

# Gender, Police, Indonesia: What practices build trust and legitimacy?



**KEPOLISIAN NEGARA  
REPUBLIK INDONESIA**

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# Call the police?



# Outline

- My research
- Policing Indonesia
- State of the research field
- Efforts to increase trust and legitimacy
- Next steps



# My research

- On-going since 2008 (COVID hiatus)
- Focus is gender and police including policewomen and gender-sensitive policing
- Long-term ethnography
  - participant-observation, in-depth interviews, focus groups, surveys
- Field work with everyday Indonesians, policing personnel, and donor organisations
  - including with the US Dept of Justice and the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP)



# Policing Indonesia

- One of the largest police forces in the world: 579k (no 5).
- Some parts heavily policed such as Papua with ratio of around 1 officer per 100 citizens.
- Presents itself as skilled, well trained, aggressive combatants which doesn't necessarily build trust, legitimacy.





# Policing Indonesia



- Known by its acronym Polri (Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia), became independent after separating from the military in 1999.
- Women make up a very small percentage of police officers, less than 6 percent, admin roles.

# Policing Indonesia

- Police officers are relatively well-paid in comparison to other government employees.
- 90% of the budget is spent on salaries, little for operational costs.
- Police often justify acts of corruption on the grounds that they need money to put petrol in their patrol cars.
- Militaristic principles dominate both the structure and culture of the force, making it difficult for reform to take place.



# Policing Indonesia

- Indonesia is a democracy.
- Since 1999, some reform has taken place.
- The aim of this reform is to make Polri less centralised, more democratic, remove corruption, nepotism and human rights abuses.
- This is a work in progress.





# State of the research field

- Given it's size, surprisingly little research on polri.
- Aside from my work with colleagues (Buttle, Meliala), which has focused on procedural justice, police reform, corruption, policewomen, public perceptions, gender-sensitive policing other work has focused on:
  - Terrorism, counter-insurgency, transnational crime
  - Security sector reform
  - Australia's involvement
- There is a real dearth of scholarly material available



# Efforts to increase trust and legitimacy

- Six policing practices outline by Blair to build trust and legitimacy in the Global South
  - Community policing
  - Saturation policing
  - Body-worn cameras
  - Procedural justice and soft skills Integration and descriptive representation
  - Militarization and constabularization



# Efforts to increase trust and legitimacy

- Community policing
  - Efforts have been made to this effect, particularly with funding through Netherlands, Japan and New Zealand.
  - But devolution of authority has likely increased opportunities for corruption; police boxes are unmanned; people prefer community leaders.
  - There's no '9/11 number'
  - Could be effective but needs better implementation.





# Efforts to increase trust and legitimacy

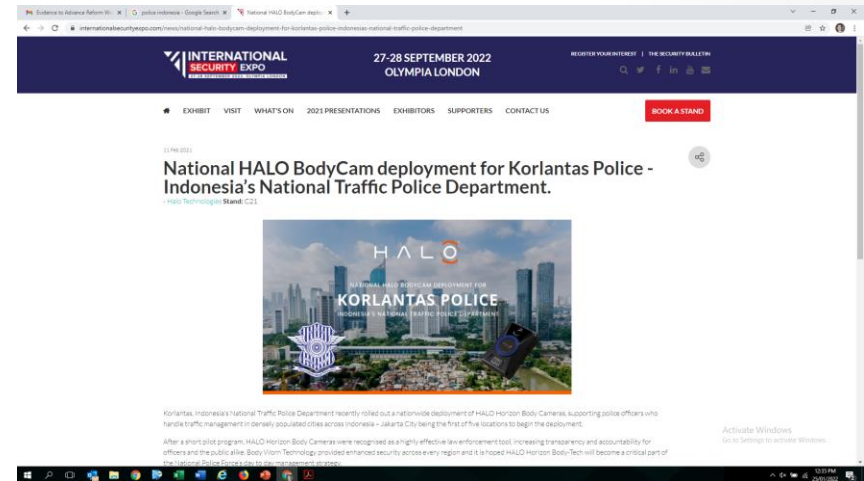
- Saturation policing
  - This approach has been taken but it has done little to increase trust and legitimacy.
  - When levels of brutality are so high hot-spot policing with full military force does not evoke feelings of safety or protection.
  - Our interviews and surveys consistently show that heavy visible policing is detrimental to positive feelings towards the police.





# Efforts to increase trust and legitimacy

- Body-worn cameras
  - Were introduced in Jakarta in 2021 for traffic police but no data on this rollout.



# Efforts to increase trust and legitimacy

- Militarization and constabularization
  - Democratic reforms have discursively shifted polri away from military space, but links with military remain strong (if not always friendly), particularly in the police special forces like Brimob
  - Reformation that led to democracy was predicated on demilitarisation of police
  - Evidence suggests these wont increase trust/legitimacy



# Efforts to increase trust and legitimacy

- Procedural justice and soft skills.
  - Efforts to move polri in this direction are limited but evidence suggests this could be effective.
- Recuring themes in interviews/surveys:
  - 'They should protect society and have a close relationship with citizens' (Maman).
  - 'Police should be polite, especially traffic police. I have seen some traffic police who are not polite at all when they stop people' (Wulan).
  - 'Their role is to protect society. They have to be unbiased and not just favour the rich' (Fitri).
  - 'They need to protect, teach us about rules and how to behave, and set a good example' (Idham).



# Efforts to increase trust and legitimacy

- Integration and descriptive representation
  - Recruit policewomen
  - Public perceptions reveal trust in policewomen.
  - Polwan can now veil
  - Barriers to entry: virginity tests, weight and appearance restrictions.
  - Domestic Violence Units still staffed predominately by men.
  - “I deliberately deploy my pretty officers to calm protesters. How can they resist policewomen who bring them snacks and drinks” Makassar Police negotiation team head





# Next steps

- Listen! What are people on the street saying?
  - Regulate bribes
  - Be polite, fair, accessible
  - Explain fines (most interactions with traffic police)
  - Fairly recruit more women
  - Ethnic/religious diversity; see: 'Safer communities ...together'? Plural policing and COVID-19 public health interventions in Aotearoa New Zealand, *Policing and Society* (2021)
  - Work with local leaders, religious groups, including women's groups
    - People don't talk much about the importance of effectiveness, efficiency, military might, – all the things polri presents.



# Next steps

- Needs proper funding and training and ensuring that Indonesia has a voice in this reform that it not muted by the interests of other parties.



Thank you!