

Democratic regression in Indonesia: Police and low-capacity democracy in Jokowi's administration (2014–2020)

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Abstract

Discussions about democratisation have often revolved around the strengthening or weakening phenomenon/notion of democracy. This research is a continuation of previous studies on democratic regression in Indonesia. Charles Tilly (2007) examined democratic regression from democracy and de-democratization theory through the concept of low-capacity democracy. Tilly's perspective argues a low-capacity democratic process occurred during the Joko Widodo administration in Indonesia from 2014 to 2020 when the state implemented the Police as a political instrument to maintain power. As a result, the character of the Police deviated from democratic principles, leading to a problem for police professionalism. The study employs qualitative methods, in which the primary data is obtained from in-depth interviews with several key informants. The secondary data is gathered from scientific works of literature and news in online media. This study indicates how low-capacity democracy developed through: first, the Indonesian regime's intervention and exercise of control by involving and appointing police officers to civilian positions; second, police repression against civil liberties; and third, the Police's justification for their authority and power. Thus, this study confirms Tilly's argument that a low-capacity democratic process occurs when democratic countries pursue undemocratic methods by manipulating the Police as an instrument to strengthen the power of the regime. The recommendation of this study is to strengthen democracy in terms of law enforcement by the supervision of parliament and supervisory institutions to retain the Police's role as an independent law enforcement institution.

Keywords:

police; democratic regression; professionalism; law enforcement; Indonesia

Introduction

This article examines Indonesia's democratic regression from the beginning to the end of the second decade of reform (2014–20), focusing on law enforcement as an instrument of the regime. In addition, this study implements the concept of low-capacity democratic processes, based on the theory of democracy and de-democratisation by Tilly (2007), as a framework for navigating Indonesia's democratic regression. The focus of

the discussion lies in the regime's politicisation of law enforcement, its associated behaviours, and the internal views of the Police on its own authority.

The discussion on police and democracy in Indonesia is related through the security sector reform (SSR) after 1998. One of the SSR's achievements was the separation of the Indonesian National Police (Polri) from the military to emphasise the Police's status as an independent entity. Such institutional

dissociation, which was due to the weak position of the Police as the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia (ABRI) during the New Order, represented a move toward professionalising law enforcement. The Police, however, failed to exercise law enforcement functions against ABRI personnel breaching the law (Siregar, 2010b, p. 6). Hence, cases of law violations seem to be "justified" and untouchable by the law for political stability.

Efforts were already underway to build a professional police force at the initiation of the reform decade. There were several policies, such as Presidential Instruction (Inpres) No. 2/1999 and Law No. 2/2002 on the Polri (Siregar, 2010) enacting the separation between the Polri and the military. Informants from Ministry of Internal Affairs stated that Law No. 2/2002 demonstrated the government's steps in organising institutionally in the security sector. Further, the law represented the first reform policy under the SSR mandate, and Indonesia's first step in building police professionalism in the era of democratisation. The regulation exhibited the Polri to the public as an independent entity in terms of organisation, line of command, and function (Sinaga, 2021).

These regulations encouraged other reform efforts within the Polri to synergise between regulations and general police programs in the democratic political system. The Polri compiled the 'Blue Book for Police Reform' in 1999, which was later developed into the Police Reform Programme, containing the three agendas (instrumental, structural, and cultural reforms) and special programs within the Polri (IDSPS, 2008). In general, instrumental reform refers to the regulatory sphere, structure in the organizational sphere, and cultural in the behavioural sphere. In 2008, Polri Headquarters announced several achievements in the police force's reform agenda. These included the introduction and inclusion of materials on human rights through police education and training and the issuance of related policies

at the Polri level through the 'Chief of Polri Regulation' (Perkap) (Makaarim, 2015).

However, criticisms of the Police have also exposed issues with Polri's professionalism. This article thus far implements the parameters of Polri's professionalism based on the elaboration of the following two studies. Muradi (2014) found that the Police could perpetrate political deviations upon the separation by becoming part of the new regime in Indonesia. Dissociation from the military facilitated such deviations. Similarly, the centre for Political Studies-Indonesian Institute of Science's (LIPI) research (2008, 2015a, 2015b, 2017) correlated Polri's professionalism with the phenomenon of police violence. Based on the framework of democracy, this article explores the two indicators of Polri's professionalism, which are: firstly, independence in law enforcement (not involved in political interests); secondly, avoidance of the use of excessive force as part of respect for human rights.

Therefore, police violence will not be directly related to the issue of professionalism, instead such a notion was perceived through several considerations as the last option in navigating the threatening case of life or public order. According to Osse (2007), force is considered legal if necessary and proportionally executed based on honesty and intelligence analysis. Whereas, accountability in the context of democracy is considered a vital variable in observing police violence.

Meanwhile, the independence of the police from political interest is doubted. The political alliance between the elite and the Police at the onset of reforms also casts doubts on Polri's professionalism. Particularly, President Abdurrahman Wahid utilised the Police to fight opposition groups during his impeachment process in 2001 (Mietzner, 2006). Soekarnoputri (2001–04) also employed the military and Police to enforce several policies. In the case of the first terrorist bombing in Bali in 2002, President Megawati was instead

inclined to send the Police to handle it (Honna, 2013). This development also gave rise to the Polri's tendency to act independently in political life by indicating a political attitude towards a policy rejecting the National Security Bill because the substance of this bill opened discussions on placing the Polri under one department (Stanley, n.d, 2004).

The political interests of the regime involving the Police and violent behaviour become the focus of discussion in this article on navigating democratic regression in Indonesia. Based on Warburton's study (2020), democratic regression was initiated by the occurrence of a decade-long democratic stagnation (2009-2019). Since the 2009 re-election of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) as president, democratic stagnation has indicated stability with low-quality democracy. The government remained stable due to a broad political coalition in parliament, dominated by the political elite to maintain power stability through securing extensive support in parliament than through improving the governance. Moreover, SBY administration failed to strengthen the democracy in Indonesia, which was evident with the 2014 Direct Local Election Bill, deciding that the local parliament (DPRD) would appoint regional heads.

In 2014, when Jokowi was appointed president, democracy appeared to indicate a backward trend (the period of democratic regression) (Warburton, 2020) and continued in 2019 after re-election of Jokowi as president. Several democracy indexes confirm this phenomenon. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (2021), Indonesia's democracy index score in 2020 was its lowest in 14 years. Although Indonesia's democracy ranking remained similar to 2019 (64th in the world), its actual score decreased in 2020. In 2019, Indonesia's democracy index score indicated 6.48, while in 2020, the score went down to 6.30, reaching its lowest point since 2014 (see **Table 1**).

Table 1.
Scores in the Indonesian Democracy Index, 2014–2020

Year	Score
2020	6.30
2019	6.48
2018	6.39
2017	6.39
2016	6.97
2015	7.03
2014	6.95

Source: *The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021*

The index released by Freedom House further confirms the decline of Indonesia's democracy since 2014. Although it had experienced an increasing score, it was not significant. However, the score continues to decline until 2020 (see **Table 2**).

Table 2.
Scores in the Indonesian Democracy Index, 2014–2020

Year	Political Rights	Civil Liberty	Score
2020	30/40	31/60	61/100
2019	30/40	32/60	62/100
2018	30/40	34/60	64/100
2017	31/40	34/60	65/100
2016	31/40	34/60	65/100
2015	30/40	34/60	64/100
2014	30/40	34/60	64/100

Source: (Freedom House, in <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>)

Indonesia's democratic ratings also declined in terms of civil liberties. In 2019, its civil liberties index stood at an overall score of 77.20. This score decreased from the previous year's 78.46 (Gismar, 2020, p. 21). This index suggested that two civil liberties had particularly deteriorated in the country since 2018: the first was freedom of assembly and association, and the second, free and fair elections, as shown in Table 3 (Gismar, 2020, pp. 23–24).

Considering all the index data, this research assesses the role of the Police in Indonesia's democratic regression between the

Table 3.
Civilian Liberty Index Comparisons

Civilian Liberty	Index 2018	Index 2019
Freedom of assembly and association	82.35	78.03
Free and fair election	95.48	85.75

Source: *Indeks Demokrasi Indonesia, 2019*

years 2014 and 2020. In analysing the linkage of police professionalism and democratic regression, the researcher looks at the Police's involvement in the broader political sphere, which the government leads. Privileges conferred on the Police were increasingly used to justify officers' role, deviating from professional principles. Furthermore, the Police's use of force became increasingly visible in public.

Therefore, this study's findings indicate three points to highlight in the discussion;

- (1) The Jokowi administration explicitly placed Polri officers in the civilian political arena. The researcher views it as a politicisation of the police which contributed to low-capacity democracy in the country.
- (2) Police violence against the community grew, especially in response to the exercise of civil liberties. This was a form of police power manipulation against civilians.
- (3) Internal views of the Polri also strengthened attempts to justify its officers' roles. Such views created the belief that the irregularities represented police duty as law enforcement, and that they were therefore not a problem for democracy.

Literature Review

Research on democratic regression at the global level began in 2006 and has continued since then (Gerschewski, 2021; Haynes, 2021; Wagemann, 2018). A certain global trend has been discovered and the case has usually applied to G20 and geopolitically dense countries (Diamond, 2021). This study highlights the G20 countries based on their position in undertaking global democracy since

2005. Based on several comparisons of index data, this study navigates those 29 countries that have experienced significant democratic setbacks, with 19 countries experiencing substantive declines in freedom between 2005 and 2019, and only two countries have improved.

This article is inseparable from previous research on Indonesian democratic regression. It developed because, since the beginning of reforms in 1998, doubts had emerged about the consistency of Indonesia's political direction with democratic principles. According to Robison and Hadiz (2004), such doubts stemmed from the enduring presence of certain economic networks and Suharto cronies. Networks can consolidate authoritarian politics and predatory economic relations toward an economic oligarchy (Hadiz, 2005).

Doubts about the strengthening of democracy become evident when the government has been unable to assert civilian control over the military or the state's capacity to ensure the rule of law (Webber, 2006). In Indonesia, they were confirmed after Joko Widodo (Jokowi) became president in 2014. Democratic regression was underway and became stronger ahead of the 2019 general election (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019). As a pillar of democratic regression, the Jokowi government built up security institutions to manipulate law enforcement. This manipulation aimed to weaken and suppress democratic opposition (Power, 2018; Aspinall & Warburton, 2017). Moreover, political consensuses have created an economic oligarchy, cartel politics, and power concessions in Indonesia (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Winters, 2014).

Meanwhile, society witnessed an increase in intolerance and a decline in civil liberties. The executive authoritarian apparatus concurrently expanded at the state level to suppress opposition and limit criticism of the government (Warburton, 2020). In its bid to be re-elected in 2019, the Jokowi administration demonstrated

undemocratic behaviours in bureaucratic mobilisation and police manipulation. The Police as a state apparatus played an active, massive role in the run-up to the general election, to the point of threatening anti-Jokowi activists under the pretext of the Information and Electronic Transaction (ITE) Law (Aspinall & Waburton, 2019). Ahmad Dhani, for example, was imprisoned for his “idiot” tweet with the hashtag #2019ChangePresident, perceived as hate speech (Bland, 2019).

This study implements the concept of low-capacity democratic processes, based on the theory of democracy and de-democratisation by Tilly (2007), as a framework for perceiving Indonesia's democratic regression. To gauge the degree of democracy or de-democratisation, Tilly (2007) proposed the concept of 'state capacity' into two categories, comprising 'high state capacity' and 'low state capacity', in which the higher capacity of the state to manage democratic values leads to higher capacity of democracy in that country. Conversely, if the state's capacity is low in such a sense, the effect of democratic values will be narrower in society.

Tilly (2007) put forward four forms of capacity. In the first, the 'high-capacity undemocratic' form, the state is not democratic at all. Its indicators are a lack of public aspirations; high interaction of state security forces in society and the political sphere; and mass rebellion and struggle for regime change. In the second, the 'low-capacity undemocratic' form, the state is not yet democratic due to enduring ethnic divisions, religious mobilisation, violent struggles such as civil war, and political actors often using deadly force (Tilly, 2007).

The two other forms pertain to democratic states. The 'high-capacity democratic' form reflects a country with a strong democracy, as indicated by the high intensity of social movements, activity of interest groups, mobilisation of political parties, competitive elections, and political relations between the

state and society; this is coupled with low levels of political violence. By contrast, the 'low-capacity democratic' form demonstrates a process of de-democratisation. This condition occurs when the state appears to reflect, at first glance, a 'high-capacity democratic' form due to the presence of social movements, interest groups, and multiparty elections (Tilly, 2007). These democratic elements are weak, since the state monitors the community through the interaction of legal, semi-legal, and even illegal state actors in the political sphere. An example of the interaction includes the regime's abuse of law and law enforcement agencies (police) for the sake of political purposes, resorting the Police violence in public.

The concept of 'low-capacity democracy' as a framework for democratic regression analysis reinforces the term 'illiberal democracy', in which a country combines democratic values and autocratic tensions in a hybrid regime. The former aspect pertains to adopting 'free' multiparty elections, and the latter to a situation in which a system of checks and balances is lacking, or even not applicable (Zakaria, 2003). 'Illiberal' regimes tend to manipulate state institutions to strengthen power while limiting freedom of expression and space for opposition actors. Such manipulation is observed when the regime regards these institutions as its own instruments rather than the state's instruments.

From a low-capacity democratic framework, this study focuses on the manipulation of a state institution—the Police—as an instrument of the current regime in Indonesia. The reason for selecting law enforcement is the relationship between democracy and the Police, with a 'democratic policing' perspective at the normative level. In democratic policing, police activities following with democratic principles, namely respect for human rights and accountability. Studies by Pino (2006), Osse (2007), Chakrabarti (2008), and Karnavian and Sulistyono (2017) explained that democratic policing activities would

ideally develop the protection of individual freedoms and activities. Although the Police are authorised to limit freedom, these restrictions must go through a process that involves citizens and is accompanied by accountability, transparency, legitimacy, and subordination to civil authorities.

However, the discourse on democratic policing has not provided an answer for law enforcement abuse in democratic countries. Bonner et al. (2018) have criticised the way studies address the Police in democratic countries, as they often consider police irregularities to be unrelated to democracy. So far, institutional accountability has been found sufficient in handling police abuse, since the latter is regarded as solely a deviation. Meanwhile, the phenomenon has continued in both authoritarian and democratic regimes (Bonner et al., 2018).

Democratic regimes can use the Police to monitor the community. The privilege of the police in a democracy provides a special authority given by the state, including a legal monopoly as part of law enforcement to exercise force in society. Consequently, the Police will often appear and interact with citizens' lives. However, police authority becomes contradictory when the regime channels it in the political sphere. Law enforcement, intended to protect freedom, abuses its monopoly on power (Jones et al., 1996), thereby shifting law enforcement into an instrument of the regime.

Methods

The study uses qualitative research methods. The researchers explore primary data through interviews with eight key informants and secondary data through relevant literature, index result, and media coverage review. The researcher analyses views, criticisms, interpretations, and opinions about the role of the Police during the Jokowi administration, based on the interviews conducted. Informants were representatives from the Polri, academia,

and the government, as well as Civil Society Organization (CSOs)

The interviews took place from February to June 2021. The researcher examined them through data reduction, having simplified the data by grouping the informants' statements in relation to the arguments of this study. For the present article, the researcher interprets the groupings which were formed to gauge arguments and support statements in the discussion.

Results

Police appointment and involvement

Years ago, President Jokowi began the process of using the Police for strategic alliances within his administration. In January 2015, Jokowi nominated Budi Gunawan (BG) as his candidate for Kapolri. Due to controversy, Jokowi finally withdrew his proposal to appoint BG, a confidant of former President Soekarnoputri, chairman of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP). However, the nomination triggered a conflict between Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and the Polri after KPK named BG a corruption suspect (Widiastuti, 2020).

In July 2016, Jokowi nominated Tito Karnavian, a relatively young figure in the Polri, as National Police Chief (*Kapolri*). This nomination also stirred up controversy because the candidate's name was not included in Polri's Office and High-Ranking Council (*Dewan Kepangkatan dan Jabatan Tinggi/Wanjakti*). The Wanjakti is in charge of recommending candidates for *Kapolri* who meet the selection criteria; the proposal for Karnavian had skipped five generations above him who qualified as candidates for *Kapolri* (Tempo.co, 2016). As a result, the proposal could damage the regeneration of Polri leadership.

The interview result from the academic informant noted the pre-existence of a 'comfortable' political relationship between

Jokowi and Karnavian. In his role as Kapolri, Karnavian turned out to be a reliable ally of the president (Anggraini, 2021). Throughout his career as Kapolri, Karnavian managed to oversee high-profile cases against government critics such as Robertus Robet, a human rights activist who sang a mockery of the military hymn at a demonstration, and Dandhy Laksono, who was critical of the Papua case (Widiastuti, 2020).

The figure of Karnavian was finally withdrawn from the helm of the Police as he became Minister of Home Affairs in the Jokowi cabinet for the 2019–24 period. This in itself is worth noting, since Karnavian became the first police officer ever to hold the ministerial position (Fealy, 2020). Karnavian's presence in the cabinet indicates that the political elite, especially the regime, feels comfortable with the relationship built with the Police to support the maintenance of power (Anggraini, 2021).

Jokowi's administration increased opportunities for Polri officers to serve in the political field in 2020. General Carlo Brix Tewu was made an expert on ideology and constitution at the Coordinating Ministry for Politics, Law, and Security in 2016. That same year, the Indonesian government appointed the general as Acting Governor of West Sulawesi (Irfany, 2020). In addition, in 2020, Tewu, an active police officer, would come to serve as Deputy for Law and Legislation at the Ministry of State-owned of Enterprises.

The government also involved Polri officers in political positions around the 2018 direct local election. Through the Minister of Home Affairs, the government appointed active police officers to Acting Governors namely Martuani Sormin in North Sumatra and Mochamad Iriawan in West Java (CNN Indonesia, 2020b). Further positions in civilian institutions were given to Polri officers in 2018, such as Inspector General Setyo Wasisto at the Ministry of Industry, although he still served as Head of Public Relations at the Polri. At the ministry, Wasisto was then promoted

to Commissioner-General (CNN Indonesia, 2020b).

Yet another strategic and controversial appointment by Jokowi was that of Arman Depari as Deputy for Eradication at the National Narcotics Agency. The controversy lay in Depari's status as a Polri retiree, when the position should have been filled by an active officer. However, Jokowi issued Presidential Decree No. 116/2020, which 'reappointed' Depari as deputy and automatically extended his retirement age based on Article 30 of Law No. 2/2002 (Simarmata, 2020). In other words, this article provides the opportunity to extend the retirement age of members of the Polri if necessary—a treatment that shuts down the regeneration and merit system within the Police.

Based on parliamentary recommendations, another high-ranking officer, Firli Bahuri, was appointed Chair of the KPK for 2019–23 (Fealy, 2020). Bahuri's appointment sparked protests and criticism amid civil society and the KPK itself. Allegations of ethical violations created doubts in the minds of the public regarding the performance of the KPK. However, the government ignored these criticisms and went ahead with the appointment. Finally, several high-ranking police officers also ascended to civilian positions in Indonesia in 2020: Adi Deriyan, as Special Staff for Security at the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy; Andap Budhi Revianto, as Inspector General at the Ministry of Law and Human Rights; and Reinhard Silitonga, as Director-General of Corrections, also at the Ministry of Law and Human Rights (CNN Indonesia, 2020b).

Violence against civil liberties: Perpetrators and neglect

Concurrently with their ascension into politics, the Police have become an active instrument in violently suppressing civil liberties. Hence, freedom, which should be the main foundation of democracy, has been

eroded during the Jokowi administration. Police have appeared at the front to block the space for civil liberties in several ways, such as using Law No. 11/2008 to arrest parties opposing the government. CSO's informant explains the Police's violence out in the community, especially when conveying aspirations in public, and has received criticism for this. In interviews, informants emphasised that this phenomenon demonstrated the Police's transformation into an instrument of the current regime (Azhar, 2021).

According to Indonesia's Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras), the Polri was the institution responsible for the most freedom-related human rights violations in the country during 2015. Of 238 violations, 85 violation cases were committed by the Polri. Examples included the forced disbandment of activities, accompanied by arrests or mistreatment and prohibition of reporting or actions (Tempo, 2015). Kontras further stated that the Polri was involved in 921 instances of violence from July 2019 to June 2020. Hence, police violence curbed civil liberties by prohibiting actions, forcing dispersal as well as clashes, shooting tear gas, and making arbitrary arrests (CNN Indonesia, 2020c).

The regime's empowerment of the Polri as a law enforcement agency in preventing demonstrations is its most publicly visible show of power. For example, the Police blocked demonstrations over the government's disbandment and banning of the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) organisation (Idhom, 2017). The disbandment was controversial because it did not go through the due process of law and the state chose to address public pressure and criticism by unleashing the Police on the dissenters. The state's capacity has thus taken the form of controlling situations in ways that violate the principles of democracy (Azhar, 2021).

Another case concerned the Police's

banishment of Habib Rizieq Shihab, the hard-line cleric, who founded the Islamic Defenders Front, into exile, after filing pornography charges against him. The case followed leaks on the internet of purported sex chats between him and a woman. The charges were dropped in 2018, but Rizieq has remained in Saudi Arabia. In addition, several Prabowo supporters and other Jokowi critics have been arrested, charged, or convicted for their public comments. Ahmad Dhani was imprisoned for tweets judged to be hate speech (Bland, 2019, p. 12).

Police violence to counter the exercise of civil liberties was observed during student demonstrations against the Draft Criminal Code (RKUHP), the KPK Law Draft, and the Omnibus Law. Besides the use of force against students, the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Jakarta reported that three journalists experienced violence and intimidation from the Police during the anti-RKUHP protests. Journalists from Kompas.com faced oppression while documenting police attacks against a local resident. An IDN Times journalist was beaten and asked to delete photos and videos of police violence against demonstrators, and a Katadata.com journalist was also beaten (BBC Indonesia, 2019).

Under the pretext of disbanding protests, the Polri used further force and intimidation against those protesting the revision of the KPK Law and Omnibus Law. The associated arrests, deployment of several tactical vehicles, and anti-riot troops demonstrated excessive policing. These actions have surpassed the standard tolerance threshold for a democracy, which is supposed to protect freedom of assembly and expression (Prayogo, 2019).

At the protest against the Omnibus Law, in particular, the Polri used the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to disperse demonstrators with violence. Fifty-one videos showed incidents of police violence against protesters, such as workers and students (CNN Indonesia, 2020a). The disbandment

was accompanied by the highest number of arrests throughout the 2019–20 rallies. The expansion of the Police's authority towards the enforcement of health protocols was used as a justification for the arrests, as shown by a telegram Kapolri Idham Aziz issued to his staff, drawing on the pretext of preventing the spread of COVID-19 (Maharani, 2021). This may encourage the Polri to further resort to the use of force against demonstrators.

Thus, the Police's use of force to repress civil liberties reflects the Indonesian regime's way of dealing with political pressures outside parliament. It shows that Jokowi uses the Police as an instrument to secure his own administration. As revealed from academic and police observer's interviews, the use of the Police to deal with public pressure speaks to Jokowi's stronger economic perspective than the democratic political perspective. Jokowi thus tends to ignore political demands and deal with them by employing a strategy to weaken civil action (Meliala, 2021).

As suggested, in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Polri acts as a law enforcement apparatus for health protocols. The Police have neglected to address cases that have threatened citizens' civil liberties in this context, such as actions against frequent critics of the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020. Hence, this phenomenon indicates that legal certainty and justice could be suspended on the grounds of an emergency situation in a democratic atmosphere. However, Agamben's study (2005) criticized the implementation of democracy along with the suspension of the rule of law, and civil rights are violated when the state experiences what is referred to as an "emergency".

The Police arrested Ravio Patra, a public policy researcher who often stated his critics of the government for posting through his WhatsApp account. The arrest drew sharp criticism because the post was not made by Patra, but by another party who hacked his

account. The arrest was judged as a ploy to criminalise Patra, who often criticised the government (Nugraheni, 2020). It was a blunder for Polri, which has remained silent on who the real hackers were.

The hacking also hit the Twitter account of Pandu Riono, an epidemiologist who criticised government policies regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the hack, Riono criticised the validity of combining ostensible anti-COVID-19 drugs made in collaboration among Airlangga University, TNI, and the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) (Sani, 2020). Another hack targeted the Tempo.co website, an online news outlet that often discusses political concerns over the Jokowi administration. Until now, the Polri has not publicly identified any perpetrators of the cyber-attacks.

Justifications of role and function

Researchers have devoted attention to the internal views and mindset consolidation of Polri officers regarding their roles and authority. Considering the aforementioned internal debate on the concept of police reform in its early years, this section discusses how the Polri defines its duties in society and its mindset regarding democratic life.

The findings of this study shed light on justifications for expanding the role of the Polri in society, indirectly influenced by legal regulations depicting the extent of the Police's authority in society. Law No. 2/2002 enacted several functions of the Polri, such as maintaining security and public order, law enforcement, protection, shelter, and service to the community.

Such justifications were confirmed via police informant described when interviewed. From the interview, the Police should maintain the quality of Indonesian democracy. This obligation is seen via a more specific scope in election-related duties. In other words, the Polri's tasks, rather than being limited to the security level, further entail safeguarding

democratic elections, by backing up the public to safely get to the polls (Maryoto, 2021).

Another role of the Police in society has been observed through the Community Development Division (Binmas). Informant stated that Binmas is a forum that supports pre-emptive and preventive functions. The core function of Binmas is to build awareness in the community to prevent potential crimes from occurring. The trick is to approach the community to become 'police officers' for themselves and their own environment. The goal is to make the community aware of the importance of security and order in their surroundings. Therefore, Binmas establishes partnerships and fosters communities toward preventing crimes (Midyawan, 2021).

In the context of reform, this coaching programme has developed into a community policing programme. This programme is one of the spearheads of the Police in preventing crimes at the micro-level, such as in the village. From Police's informant interview, through Public Order and Security (*Babinkamtibmas*) officers, the frontline in executing community policing programmes serves also as a mediator, facilitator, and problem-solver in the community (Midyawan, 2021).

On the one hand, the function of Binmas is strategic for Polri as the former contributes to reducing crime in society. On the other hand, this function can be misused for political purposes. The Polri can enter the sub-district level to control the community in the name of such crime prevention efforts. We see this potential based on the meaning of community development from the police informant's point of view;

Binmas is the controller of the community. The purpose of control is that we approach the community. We appeal, provide solutions, mediate, and foster. Everything is aimed at controlling the situation so that the potential for a crime does not arise (Midyawan, 2021).

The aforementioned findings exhibit that the inner meaning of the Polri duties and functions in the context of democracy has expanded. The biggest impact relates to deviations while serving in the community, which become justifiable by the Polri. In political life, a broad meaning can trigger the misuse of the Police, when it becomes a political instrument of the regime.

Researchers also confirmed internal views regarding police violence. So far, through various statements in the media, the Polri has claimed that violence cannot be avoided and is legal within their authority. One police informant did not fully support this finding, however. Violence is the opposite of one of Polri's core concepts, that of a civilian-police. The Polri is not part of the military, and the civilian Police have become a new character (Siregar, 2017b). This means that militaristic methods, including violence, must be avoided in performing police duties.

Criticism of police violence was revealed through the views of the Police's informant. According to this perspective, a mistaken meaning has been attributed to the civilian Police. The 'civilian' notion has been detached from military attributes, and changing doctrines and regulations in this respect, including philosophically, the meaning of 'civil' runs contrary to repressive methods. The purpose of a 'civilian-police' is to form a 'civilised' police force to uphold a 'civilised' society. The establishment of civilian police means that the Police have understood and become role models for society (Sulistiyanto, 2021). Yet, the violent behavior of the Police is apparent in the community from the perspective of empirical evidence, indicating the incomplete internal process of forming the civilian police.

Discussion

The police involvement in civilian position shows that the Polri has become increasingly important to Jokowi, and that the police

force has shifted into a political instrument for the regime. The Polri's ever-deeper dive into politics to secure the regime could also yield more personal rewards, as the current administration and political elite further embrace the Police as a player in political life.

One of the cases was the right to be a candidate in a direct local election (*Pilkada*). It was confirmed from the election researcher interview. The informant concerns Law No 8/2015, which became Law No. 10/2016 on *Pilkada*. On that occasion, the Constitutional Court required that members of the House of Representatives (DPR), State Civil Apparatus (ASN), Polri, or TNI resign if nominated as candidates to run in the elections. Several members of the DPR argued that they would allow members of the TNI, Polri, and ASN, to advance in the regional elections without backing down (Anggraini, 2021). Although the proposal was ultimately rejected, it represented a major setback in democracy, as when members of the DPR issue a discourse, they open it up as an option. Hence, the political elite, especially parliamentarians, increasingly appear receptive to inviting the Police into its circles as it opens the contrasting discourse toward the principles of Police professionalism. In other words, one of the weaknesses of democracy elements lies in the poor quality of parliamentarians.

Meanwhile, the phenomenon of police violence is not something new. In the first decade of reform, several CSOs highlighted police violence in the community, which violated human rights. Data gathered from Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) increased between 2008 and 2010. Complaint filings in 2009 increased by 20.6% from 2008, then in 2010 increased by 10.1%. During 2008–2010, the number of complaints regarding police violence to Komnas HAM increased by around 15.35%. In 2011, Polri, as an institution, once again ranked first in the number of complaints the

Indonesian commission received from victims of human rights violations (Prasetyo, 2012).

As cited in Siregar's study (2017b), The Indonesian Human Rights Monitor (Imparsial) recorded 154 cases of police violence in the country between 2005 and 2010. In 2012, Amnesty International criticised police violence in the areas of Bima, West Nusa Tenggara; Abepura, Papua; Gowa, South Sulawesi; Sarolangun, Jambi; and Langkat, North Sumatra.

However, during the Jokowi administration, police violence against civil liberties was evident when people voiced their freedom of speech in demonstrations, which was considerably ironic as the space for public freedom has been increasingly open since the 1998 reform. Such paradoxical sphere includes voicing opinions in public. However, in the Jokowi era, the police often faced demonstrations, especially from those criticising the government with violence, which was in contrast to the principle of democratic country. It is expected that the main principle of human rights must be prioritised. Other additional principles include the mechanism of demonstrations in an appropriately peaceful assembly. Therefore, the principle of proportionality and the need for strength (violence) shall be the last resort (Osse, 2007).

In addition, it is interesting when there is an omission in handling cases of violence by parties who often criticize Jokowi. The allegations of police neglect of the hacking cases strengthen the assessment of the Polri's support for the Jokowi regime. It shows that the Polri is at odds with the democratic principle of protecting civil liberties. Apart from blocking civil liberties in the form of violence, the law enforcement institution has failed to protect them. Such a failure becomes evident when the Police are reluctant to pursue legal action against perpetrators if the latter acted against citizens known to be critical of the government (Azhar, 2021).

In addition to neglecting hacking cases, the Polri has shown inconsistent behaviour in enforcing health protocols related to COVID-19. The Police moved quickly when carrying out legal proceedings against a group of sympathisers of the cleric Rizieq Shihab. The crowd in question gathered in Petamburan on November 14, 2020. In less than a month, on December 10, 2020, the Polri identified the cleric as a suspect in the crowd, detaining him on December 13, 2020 (Simanjuntak, 2021). Meanwhile, the Police's observance of health protocols differed when Jokowi distributed souvenirs to a crowd in Maumere, East Nusa Tenggara. The Polri rejected reports on the crowd on the grounds that people had not been invited to gather, but rather spontaneously gathered to see Jokowi. As stated by an informant, this double standard of enforcement has drawn criticism and further confirms the assessment that the tension in the state's role has increased with the heightened level of police support of the Jokowi regime (Samego, 2021).

The Polri's role during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 proved to be Jokowi's strategic instrument. The Police and Jokowi also involved the TNI in every perceived security threat. The government openly assigned the Polri, TNI, and State Intelligence Service (BIN) as agents to overcome the pandemic. Via these three institutions, the state justifies using extraordinary measures under the pretext of handling the COVID-19 crisis. The result is a process of securitisation, which gives the Police, military, and intelligence services a broad scope of intervention capabilities and influence in society (Fealy, 2020). Thus, police intervene in the community and secure government policies by repressing civil liberties, while allowing the legal process to stagnate in cases involving groups critical of the government's COVID-19 policies. These factors have all contributed to the decline in the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

The view regarding the framework of

security actors' professionalism has been interpreted as problematic phenomenon, attesting to the incomplete democratic construction of police authority in Indonesia, requiring police neutrality in the political sphere as a prerequisite for democracy (Sutrisno, 2012). Hence, police authority in politics should be limited to maintaining security during the general election. Referring to the results of this study, the Police indicated an understanding of a vast role in guarding democracy, particularly in elections. Informant illustrates the Polri role from the perspective of responsibility to democracy, by comprehending the responsibility between the convenience of voters and by preventing the event from the clash of political interests involving people in the political sphere. This perspective proves that the Police view their role so broad that it includes aspects that are precisely the responsibility of the election organisers.

The same applies to the other roles of the Police in society. The Police interpret the role of fostering the community to carry out a crime prevention function and control the community. Based on the research's result, it shows that the Polri can monitor the community through Binmas. This is inseparable from Polri's internal justification, which views Binmas's ways of working as almost the same as intelligence. While on duty in the field, it was revealed that there was a collaboration between police intelligence and Binmas. Intelligence did the raising, then Binmas did the coaching. The police informant stated that it is even possible that Binmas also adopted the methods of intelligence work. They can monitor, condition, and find out much information from the community. These actions become recommendations for decision-making by leaders (Midyawan, 2021). The Police can potentially manipulate this method to control society.

Conclusion

Based on its findings, this study concludes

that democratic regression during the Jokowi era can be linked to a low-capacity democratic form in the state's use of the Police as a political instrument to maintain power. This matter impacts the character of law enforcement, which deviates from democratic principles and becomes a problem for police professionalism. These results support Tilly's argument (2007) connecting the onset of low-capacity democracy to situations where democratic countries pursue undemocratic methods. The trick has been to manipulate the Police as an instrument of the regime to strengthen power.

Manipulation of the Police by the Indonesian regime has been present since the first decade of democratic reform (1998–2008). Changes in institutions and instruments have yet to lead to police professionalisation. From the early years of reform (1998), the Police came to function as a strategic partner for the regime and civil liberty eliminator. The Jokowi administration expanded the presence of the Police as a strategic political ally. The Polri thus gradually shifted from a state instrument to a political instrument of the regime. Within this context, the researcher sees that low-capacity democracy has been formed and is getting stronger in Indonesia due to two main factors.

The first factor is Jokowi's granting of privileges to the Police in the form of strategic political positions, which benefits the president because the Police can act as both a security force and political power. On the one hand, the Polri actively pursues legal proceedings in silencing and dispelling criticism of government policies. On the other hand, the Polri eschews legal processes when problems occur with groups or figures who criticise the government.

The second factor concerns the Police's broad interpretation of their authority in the context of democracy. This affects justifications for the interaction and role of Police in society and facilitates regime manipulation of law enforcement as an instrument to monitor critical groups in society. However, the study results

also revealed differences in opinions, with some criticising violence and police intervention. It seems that this phenomenon requires deeper investigation, towards complementing studies on the Police in democratic life in Indonesia.

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