

Police Accountability and Institutional Reform in Indonesia: Challenges and Prospects for Democratic Policing

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Abstract

Police accountability is a fundamental component of democratic policing because law enforcement institutions exercise significant authority over citizens and public order. Indonesia's police reform agenda has sought to strengthen professionalism, accountability, transparency, and public responsiveness, yet institutional challenges remain. This study examines the development of police accountability mechanisms in Indonesia and evaluates their implications for democratic policing. The research employs qualitative document analysis of legal frameworks, institutional policies, accountability mechanisms, and relevant public oversight practices. The study identifies several challenges, including institutional fragmentation, limitations in external oversight, uneven implementation of accountability mechanisms, and tensions between operational autonomy and democratic control. It argues that accountability should be understood not merely as disciplinary control but as an institutional framework encompassing transparency, justification of police actions, independent oversight, and meaningful avenues for public complaint. Strengthening accountability therefore requires both internal institutional reform and credible external mechanisms of civilian oversight. The study contributes to scholarship on police reform by examining the Indonesian experience within broader debates concerning democratic governance and law enforcement accountability. It also provides policy implications for strengthening institutional legitimacy and public confidence in policing.

[Akuntabilitas kepolisian merupakan komponen mendasar dari pemolisian yang demokratis karena lembaga penegak hukum memiliki wewenang yang signifikan atas warga negara dan ketertiban umum. Agenda reformasi kepolisian di Indonesia telah berupaya memperkuat profesionalisme, akuntabilitas, transparansi, dan responsivitas terhadap publik, namun tantangan kelembagaan masih tetap ada. Studi ini mengkaji perkembangan mekanisme akuntabilitas kepolisian di Indonesia serta mengevaluasi

implikasinya terhadap pemolisian yang demokratis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode analisis dokumen kualitatif terhadap kerangka hukum, kebijakan kelembagaan, mekanisme akuntabilitas, dan praktik pengawasan publik yang relevan. Studi ini mengidentifikasi beberapa tantangan, termasuk fragmentasi kelembagaan, keterbatasan dalam pengawasan eksternal, penerapan mekanisme akuntabilitas yang tidak merata, serta ketegangan antara otonomi operasional dan kontrol demokratis. Studi ini berargumen bahwa akuntabilitas tidak boleh dipahami semata-mata sebagai kontrol disipliner, melainkan sebagai kerangka kelembagaan yang mencakup transparansi, pemberian alasan atas tindakan kepolisian, pengawasan independen, dan saluran pengaduan publik yang efektif. Oleh karena itu, penguatan akuntabilitas memerlukan reformasi kelembagaan internal sekaligus mekanisme pengawasan sipil eksternal yang kredibel. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi pada kajian mengenai reformasi kepolisian dengan menelaah pengalaman Indonesia dalam konteks perdebatan yang lebih luas mengenai tata kelola demokratis dan akuntabilitas penegakan hukum. Selain itu, studi ini juga menyajikan implikasi kebijakan untuk memperkuat legitimasi kelembagaan dan kepercayaan publik terhadap kepolisian.]

Keywords: police accountability, police reform, democratic policing, civilian oversight, Indonesia

Introduction

Police accountability is a fundamental principle of democratic policing because police institutions exercise extensive coercive authority while simultaneously performing essential functions of public security, law enforcement, and public service. The democratic character of policing therefore depends not only on whether police are capable of maintaining public order but also on whether their authority is exercised within legal, institutional, and ethical boundaries. Bayley (2006) argues that democratic policing requires mechanisms capable of ensuring that police remain responsive to law, democratic institutions, and citizens. Accountability consequently involves more than punishment after misconduct has occurred; it includes transparency, justification, supervision, review, and institutional responsiveness. In democratic societies, the exercise of police authority must be accompanied by mechanisms that enable citizens and other institutions to question decisions, challenge abuses, and obtain appropriate remedies. Police accountability should therefore be understood as a continuous institutional process through which police power is subjected to legal and democratic constraints.

The relationship between accountability and democratic policing becomes particularly important because policing involves an inherent tension between operational autonomy and democratic control. Police officers require sufficient discretion to respond to complex and rapidly changing security situations, but

extensive discretion can also create opportunities for arbitrary decisions, excessive force, discrimination, corruption, or other forms of abuse. Goldstein (1977) argues that police discretion is unavoidable because law enforcement personnel routinely make decisions concerning priorities, enforcement strategies, and the application of legal authority. The central democratic challenge is therefore not to eliminate discretion but to ensure that discretion operates within transparent and reviewable institutional arrangements. Accountability mechanisms provide the means through which operational discretion can remain compatible with democratic governance. In this sense, police accountability should not be regarded as an obstacle to effective policing but as an institutional condition for legitimate and sustainable police authority.

Indonesia provides a particularly important case for examining this relationship because the transformation of the Indonesian National Police (Polri) is closely connected to the country's democratic transition after the fall of the New Order regime. The separation of Polri from the Indonesian Armed Forces and the enactment of Law No. 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police established a new legal foundation for the police as a civilian institution. The law defines the police as a state instrument responsible for maintaining security and public order, enforcing the law, and providing protection, guardianship, and services to society. It also establishes principles concerning professionalism, independence, and institutional responsibilities. This legal transformation represented an important departure from the previous security-sector arrangement. Nevertheless, formal institutional separation does not automatically produce democratic policing because organizational cultures, hierarchical structures, professional norms, and patterns of accountability can persist beyond legal reform (Republic of Indonesia 2002; Honna 2013). The legal framework therefore constitutes the starting point rather than the conclusion of police reform.

Police reform in Indonesia has subsequently involved structural, instrumental, and cultural dimensions. Structural reform concerns the institutional position of Polri and its relationship with other state institutions, while instrumental reform involves legal frameworks, organizational procedures, technology, and operational standards. Cultural reform concerns professional values, human-rights awareness, integrity, and the orientation of police personnel toward citizens. These dimensions are interdependent because structural independence without effective accountability may generate institutional insulation, while internal accountability without cultural transformation may reduce reform to formal compliance. Indonesian scholarship has repeatedly identified the persistence of organizational and cultural challenges within police reform. Suryana, Habibullah, and Alifya (2025), for example, argue that although structural and instrumental reforms have taken place, continuing concerns concerning human rights, organizational culture, oversight, and sanctions indicate that democratic policing has not been completely institutionalized. Their analysis emphasizes that accountability and organizational

culture must develop together if reform is to produce substantive rather than merely formal transformation.

The institutional architecture of police accountability in Indonesia consists of several mechanisms operating at different levels. Internal mechanisms include professional and disciplinary supervision within Polri, particularly through the Professional and Security Division (*Divisi Profesi dan Pengamanan* or Propam). External mechanisms include the National Police Commission (*Komisi Kepolisian Nasional* or Kopolnas), parliamentary oversight, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, judicial review, and other institutions involved in human-rights and public-administration oversight. Law No. 2 of 2002 established Kopolnas as an institution assisting the President in determining the strategic direction of Polri and providing considerations concerning police leadership, while Perpres No. 17 of 2011 subsequently regulated its institutional organization. The existence of these mechanisms demonstrates that Indonesia possesses a formal architecture of police accountability. The more significant question, however, concerns the degree to which these institutions possess sufficient independence, authority, resources, and procedural access to produce meaningful accountability outcomes (Republic of Indonesia 2002; Republic of Indonesia 2011).

International scholarship indicates that the effectiveness of civilian oversight depends not simply on the existence of an oversight institution but on the authority and independence available to that institution. Hope (2021) explains that civilian oversight can strengthen democratic policing by creating mechanisms through which citizens and independent institutions scrutinize police conduct, but he also identifies recurring obstacles involving institutional resistance, limited investigative authority, insufficient resources, and political dependence. Nalla and Mamayek (2013) similarly demonstrate that civilian participation in police accountability varies considerably across Asian democracies, reflecting differences in institutional development and political structures. These comparative perspectives are relevant to Indonesia because the existence of Kopolnas and other oversight institutions does not necessarily guarantee effective external accountability. The central issue is whether external institutions can independently obtain information, investigate complaints, require institutional responses, monitor implementation, and communicate findings to the public. Accountability therefore depends on institutional capacity as much as institutional design.

The Indonesian literature has increasingly examined the limitations of Kopolnas as an external accountability mechanism. Nasser (2021) notes that Kopolnas has an important role in assisting the President and receiving public complaints, but its position creates ambiguity concerning the strength of its oversight function. Amostian, Yusriyadi, and Silviana (2023) similarly argue that the effectiveness of Kopolnas is constrained because its recommendations do not possess binding legal force and because questions concerning institutional independence remain. Yusuf and Harmoko (2023) further identify limitations in the ability of Kopolnas to evaluate the implementation of its recommendations. These

studies collectively suggest that Indonesia's accountability challenge is not necessarily the absence of oversight institutions but the limited capacity of existing institutions to transform information and complaints into enforceable institutional correction. The distinction is crucial because accountability requires a complete chain extending from complaint and investigation to findings, institutional response, corrective action, and public explanation.

Public complaints provide another important indicator of the practical accountability relationship between citizens and police institutions. The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia reported that it received 10,837 public reports during 2024, with Polri identified as the reported institution in 634 cases nationally. At the regional level, the Ombudsman office in East Java reported 43 complaints concerning police services in 2024, including complaints associated with investigation administration. These figures should not automatically be interpreted as evidence that police services are broadly ineffective because complaint numbers can also reflect institutional accessibility and citizens' willingness to use formal complaint mechanisms. Nevertheless, they demonstrate the importance of effective complaint resolution as an accountability function. A democratic policing institution should not merely provide channels through which citizens can complain; it must also demonstrate that complaints are processed transparently and that legitimate findings generate institutional learning and corrective action.

Previous research has therefore established several important dimensions of the Indonesian police reform problem, but an analytical gap remains. Existing studies frequently examine particular components of reform, such as KOMPOLNAS, human rights, organizational culture, or police professionalism, without fully integrating internal accountability, external oversight, transparency, public complaints, and democratic control into a single analytical framework. The international literature, meanwhile, provides broader theories of democratic policing and civilian oversight but does not fully explain the institutional particularities of Indonesia. The research gap addressed by this study lies in connecting the formal architecture of police accountability with the practical challenges of institutional reform. The article asks how Indonesia's accountability mechanisms have developed, what structural and institutional limitations constrain their effectiveness, and what reforms could strengthen democratic policing without eliminating the operational autonomy required for professional law enforcement. This approach treats accountability not as disciplinary control alone but as an integrated system of transparency, justification, oversight, review, and institutional responsiveness.

Methodologically, this study employs qualitative document analysis. The research examines Indonesian legal frameworks, institutional regulations, academic literature, public oversight documents, and relevant institutional reports available through 2025. The analysis is conducted thematically by examining four interconnected dimensions of accountability: institutional responsibility,

transparency and justification, internal and external oversight, and public complaint mechanisms. Legal documents are interpreted to identify the formal distribution of police authority and oversight responsibilities, while academic and institutional literature is used to examine implementation challenges and institutional dynamics. The study does not attempt to generate statistical estimates or establish causal relationships through primary field data. Instead, it develops an analytical interpretation of the relationship between police accountability and democratic institutional reform. This qualitative approach is appropriate because the central research problem concerns institutional design, implementation, and the interaction between formal rules and accountability practices within the Indonesian policing system.

Police Accountability within Indonesia's Post-Reform Institutional Architecture

The development of police accountability in Indonesia must be understood within the broader process of democratic transition and security-sector reform following 1998. During the New Order period, policing operated within a security architecture in which the police were institutionally integrated with the armed forces. The post-1998 separation of Polri from the military represented a significant institutional transformation because it established the police as a civilian law-enforcement institution. Law No. 2 of 2002 subsequently provided a statutory foundation for this new institutional position. The reform created an opportunity to redefine policing according to principles of professionalism, legality, public service, and democratic accountability. However, institutional transformation is not equivalent to institutional replacement. Organizational hierarchies, professional identities, command practices, and inherited approaches to security can persist even after legal structures change. Police reform in Indonesia should therefore be interpreted as an ongoing process in which democratic principles are layered onto an organization with a long institutional history shaped by centralized authority and security-oriented practices (Honna 2013; Republic of Indonesia 2002).

Law No. 2 of 2002 establishes an important normative basis for police accountability by defining the duties and responsibilities of Polri within a civilian constitutional framework. The law gives the police extensive authority to maintain security and public order, enforce the law, and provide protection and services to citizens. Such extensive authority makes accountability particularly important because the greater the coercive and administrative powers of an institution, the greater the need for mechanisms capable of constraining misuse. Democratic policing therefore requires a balance between police independence in operational matters and institutional subordination to law and legitimate democratic authority. Operational independence allows officers to make professional decisions without inappropriate interference, while accountability mechanisms ensure that such decisions remain legally reviewable and institutionally justified. The challenge for

Indonesia is consequently not whether Polri should be independent, but how operational independence can coexist with effective oversight, transparency, and public accountability (Bayley 2006; Goldstein 1977).

This distinction becomes particularly significant because police accountability operates through both vertical and horizontal relationships. Vertical accountability involves responsibility to political authorities and the legal system, while horizontal accountability involves review by independent institutions, oversight bodies, courts, legislatures, and other public institutions. A third dimension, social accountability, concerns the ability of citizens and civil society to question police conduct and demand explanations. Nalla and Mamayek (2013) demonstrate that citizen oversight is an important component of democratic policing in Asian contexts because democratic accountability cannot be reduced to control by government institutions alone. In Indonesia, the presence of Kompolnas, the Ombudsman, parliamentary oversight, and public complaint mechanisms creates the potential for multiple forms of accountability. However, multiple mechanisms do not necessarily constitute an integrated accountability system. Without clear coordination and effective authority, institutional fragmentation can result in complaints moving between institutions without producing meaningful correction.

Kompolnas occupies a particularly important position within this architecture because it was designed to provide an external civilian perspective on police governance. Under Law No. 2 of 2002 and Perpres No. 17 of 2011, its functions include assisting the President in determining the direction of Polri policy, providing considerations concerning the appointment and dismissal of the Chief of Police, and receiving public suggestions and complaints concerning police performance. The institutional design therefore recognizes that police governance requires an external perspective. However, the nature of its authority is primarily advisory and recommendatory. This creates a structural limitation because an institution that can receive information but cannot independently compel compliance may have difficulty transforming recommendations into institutional correction. Yusuf and Harmoko (2023) conclude that the absence of authority to evaluate the implementation of recommendations represents a significant obstacle to the effectiveness of Kompolnas. The accountability problem is consequently connected to the legal consequences attached to oversight rather than simply the existence of oversight.

The limitations of Kompolnas also illustrate a broader problem concerning institutional independence. Effective civilian oversight generally requires sufficient separation between the institution being supervised and the authority responsible for evaluating it. Hope (2021) emphasizes that civilian oversight becomes meaningful when oversight bodies possess institutional independence, adequate resources, investigative capacity, and mechanisms for communicating findings publicly. In Indonesia, Kompolnas operates within an executive-centered institutional framework because it assists the President, while Polri itself is

institutionally positioned directly under the President. This arrangement does not necessarily make oversight impossible, but it creates a structural tension because the same executive authority is connected to both police governance and the oversight institution. Amostian, Yusriyadi, and Silviana (2023) therefore identify institutional independence as one of the central issues requiring attention in strengthening Kompolnas. The challenge is to develop oversight capable of scrutinizing police conduct without transforming civilian oversight into operational interference.

Internal accountability mechanisms are equally important because external oversight cannot monitor every police action. Internal professional standards, disciplinary procedures, supervisory structures, and ethical review provide the first institutional response to misconduct. Yet internal accountability also creates an inherent institutional tension: the police organization is simultaneously responsible for maintaining operational effectiveness and investigating its own personnel. This does not mean internal mechanisms are inherently ineffective. Professional internal affairs systems can provide specialized knowledge and rapid responses that external bodies may lack. However, internal accountability becomes vulnerable when organizational loyalty, hierarchical relationships, or career incentives discourage impartial investigation. For democratic policing, internal accountability should therefore be complemented rather than replaced by credible external review. The objective is not to transfer all police disciplinary authority to civilian institutions but to create a system in which internal decisions remain subject to independent scrutiny when questions of legality, serious misconduct, or public interest arise.

Accountability, Transparency, and the Limits of Institutional Self-Reform

Institutional accountability cannot be separated from transparency because citizens and oversight bodies require access to information in order to evaluate police conduct. Transparency does not mean that every operational police decision should be disclosed publicly, particularly where disclosure could compromise investigations, protect sensitive information, or endanger individuals. Rather, democratic transparency requires appropriate disclosure concerning institutional policies, procedures, aggregate performance, complaint mechanisms, disciplinary outcomes, and the justification for significant decisions. Without sufficient information, external oversight becomes dependent on information supplied by the institution being monitored. This creates an information asymmetry that can weaken accountability. In this respect, transparency functions as an institutional bridge between formal oversight and meaningful public scrutiny because it allows citizens and independent institutions to assess whether police actions correspond with legal and professional standards.

The importance of transparency becomes particularly evident in situations involving institutional crisis. The 2022 Ferdy Sambo case demonstrated how

allegations involving senior police personnel can produce significant consequences for institutional credibility. Suspaningrum and Sunarto (2024), examining Polri's crisis communication during the Sambo case, found that the case created reputational and public-trust challenges requiring strategic institutional communication. The significance of such cases extends beyond individual misconduct because the public may evaluate the institution's response as evidence of its willingness to acknowledge problems, investigate wrongdoing, and provide credible explanations. Accountability therefore has a communicative dimension. An institution that investigates misconduct but communicates inadequately may still experience legitimacy problems because citizens cannot easily distinguish between genuine correction and institutional reputation management. Transparent explanation is consequently part of accountability rather than a separate public-relations function.

The relationship between transparency and accountability also demonstrates why disciplinary punishment alone cannot constitute a sufficient reform strategy. A narrow disciplinary model asks whether an officer violated a rule and whether the individual was sanctioned. A broader accountability model asks why the violation occurred, whether organizational procedures contributed to it, whether supervisors fulfilled their responsibilities, whether similar risks exist elsewhere, and whether institutional practices have changed after the incident. This distinction is crucial because misconduct may reflect systemic vulnerabilities rather than isolated individual behavior. Suryana, Habibullah, and Alifya (2025) identify organizational culture, weak sanctions and oversight, and incomplete internalization of human-rights principles as continuing challenges to democratic policing. Institutional reform therefore requires mechanisms capable of converting individual cases into organizational learning rather than treating each incident as an isolated disciplinary problem.

Public complaints represent another critical dimension of accountability because they provide citizens with a formal mechanism for challenging police performance. The existence of complaints should not itself be interpreted negatively because accessible complaint mechanisms may indicate that citizens have institutional channels through which grievances can be expressed. The accountability value of complaints depends instead on how they are processed. An effective system should enable citizens to submit complaints without intimidation, provide clear information about procedural stages, protect complainants where necessary, investigate allegations impartially, communicate outcomes, and ensure appropriate corrective action. The Ombudsman's 2024 data concerning complaints involving Polri illustrate the continuing importance of this mechanism. The broader challenge is to ensure that complaints become sources of institutional information and reform rather than merely administrative cases that are closed without addressing underlying patterns.

Institutional fragmentation complicates this process because citizens may encounter multiple bodies with overlapping or unclear responsibilities. A complaint

concerning police conduct may potentially involve internal disciplinary structures, Kopolnas, the Ombudsman, courts, human-rights institutions, or legislative oversight depending on the nature of the allegation. Fragmentation can be beneficial when it creates multiple avenues for review, but it can also generate uncertainty concerning where responsibility lies. Democratic accountability requires not only multiple institutions but a coherent relationship among them. Each mechanism should have a defined jurisdiction, procedures for information sharing, and clear expectations concerning institutional response. Without coordination, multiple oversight institutions may paradoxically produce weaker accountability because responsibility becomes dispersed. Institutional reform should therefore focus on the architecture connecting accountability mechanisms rather than treating each oversight institution as an independent reform project.

Another challenge concerns the relationship between institutional autonomy and external supervision. Police organizations require professional autonomy because operational decisions often involve rapidly changing circumstances and specialized knowledge. Excessive political intervention could undermine impartial law enforcement and create opportunities for political manipulation. Yet autonomy without effective accountability can produce institutional insulation. The appropriate democratic model is therefore neither unrestricted police independence nor continuous political intervention in operational decisions. Bayley (2006) emphasizes that democratic police institutions must remain accountable to law and legitimate civilian authorities while retaining sufficient professional capacity to perform their duties. Indonesia's reform challenge lies in designing institutional boundaries that distinguish legitimate policy direction and oversight from inappropriate interference in individual investigations or operational decisions.

The issue of accountability is consequently inseparable from police organizational culture. Formal rules can establish complaint procedures, ethical codes, disciplinary sanctions, and oversight institutions, but their effectiveness depends on whether personnel regard accountability as an integral component of professionalism or as an external threat to institutional solidarity. A strong organizational culture should encourage officers to understand that professional integrity includes willingness to explain decisions, accept legitimate review, report misconduct, and cooperate with oversight. Suryana, Habibullah, and Alifya (2025) argue that democratic policing requires cultural transformation alongside structural and instrumental reform. This suggests that accountability reform should be incorporated into recruitment, education, promotion, leadership evaluation, and professional development rather than treated solely as a disciplinary function. Accountability becomes sustainable when professional advancement is associated with integrity and lawful performance rather than only operational results.

Prospects for Strengthening Democratic Police Accountability

The prospects for democratic police reform in Indonesia depend substantially on whether accountability can be transformed from a reactive disciplinary mechanism into a comprehensive governance framework. Such transformation requires stronger connections among transparency, oversight, complaint handling, internal discipline, professional ethics, and institutional learning. External oversight should not simply investigate individual complaints but also identify patterns that indicate systemic problems. Internal mechanisms should not merely punish individual officers but should analyze organizational causes. Public complaints should not simply be closed administratively but should contribute to service improvement. Transparency should not be reduced to institutional communication but should provide sufficient information for independent evaluation. This integrated approach would allow accountability to function as a continuous feedback system in which information concerning police performance produces review, correction, and institutional adaptation.

Strengthening Kompolnas represents one possible component of this institutional transformation. The existing legal framework gives Kompolnas an important advisory and complaint-receiving role, but scholarship has repeatedly identified limitations concerning binding authority, institutional independence, and the ability to evaluate implementation. Amostian, Yusriyadi, and Silviana (2023) argue that strengthening Kompolnas requires reconsideration of its supervisory functions and legal position, while Yusuf and Harmoko (2023) emphasize the problem of limited authority to evaluate the implementation of recommendations. Reform should therefore focus not merely on expanding the number of complaints that Kompolnas can receive but on creating a credible chain from complaint to investigation, recommendation, institutional response, and public reporting. Any expansion of authority should also preserve clear boundaries between independent oversight and operational police decision-making.

Civilian oversight should also be designed according to principles of independence, accessibility, procedural fairness, and transparency. Hope (2021) emphasizes that effective civilian oversight requires more than formal institutional existence; oversight bodies need resources, investigative competence, access to information, and mechanisms capable of ensuring institutional responses. Nalla and Mamayek (2013) similarly demonstrate that citizen participation is an important component of democratic police accountability. For Indonesia, this suggests that oversight reform should provide citizens with accessible channels for complaint and participation while ensuring that oversight institutions possess sufficient institutional independence. Civilian oversight should not become an instrument for political intervention in operational policing. Instead, it should create a legitimate institutional mechanism through which citizens can challenge police conduct and through which police institutions can demonstrate compliance with legal and professional standards.

A further prospect for reform lies in strengthening transparency through systematic publication of accountability information. Police institutions can increase public confidence by publishing appropriate information concerning complaint volumes, categories of allegations, investigation outcomes, disciplinary measures, service standards, and institutional responses. Such disclosure should be designed carefully to protect privacy, due process, and operational security. The objective is not to expose individual officers unnecessarily but to allow citizens to understand how the institution responds to misconduct and service failures. Transparency can also support institutional learning because publicly documented patterns allow policymakers and researchers to identify recurring problems. In this sense, transparency should be understood as a mechanism of organizational accountability rather than simply a strategy for improving public image.

Digitalization provides additional opportunities for strengthening accountability, particularly through complaint management, case tracking, service monitoring, and public information systems. However, digital systems cannot substitute for institutional independence or effective investigation. A technologically advanced complaint platform may still produce weak accountability if complaints are processed by the same structures without independent review. Digitalization should therefore be treated as an enabling instrument within a broader accountability architecture. Its value lies in improving traceability, reducing opportunities for administrative disappearance of complaints, providing citizens with information concerning procedural progress, and generating institutional data that can be analyzed for recurring patterns. Technology becomes democratically valuable when it increases transparency and citizen access rather than merely increasing administrative efficiency.

Police education and professional development constitute another important dimension of reform. Democratic accountability requires personnel who understand policing as a public institution governed by law rather than merely as an organization responsible for controlling crime and disorder. Training should therefore integrate human rights, ethics, procedural justice, complaint handling, communication, evidence-based decision-making, and professional responsibility. Recruitment and promotion systems should reinforce these principles by recognizing integrity and accountability as components of professional competence. Suryana, Habibullah, and Alifya (2025) emphasize the importance of cultural transformation because formal institutional reforms may have limited effects when organizational norms remain resistant to democratic principles. Professional education can contribute to this transformation when it connects legal obligations with practical decision-making and organizational leadership.

The prospects for reform also depend on parliamentary and judicial institutions exercising meaningful oversight without undermining police operational independence. Parliamentary oversight can contribute to democratic accountability by examining budgets, institutional performance, legal compliance, and policy priorities, while courts can provide legal remedies when police actions

violate rights or exceed statutory authority. These mechanisms should operate according to clear institutional boundaries. Parliamentary bodies should scrutinize policy and institutional performance rather than direct individual investigations, while courts should independently review legality and protect constitutional rights. Such differentiation is essential because democratic accountability is strongest when multiple institutions perform complementary functions rather than competing for control over police operations.

The broader objective of institutional reform should therefore be to construct an accountability ecosystem rather than to identify a single institution as the solution to police reform. Internal supervision, Kompolnas, Ombudsman, parliament, courts, civil society, media, and citizens each occupy different positions within the accountability structure. No single institution can effectively monitor the full range of police activities. A functioning accountability ecosystem requires coordination, information sharing, defined jurisdiction, institutional independence, and mechanisms for ensuring that findings lead to corrective action. The Indonesian experience demonstrates that formal reform can create important institutional foundations, but democratic policing becomes sustainable only when accountability mechanisms operate together and become embedded in everyday organizational practice.

Conclusion

Police accountability is a central condition of democratic policing because the authority necessary for effective law enforcement must remain subject to legal, institutional, and democratic constraints. The Indonesian experience demonstrates that substantial formal reforms have occurred since the Reformasi period, particularly through the separation of Polri from the military and the establishment of Law No. 2 of 2002 as the principal legal foundation of the contemporary police institution. Nevertheless, formal transformation does not automatically eliminate organizational cultures, hierarchical practices, or institutional vulnerabilities inherited from earlier periods. The analysis shows that Indonesia possesses multiple accountability mechanisms, including internal professional supervision, Kompolnas, parliamentary oversight, Ombudsman complaint mechanisms, and judicial review, but these mechanisms face challenges concerning institutional fragmentation, limited external authority, information asymmetry, and uneven implementation. Accountability should therefore be conceptualized more broadly than disciplinary punishment. It encompasses transparency, justification, independent review, public complaint mechanisms, institutional learning, and the capacity to correct systemic problems.

The prospects for democratic police reform depend on strengthening the relationship between police autonomy and accountability rather than treating them as mutually exclusive principles. Professional operational independence is necessary for effective policing, but it must operate within a framework of

transparent rules, independent oversight, accessible complaints, and meaningful institutional review. Strengthening external civilian oversight, improving the capacity and independence of accountability institutions, developing transparent complaint systems, integrating human rights and procedural justice into police education, and connecting disciplinary cases with broader organizational learning can contribute to a more sustainable reform process. The central challenge is consequently cultural as well as institutional: accountability must become part of the definition of professional policing itself. Future research should examine the effectiveness of individual accountability mechanisms through comparative regional studies, longitudinal analysis of complaints and disciplinary outcomes, and empirical research involving police personnel, oversight institutions, and citizens. Such research would provide stronger evidence concerning how institutional accountability can be translated into everyday democratic policing practices in Indonesia.

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