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Indonesia's Police Force: Decentralisation for Better Welfare?

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Indonesia's police force is generally under-paid -- a condition that encourages police officers to look elsewhere to supplement their income. This has exposed the force to abuses of power and corruption. The national budget for the police is not enough. One solution is to get the local or provincial government to support the police budget.

IT HAS been public knowledge that Indonesian police officers supplement their income through activities outside their official salaries. There are three sources of such additional income known locally as 'people's participation' (*partipasi masyarakat - parmas*), 'friendship participation' (*partisipasi teman - parman*), and 'criminal participation' (*partisipasi kriminal - parmin*). These sources of income are tolerated because of the permissive attitudes in society for improper practices of the officers.

To eradicate the negative effects of these practices, the Chief of National Police, General Sutanto stated in 2005 the necessity to gradually increase the official salary of police officers. Based on Government Decree No. 29/2001 on Regulation of Salary for Police Officers, the lowest monthly income for Indonesian officers is only Rp.1.7 million or S\$262. General Sutanto has proposed to raise the monthly income for the lowest-rank police officers to Rp.7-8.3 million or S\$ 107 to S\$128

This proposal is in line with the trend of income improvement for other officers in the judicial branch as well as other law enforcement units. These officers have already enjoyed a significant increase in their income when President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono issued a presidential decree (Perpres) No. 19/2008 to raise significantly the allowances for judges and employees in the Supreme Court (MA) and other judicial courts.

This decision should be extended to police officers so that the income gap between officers in law enforcement units could be eradicated, though, granted, this will not be easy to implement.

Support from Local Government Budget

The limited state budget for the police force of Rp20-25 trillion or S\$ 3.1 to S\$3.8 billion per year must be further distributed for use into several organizational functions, including salary, and must also be allocated to support the operational costs of more than 400,000 officers. This creates a classic problem: the incapacity of state to financially support the police as an institution, which creates the condition for officers to abuse their authorities to supplement their low income.

To overcome this predicament, I propose a budget alternative for Indonesia's police. The local governments can allocate their expenditure to support local police activities, including giving additional allowances for the officers in their respective areas. However, there are currently two regulations that prohibit this. The Decree of Minister of Home Affairs No. 15/2004 and the Government Decree No. 39/2007 on Prohibition of Aid from Regional Budget to Vertical Institutions clearly stated that local governments cannot allocate their expenditure to the police. The basic logic of these regulations is that the police is part of the central government, thus the principle of centralization, including budget allocation, must be upheld.

This principle of centralization of the police should be modified. Local governments should be more involved in managing police activities in their respective regions. Currently, the national police is not seriously developing effective communication with local government. The Head of Provincial Police and Head of Basic Operation Unit at the regional level fail to build a strategic interaction with their counterparts from local government. The policy of policing in the region is still formulated in Jakarta without any significant local government involvement.

Home Security affairs

To secure local financial support in police budgeting, the function of home security affairs should be put under the coordination of the local government. It means that the National Police should propose a policy coordination mechanism with the Ministry of Home Affairs and translate it into a working mechanism with local government. This mechanism may evolve into the concept of decentralization in police function and management. This should be followed by providing some level of authority for local government, for example, to recommend candidates for the positions of Head of Provincial Police, Head of Regional Police, Head of District Police, and Head of Precinct.

Both political and institutional modifications will not disrupt the main structure of the National Police as an institution as stipulated in Law No. 2/2002. The character of the national police can also be kept intact by drawing three boundaries. First, the authority of local government is limited to the supervision of budget expenditure as allocated by the local government. Second, local government will only employ the national police deployed in its area when a security threat arises in the region. This should be reported to the local government, besides the headquarters of the national police in Jakarta. Currently, reports concerning the employment of police are sent directly to the headquarters of the national police. Third, the proposed candidate of the head of regional police and basic operations unit is recommended by the local government solely to improve cooperation between the two institutions.

The additional police budget allocated from local government can be formulated in two formats. First, the national police and the Ministry of Home Affairs can specify the boundary on the minimum and maximum budget allocation that can be provided by local government to the police. This boundary must be made to accommodate the differing economic conditions of the regions. Related to the officers' income, local government can also allocate additional income to police officers deployed in their region so that the new ideal salary for the lowest-rank police officers of Rp.4.5-7.5 million or S\$ 690 to S\$1,155 can be fulfilled. The differing financial capacities of the various local governments can be overcome by creating a cross-subsidy mechanism between regions.

Second, the national police and the Ministry of Home Affairs can give full authority to the Regional

Police and the Basic Operations Unit to negotiate with local governments on issues relating to local police requirements and budget allocation. Such autonomy will embrace strategic interactions between the two institutions at the regional level.

If the additional budget from local government can be allocated to the national police, Indonesia's police officers will enjoy better prosperity and their improper practices can be significantly tackled.

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