Muradi


This book presents a comprehensive historical analysis of the position of the Indonesian National Police (Polri) during the regime change, from the New Order to Reformasi era. Muradi investigates how the police responded to the regime change and what actually happened to the police institution during the transition process. His main focus is on the process of Polri’s disassociation from the Indonesian National Military (TN ke-), examines the impact of that process on the Polri and its relationship with the national and local government and the military.

This book is divided into five parts, and each part consists of two chapters. In chapter one, Muradi provides the story of the transformation of the Indonesian national police from the Dutch colonial period to the end of Sukarno’s Guided Democracy. The modern Dutch police, established between 1897 and 1920, was the product of ‘fear and concern’ (Bloembergen, 2011: xxix). Due to increasing concerns about the development of the Dutch East Indies, the Dutch government subscribed to the idea that security affairs were an integral part of the state’s public obligation to safety but in reality the police force was used to maintain the colonial status quo. After the Indonesian independence, it was decided that the police would be incorporated into the Ministry of Internal Affairs. However, a rapid change in leadership during the revolution and Parliamentary Democracy period in 1946–1959 caused the structure of the police to change with the transfer of power. In the Guided Democracy, politicization of the Polri was strong and internal disputes emerged. Internal conflicts in the Polri occurred as a result of political intervention by the political parties, especially the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and political elites of President Sukarno’s circles.

With the regime change from Sukarno’s Guided Democracy to Suharto’s New Order, the police purged the supposed communist members and took part in the new regime’s bloody consolidation of power. Polri became a watchdog to secure all the policies of the New Order that emphasized the rust en orde. During this period, the position of the Polri was powerless and subordinate in relation to the Republic of Indonesia Armed Forces (ABRI). After Suharto’s downfall in 1998, the disassociation of the Polri from ABRI became a major element in dismantling the New Order regime. Reformasi brought a new paradigm to the Polri, from police as combatant to professional police dealing with internal security affairs. However, this transition became a complicated process during
Abdurahman Wahid’s tumultuous period, as the question of Polri’s leadership was caught up in the political tensions between the president and the parliament.

In the era of President Wahid, the Polri started to put modernization and professionalization into practice (p. 67). Polri revised its curriculum, teaching manuals, and recruitment system. The patterns of relations between the Polri and other institutions were changed, most importantly between the Polri and ABRI. Polri now ‘took over many roles of territorial or dual functions that had been previously dominated by the ABRI’ (p. 74). This fundamental change resulted in various clashes in the field, especially on the local level. Although the military control of the police ended, it did not mean the Polri was completely free from intervention and cooptation from other institutions. The efforts of several institutions, especially the president and parliament, to try and take control of the Polri for their personal interests continued.

Muradi argues that extortion and corruption in the Polri have become greater since the disassociation era. He believes these problems are caused by the inadequate state budget of the Polri; ‘business managed by Polri are not able to solve the problem of uneven welfare between leaders and personnel and inadequate operational budgets at all levels’ (p. 102). From an investigation in six districts and municipalities of West Java province, namely Bandung and Cirebon Municipalities, Cirebon, Garut, Tasikmalaya and Ciamis, Muradi concludes that, on the local level, corruption and extortion within the Polri was also increasing and spreading across all roles and functions of the Polri. The relationship model between the Polres (District or Municipality Police) and decentralized local government tended to be profitable for the Polres as an institution and for its individual members (p. 167). This was because local politicians, both in government and DPRD (district or provincial assembly), lacked knowledge about various legal instruments but had to ensure their contradictory practices were not disturbed by law enforcement. The local police then took advantage of this practice to (illegally) enrich themselves.

Overall, this book succeeds in showing that the process of disassociation of the Polri from the military structure has advanced the prospects of independence and professionalism although there are many serious problems that should be improved. The presence of this book is appropriate to the current condition of Indonesia as the findings raised by Muradi are still the biggest challenge for Indonesia’s reform today. So Muradi’s work is necessary reading not only for researchers but also for the Polri and Indonesian leaders.

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