:

*“In the wake of 9/11, the federal government established state and local grant funding to prepare law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders across the country to deal with new threats. Public health workers at the state and local levels are on the frontline of the pandemic threat and are first responders, too: the government should treat them that way by funding and reinforcing a sustained program of state and local pandemic preparedness” (Monaco, 2019).*

Health creates challenges that have varying dimensions at different levels in different countries. As a consequence of globalization, people from various parts of the world cross geographical boundaries. This creates economic prosperity but also creates its challenges, especially concerning the spread of disease, crime, and terrorism. Since the UN declared coronavirus as a pandemic, the virus has spread globally and international cooperation is needed to resolve this. However, prejudice against China is inevitable. Regarding the trade war and its conflict with the US. Trump has blamed Beijing for a lack of transparency over the true extent of the COVID-19 outbreak in China (Tan, 2020). It relates to China was late in reporting the virus outbreak to WHO. China has fired back with its foreign ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian, suggesting that the US military might be the cause of the outbreak in Wuhan (Tan, 2020).

That is an endless accusation between the US and China. That is less important compare to how the world is facing this pandemic. In this case, the US as a superpower country is overwhelmed in handling this pandemic. This drew a reaction from the American public, reflected in the sentence “Many Americans are going to demand to know why the United States failed to adequately prepare for one of the most significant crises since World War II; a crisis that was both foreseeable and foreseen (Bergen, 2020). In the same article, Bergen likened the pandemic attack to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the

September 9, 2001, WTC attack. During the Pearl Harbor attack, the current president was F. D. Roosevelt, after the incident, he immediately formed an investigation team and seven weeks later the investigation team reported the results of the investigation. The September 9, 2001 attack the president who was serving at the time was George W. Bush, he also formed an investigation team after getting protests from the families of the victims (Bergen, 2020). The US has more COVID-19 cases than any other country, but the president's response is 'xenophobic scapegoating' by announcing an executive order that would temporarily suspend all immigration from other countries (Walker, 2020).

## **5. Discussion**

### *5.1 COVID-19 and how threat perception changes in security*

The US is hostile to countries suspected of possessing nuclear weapons such as North Korea and Russia. While the US is worried about that, it turns out that nuclear is not haunting right now, rather a virus as an invisible threat to human security. Even though some say that this virus is man-made, but conspiracy theories do not add up. The assumption that this virus is man-made is because at the early emergence of this virus two doctors died in Wuhan and the authorities were hiding it. However, there are already journalists who cover. This is reflected in the sentence "he had sent out a warning to fellow medics on 30 December but police told him to stop making false comments (BBC News, 2020)." Further on the news, Dr. Li was summoned to the Public Security Bureau to sign a letter he was accused of "making false comments" that had "severely disturbed the social order." From this incident, we can see that the Chinese government tried to hide the outbreak of a new disease in Wuhan.

After Dr. Li was diagnosed with coronavirus and died, Dr. Li's posts in Weibo got viral as he showed the symptoms that look like SARS the outbreak in 2003. The public urged the government by creating hashtags "Wuhan government owes Dr. Li Wenliang an apology" and "We want freedom of speech." But the next day, those thousands of comments had already been wiped (BBC News, 2020). China is lack of transparency at the early stage of this pandemic emergence.

In February 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a global health emergency saying if funds are not allocated now to tackle the outbreak, nations would pay for it later (BBC News, 2020). When a pandemic is attacking, the government is in a security dilemma whether to put health or economy first. It happened in Indonesia. Indonesia with

approximately 280 million population has a big possibility for contagion, the spread will be fast with that number of population and high travel mobility. However, the president making it clear that he was not going to contemplate the idea to impose lockdown (Bayuni, 2020). Lockdown has a huge economic impact. Christopher Wood, Global Head of Equity Strategy at Jefferies stated that lockdown in countries like India and Indonesia are more disastrous for human welfare and economies since there is no help for small businesses nor are there unemployment benefits (Economic Times, 2020). Infectious disease and pandemic can have significant effects that can lead to the destabilization of nations and regions through direct mortality and morbidity as well as staggering economic and social loss.

According to Jonathan Granoff from Global Security Institute and UNFOLD ZERO, coronavirus pandemic is a threat to human security for which governments should have been prepared. But instead, they have been focusing more on military (in) security, spending trillions of dollars on weapons to defend against military attacks rather than investing in human security issues like health, climate change, and poverty (Granoff & Kellman, 2020). From Granoff's statement, it can be inferred that a pandemic attack can come unpredictably, the readiness of countries is examined by the pandemic emergence.

The readiness of countries in facing bioterror is still questionable. Take the US for example, the US is not ready to face biological attack. A few days after the 9/11 attack, a retired Air Force colonel named Randal Larsen on his meeting with Vice President Dick Cheney made a simulation of bioterrorism by smuggling a biological weapon into the office. The weapon was put in a briefcase and could not be detected by the security check. He told the Vice President that the country was unprepared for a biological attack, and Larsen told Cheney that he just smuggled it into the office (Hylton, 2011).

The simulation above showed us that in addition to a virus as an invisible threat, it is also easily smuggled. It is different from military weaponry and nuclear which physically stand out. The most intriguing is no reaction from Cheney and other people inside the office when Larsen entered the office. From that simulation, it can be assessed that people do not put suspicion at all when someone is smuggling a biological weapon. A weaponized powder of *Bacillus globigii* almost genetically identical to anthrax was put inside a tube (Hylton, 2011). If it was not a simulation, perhaps the whole people in one of the most secure buildings in the world have been infected by disease without notice.

The suspect of a biological attack is hard for almost anyone to imagine. It makes of the most mundane object, death: a doorknob, a handshake, the breath can become poison (Hylton, 2011). A biological weapon is just as horrible as nuclear, yet biological weapons are just as old as war. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nearly every major nation developed, produced, and used a panoply of biological weapons including anthrax, plague, typhoid, and glanders (Hylton, 2011). After the 9/11 attack, it was a fragile moment when people forget about the danger of those biological weapons because the world focus was directed into terrorists.

Graham Allison, a leading expert on nuclear proliferation and the founding dean of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government stated:

*“Nuclear terrorism is a preventable catastrophe, and the reason it is preventable is that the material to make a nuclear bomb cannot be made by terrorists. But in the bio case – oh, my God! Can I prevent terrorists from getting into their hands’ anthrax or other pathogens? No! Even our best efforts cannot do that. I think the amazing thing is that one has not seen more bioterrorism, given the relative ease of making a bioweapon and the relative difficulty of defending (Hylton, 2011).*

Concerning COVID-19, it is much more than a health crisis. It stresses every one of the countries it touches, it has the potential to create devastating social, economic, and political crises that will leave deep scars (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). In decade and centuries past, the outbreak of the infectious disease was often limited to the local location where it firstly reported. However, the pace of global travel, migration, and commerce has increased dramatically in recent decades, and that increase poses an increased global risk of disease (Cecchine & Moore, 2006). When a pandemic emerges, countries are competing in technology to find the cure. These technologies notably include methods to collect and communicate information about infectious disease outbreaks more effectively and quickly than ever before (Cecchine & Moore, 2006). The fast worldwide information of the outbreak can result in better and fast response to anticipate them.

Since the 9/11 WTC attacks security issues have been dominated by terrorism. Until the world forgets the unseen threat of viruses (either natural or artificial viruses). With a virus, this affects the world of surveillance. In the future, surveillance can take the form of information on what science and technology are being developed and produced by other countries. What will be contested in the future is the technology including the manufacture of vaccines. It is possible that the technology being traded is not only a vaccine to treat but the

technology to make a virus remains in a certain area. People in the future who will accompany the military meeting include health experts.

### *5.2 Technology as a solution for the next pandemic outbreak*

In addition to a good healthcare system, technology is the best option for anticipating pandemic. Technology allows humans to handle it quickly. Isolation should be conducted as soon as the pandemic occurred, it then followed by the use of technology. Not every country has advanced technology in facing pandemic. Learning from Singapore, more than a million people have used a popular telehealth app called -MaNaDr, founded by family physician Dr. Siaw Tung Yeng, for virtual visits; 20% of the physicians on the island country offer some level of service via the app (Park, 2020). In China, they use technology installed in their smartphone to identify whether they should be quarantined or they can go out. People have to install an application, and people can start filling information about their current symptoms. This technology very efficient and effective in stopping the pandemic to occur because people do not have to see a doctor to know whether they should be quarantined or not. China initiated its response to the virus by leaning on its strong technology and artificial intelligence (AI), data science, and technology to track and fight the pandemic. In addition to that, the tech leaders such as Alibaba, Baidu, Huawei, and more increased their company's healthcare initiatives.

In a global pandemic such as COVID-19, technology, artificial intelligence, and data science have become critical to helping societies effectively deal with the outbreak (Marr, 2020). According to Forbes, AI has some benefit in fighting pandemic (Marr, 2020):

1. AI can identify, track, and forecast outbreaks. AI does it by analyzing reports, social media platforms, and government documents to detect an outbreak. A Canadian startup BlueDot provides the service to detect the outbreak early.
2. AI can help to diagnose the virus. This can help front-line healthcare workers to detect and monitor patients efficiently. The speed of this technology is very reliable, healthcare workers do not have to worry about the explode of the patients during the outbreak. Chinese giant e-commerce Alibaba offers this service with its claim of having 96% accurately diagnosing the virus within a second.

3. AI can process healthcare claims. This technology is very efficient to reduce direct interaction. The healthcare claims will be processed faster regardless of limited staff. Ant Financial provides this service.
4. AI can develop a drug. Google's DeepMind division used its newest AI algorithms to understand the protein which forms the virus and develop finding to find a cure.
5. AI can identify infected individuals. China's sophisticated surveillance devices can identify fever with facial recognition.
6. In addition to AI, big data is also very essential to identify and assess the risk of each individual based on their travel history, time spent in virus hotspots, and possible exposure to people carrying the virus. An excellent healthcare system with sophisticated technology can become a weapon to fight for a pandemic outbreak or possible bioterrorism attack in the future.

## **6. Conclusion**

COVID-19 is a virus with the greatest impact on human security compare to other viruses that have emerged before. COVID-19 has shown that the upcoming threat in the future will mostly be an invisible one. Countries are unprepared for a bioterrorism attack. The ammunition for fighting bioterrorism is not military power like in traditional threat, it rather technology which can detect the spread of infectious disease as soon as possible. Countries can utilize Artificial Intelligence to identify, control, and suppress the spread of the virus. An excellent healthcare system with sophisticated technology enables us to detect the virus at the early stage to save more lives and prevent the effect of the virus on other life aspects such as social and economic. Bioterrorism attacks can happen anytime without notice, however, countries have to be ready with their strong national security resilience.

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