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## The conflict between the army and the Indonesian police: history, dynamics, ways to overcome the crisis of relations between the two structures

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**Аннотация.** Национальная армия Индонезии (ТНИ) долгое время была ключевой опорой суверенитета Индонезии. Национальная полиция (Полри), в свою очередь, сыграла важную роль в борьбе нации за независимость и была одной из немногих организаций, поддержавших Сукарно во время государственного переворота 1965 года. После переворота в 1965 году Полри вошла в состав Вооруженных сил Индонезии (АВРИ). Однако после краха режима Сухарто полиция вновь была отделена от Вооруженных сил. Разделение оказалось неудачным. Это привело к конфликту между полицией и армией из-за неразделенных обязанностей и конкуренции за ресурсы. Данное противостояние может привести к еще большему конфликту и в конечном итоге к распаду страны. Таким образом, важно проанализировать эту сложную проблему с учетом ее истории, текущей динамики и потенциального развития конфликта.

**Ключевые слова:** ТНИ, Полри, история Индонезии, политика Индонезии

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However, there is another school of thought about the founding of the police. According to A. Wahyurudhanto, the first police division was founded in 1867 in Semarang by Dutch colonial authorities who organised a unit of 78 locals to keep order in the city and to protect resident Europeans [**Wahyurudhanto: 104**]. The police finally got its modern appearance in the period of 1897—1920 and consisted of several divisions: veld politie (the field police), stads politie (the city police), rechts politie (the local's police), bestuurs politie (the police unit that protected the native and European administrative apparatus) et cetera [**Wahyurudhanto: 104**].

Police departments were headed by Dutch officers. Ordinary officers were mostly from the Christian regions of the Dutch East Indies, such as Manado, Ambon, and some regions of Sumatra [**Wahyurudhanto: 106**]. Usually, local officers served in Java and Madura because they had no relations with the local customs and were not Muslims; hence they had no relation with the anti-Dutch movements there [**Panchenko: 22—23**].

In the 1930s, around 54, 000 people served in the colonial police. Approximately 96 percent were locals [**Wahyurudhanto: 105**].

During this period, the colonial police developed some problems that still affect contemporary policing in Indonesia, including corruption, sexual assault, and racketeering. The largest amount of crimes was committed against the ethnic Chinese. As the result, the local population was afraid of the police [**Wahyurudhanto: 104**].

In addition, there were increasingly encounters between police officers and soldiers of the colonial army - the KNIL (Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger) [**van der Meij: 381**]. KNIL personnel, as a rule, were locals. The conflicts between the two structures had religious and ethnic

dimensions. However, sometimes conflicts emerged without any clear reason. Often such incidents led to skirmishes with casualties on two sides. Hence, the ranks of the police became the main enemies of soldiers of the colonial army from the beginning of the 20th century onwards **[Wahyurudhanto: 105]**

The police of the Dutch Indies were one of the most corrupted organizations in Indonesia. Officers stole, were corrupt, and involved themselves in the racketeering of brothels and opium smokehouses<sup>1</sup>. Eventually, the colonial administration tried to fight the corruption and decided to change the administration of the police to officers of the KNIL<sup>2</sup>. Military officers instead of fighting corruption simply changed officers of the police by loyal officers of the army and did exactly the same things as the former corrupt police officers. As the result, the system did not change at all, but the conflict between the police and the army became more entrenched. Moreover, police staff became more unsure about their ability to oppose the army **[Wahyurudhanto: 104]**.

Thus, it can be said that the conflict between the police and the army started long before the 'Reformasi' period but in the period of the Dutch Indies.

After the Second World War, the police became one of the key pillars of Indonesian Independence **[Wahyurudhanto: 104]**, with them engaged in the war for independence against English and Dutch forces in Surabaya<sup>3</sup>. The force remained the main power, after the TNI, which fought against separatists and terrorists in the period of from 1945 to 1970s<sup>4</sup>.

After the coup of 1965, the police became a part of the ABRI (the Armed Forces of Indonesia)<sup>5</sup>.

In 1998 president Suharto resigned amid political and economic crisis. The democratic government announced the reform of the army **[Crouch: 130]**. Notwithstanding very ambitious plans, including the separation of the police and the army, reforms stalled. At that time the conflict between the Polri and the TNI escalated.

In 1999 the official separation of the police and the army took place. Experts and the government hoped that the Polri would become democratic, less corrupt, and more professional<sup>6</sup>. However, not all the goals of the reform were achieved **[Sebastian and Iisginarsah: 93]**.

Due to political and economic instability, the government distanced itself from army reformat. As the result, the army had no choice but to take over the reforms itself. However, an authoritarian structure such as the army had little incentive to reform itself. Predictably, the reforms stalled and the police-army conflict entered a new stage **[Crouch: 130]**.

For the first time in the 'Reformasi' period, there was a lack of financing for the police. Although, the problem of underfinancing was acute, the government nevertheless the situation did not spiral out of control as both the TNI and Polri were able to independently resolve their lack of funding by resorting to corruption and racketeering, just as they had done back in the times of the Dutch Indies **[Mietzner: 21]**. The TNI had much more power than the police forces, therefore a larger amount of money was taken by the army. The police were jealous of the army's ability to extract a greater amount of resources<sup>7</sup>. The Polri decided to confront the TNI and conduct a "re-division of spheres of influence" in the busyness. As the result, the conflict was quickly approaching a bloody crescendo<sup>8</sup>.

In addition, salaries of the TNI and the Polri have differed greatly up until the present day<sup>9</sup>. Currently, many encounters happen because policemen want to take revenge against the military due to their difference in wages.

Another reason for the conflict was that in period from 1998 to 2004, the responsibilities and spheres of authority of the army and the police often overlapped. This was the reason for many local conflicts occurring happened in 1999—2002 when the separatist movement was on becoming increasingly active<sup>10</sup>. Until the present day the lack of clearly delineated responsibilities hampers the solving of the TNI-Polri conflict<sup>11</sup>.

At present the conflict is getting worse because of the frequent use of weapons and hence growing casualties from two sides, as well as among civilians<sup>12</sup>. In 2002-2018, there were 13 skirmishes between the army and the police, all in all 24 people were killed (including civilians)<sup>13</sup>. The last skirmish took place in 2019.

The administration of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004—2014) and the administration of Joko Widodo (Jokowi) (2014—present) have seen attempts to reduce the conflict. As a result, the two organizations' elites have become closer to each other, but the same cannot be said of the rank-and-file<sup>14</sup>.

Jokowi's administration has made significant progress in solving the conflict. During his presidency elites of the army and the police finally reached reconciliation and put an end to long-lasting conflicts of interests. Most probably president simply bought the loyalty of the top brass of the army and police. This, nevertheless, does not guarantee that the peace between the elites will be long lasting. The evidence of that is that Jokowi still helps and supports the army over the police. Shortly after his election, Jokowi needed for powers that could support his presidency. Hence he decided to rely on the TNI<sup>15</sup>. Giving the responsibility of protecting the president to the TNI in return for financial assistance, for instance, was seen during his first term [**Supriatma: 2**].

At present there are a number of disagreements between the TNI and the Polri, some of which occurring without Frequently policemen and soldiers do not report local encounters to officers<sup>16</sup>.

Today the police-army conflict is one of the most actual problems of internal security of Indonesia. Both of them have ample personnel and weaponry. The dynamics of the conflict show that TNI and Polri personnel often use weapons in encounters. If the situation gets worse a large-scale conflict may occur. The latter would lead to the process of the balkanization of the state. Additionally, the conflict of two structures might be used to weaken Indonesia from inside.

The administration of Joko Widodo has now fewer possibilities to suppress the conflict. The government could end the conflict by following a few steps:

1) The government and the leaders of the two bodies should enhance the discipline of staff, improve the selection of candidates for service, and establish connections between officers and personnel<sup>17</sup>.

2) The government and president Jokowi should become mediators in solving the conflict<sup>18</sup>.

3) Budgets of the TNI and the Polri should be balanced. Right now there is a difference between the two budgets. For example, the budget of the army in 2021 is IDR 136.5 trn.<sup>19</sup>, while the budget of the police is only IDR 97.5 trn.<sup>20</sup>.

4) Wages of army and police personnel should be equal. It must be admitted that the government has made progress on this question and has increased the wages of police staff<sup>21</sup>.

5) The police law of 2002 and the army law of 2004 should be improved, so that the problem of separation of powers, especially in areas with strong separatist movements, is no longer so acute.

6) The government should continue its work on enhancing the professionalization and increasing its control over the army and the police. However, this is impossible while both of the structures are not provided with funding solely from the budget of the state<sup>22</sup>.

7) Both the police and the army must be separate from business and racketeering to establish full control upon them and to fight corruption<sup>23</sup>.

## Conclusion

The confrontation between the armed forces and the police of Indonesia is one of the longest and the most dangerous conflicts in the country. Based on historical, economical, and political reasons, the army-police standoff might bring Indonesia to a large-scale conflict, which in turn could lead to the collapse and balkanization of the whole country. For these reasons, the government of Indonesia should as soon as possible take steps to end the conflict.

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#### Political science and regional studies

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## The conflict between the army and the Indonesian police: history, dynamics, ways to overcome the crisis of relations between the two structures

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**Abstract.** The National Army of Indonesia (the TNI) has long been a key pillar of Indonesia's sovereignty. The nation's police force (the Polri), in turn, was instrumental in the nation's struggle for independence, and was one of the few organizations which supported Sukarno during the 1965 coup. After the coup in 1965 the Polri became part of the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI). However, after the collapse of Suharto's regime, the police were again separated from the Armed Forces. However, this separation was unsuccessful. It has resulted in conflict between the nation's police and army due to overlapping responsibilities and competition over resources. This standoff could lead to greater conflict and the eventual balkanisation of the country. Hence, it is crucial to analyse this complex issue, taking into account its roots, its current dynamics and its potential future development.

**Keywords:** TNI, Polri, history of Indonesia, Indonesian politics

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