



Diplomatic Relations between the Indonesian National Police and UNODC in Drug Eradication Efforts

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ABSTRACT

Narcotics trafficking and abuse are forms of non-traditional security threats that are increasingly complex in the Southeast Asian region, especially Indonesia. Drugs not only have an impact on legal and public health aspects, but also threaten social, economic, and national security stability. This article examines the diplomatic relations between the Indonesian National Police (POLRI) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in drug eradication efforts, as well as their contribution to national and regional security resilience. This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach to examine the dimensions of cooperation, the role of international actors, and forms of institutional support in handling narcotics crimes. The results of the study show that the Police-UNODC partnership includes strengthening institutional capacity, technical training, intelligence exchange, and integrating human rights principles in narcotics policy. This cooperation not only impacts the effectiveness of law enforcement, but also strengthens Indonesia's diplomatic position in global security governance. Therefore, the relationship between the National Police and UNODC is a relevant model of transnational cooperation in dealing with non-traditional threats based on cross-border organized crime.

Keywords : *security diplomacy, UNODC, Indonesian National Police, narcotics, non-traditional security, international cooperation.*

INTRODUCTION

Narcotics trafficking and abuse are real threats that are now categorized as part of the non-traditional security (NTS) issue, as they not only impact the criminal aspect, but also cause social instability, public health problems, and economic decline (Newman, 2001). In the Southeast Asian region, Indonesia is one of the most affected countries, both as a transit country and a market destination of the international narcotics trafficking network (KOMPAS, 2024). The World Drug Report 2023 notes that Indonesia is included in the region "Golden Triangle" drug trafficking in Asia, with increasingly complex distribution patterns due to technological advances and weak border control (UNODC, 2023). Narcotics trafficking in Indonesia has reached the scale of a national emergency, as reflected in data from the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) which shows that around 3.3 million people are involved as active drug users (BNN, 2024).

This threat can no longer be overcome by a national approach alone. Therefore, international cooperation is one of the important instruments to increase the effectiveness of drug handling. In this regard, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) plays a strategic role in building technical, diplomatic, and legal



cooperation with member countries, including Indonesia(admin, 2024). Since the early 2000s, UNODC has been a key partner of the Government of Indonesia, especially the National Police and the National Police, in supporting narcotics law reform, law enforcement capacity building, and cross-border intelligence cooperation(BNN, 2024). This cooperation is further strengthened through *Country Programme for Indonesia 2021–2025*, which integrates evidence-based approaches (*evidence-based policy*) in the formulation of drug eradication strategies. In the context of international relations, this reflects a paradigm shift from the concept of state security (*State-centric security*) towards a human security approach (*Human Security*), where the safety and well-being of the citizens is the focus of attention(Paris, 2001). Moreover, this non-traditional security approach is in line with Barry Buzan's thinking in *Regional Security Complex Theory*, which states that security threats are often regional and require a cross-border response (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Therefore, this article aims to examine in depth how the form, dynamics, and significance of diplomatic relations established between the National Police of the Republic of Indonesia (POLRI) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in the context of increasingly complex and transnational drug eradication efforts.

The main focus of this study is to examine how such cooperation is not only limited to the exchange of information and technical training, but also includes aspects of operational diplomacy, policy harmonization, and the establishment of legal and institutional standards in dealing with cross-border narcotics networks. Furthermore, this article argues that the relationship between the National Police and UNODC plays an important role in strengthening the country's capacity to deal with the threat of drugs as part of non-traditional security. The issue of narcotics is increasingly seen as a serious threat in non-traditional security frameworks. In contrast to military threats, non-traditional security refers to multidimensional challenges, such as terrorism, natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and transnational crimes. Narcotics is a form of threat that has a wide impact because it is cross-border, involves a global network, and has implications for public health, socio-political stability, and economic resilience of a country. As Buzan (2008) emphasized, security should not only be understood in the state dimension, but also include society and individuals. Therefore, drug control efforts require international collaboration, as seen in the partnership between the National Police and UNODC, which serves as a collective response to non-traditional threats.

In the study of international relations, the theory of international regimes provides an analytical framework to understand this kind of pattern of cooperation. Krasner (1983) defines an international regime as a set of principles, norms, rules, and procedures that govern the behavior of countries in dealing with certain issues. UNODC plays a role as one of the international regimes in the field of narcotics through the provision of legal and policy instruments, including the 1988 United Nations Convention on Illicit Circulation of Drugs and Psychotropics. The participation of the National Police in UNODC programs demonstrates Indonesia's attachment to international norms and its commitment to strengthening domestic law enforcement capacity through technical cooperation, information exchange, and adjustment of national regulations.



Furthermore, the constructivist approach helps to explain the normative dimension of such cooperation. In contrast to realism and liberalism that emphasize material or institutional importance, constructivism sees that international interactions are shaped by ideas, norms, and identities. In line with Wendt's (1992) view that "anarchy is what the state makes out of it," Indonesia's involvement in anti-narcotics cooperation with UNODC is not solely driven by the calculation of interests, but also by the construction of identity as part of an international community that upholds global norms. This is reflected in the adoption of a more humanist approach to drugs, such as rehabilitation and alternative development, which shows the internalization of international values in national policies. Thus, the cooperation between the National Police and UNODC can be understood not only as a practical strategy for drug eradication, but also as a form of Indonesia's active participation in shaping the global normative order.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with the literature study method (*library research*), which aims to analyze the dynamics of cooperation between the Indonesian National Police (Polri) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in efforts to eradicate drugs in Indonesia. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate to explore a deep understanding of the patterns of diplomatic relations and institutional policies reflected through official documents, academic publications, and reports on bilateral and multilateral cooperation activities. This research is exploratory, because it wants to explain a complex phenomenon, namely the involvement of national security actors in international relations within the framework of non-traditional security studies. Data is collected through a literature review from various credible and relevant written sources. These sources include official documents of the UNODC and the National Police (such as annual reports, joint work programs, and memorandums of understanding/MoU), reports of the National Narcotics Agency (BNN), policy documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as academic literature from national and international scientific journals that discuss security diplomacy, cross-border cooperation, and narcotics eradication. In addition, supporting data is also obtained from reports from international organizations such as ASEAN, the FATF (*Financial Action Task Force*), and the *Global Commission on Drug Policy*, as well as investigative news from the mass media that have a credible reputation.

The analysis technique used in this study is content analysis (*content analysis*), that is, by examining and interpreting the substance of documents and literature to identify patterns of cooperation, diplomacy strategies, and their influence on national and regional security policies. In the process, written data triangulation is carried out, which is comparing various sources of information to increase the validity and reliability of the analysis. The time limit set in this study is between 2015 and 2024, which is the period when the drug issue in Indonesia receives serious attention nationally and internationally, in line with the increasing strategic cooperation between the National Police and UNODC in strengthening national resilience to cross-border narcotics threats.



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The cooperation between the Indonesian National Police (POLRI) and *the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* (UNODC) has shown a number of concrete results that can be measured through three main dimensions: strengthening the institutional and capacity of the National Police, operational diplomacy and international engagement, and contributing to regional security stability. In terms of strengthening institutional capacity, UNODC actively supports the improvement of the technical and institutional capabilities of the National Police, including through training in the investigation of narcotics crimes, the use of modern forensic technology, as well as the strengthening of the internal supervision system and the establishment of special anti-drug units. Support was also provided in the procurement of illegal financial tracking devices used to crack down on cross-border narcotics transactions. In border areas such as North Kalimantan and Papua, capacity building is also focused on tackling cross-border networks that are prone to narcotics smuggling.

In terms of operational diplomacy, this cooperation is manifested in cross-border operations and international forums such as the *ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime* (AMMTC) and the SMART (*Synthetics Monitoring: Analysis, Reporting and Trends*) program. The National Police also signed a memorandum of understanding across jurisdictions in handling drug syndicates in *the Golden Triangle* area, as well as participating in intelligence exchanges and joint training with neighboring countries. This strengthens Indonesia's ability to tackle transnational and complex narcotics crimes. Finally, the contribution to regional security stability is reflected in the implementation of evidence-based policies in the P4GN National Action Plan, the establishment of integrated drug data centers, and the improvement of rehabilitation services for drug users. This creates a comprehensive approach between law enforcement and public health-based handling.

From the point of view of non-traditional security studies, the cooperation between the National Police and UNODC reflects a new approach to dealing with the drug threat as part of the human security agenda. Narcotics is no longer understood simply as a crime problem, but as a multidimensional threat that includes health, economy, social stability, and national integrity. In this context, international collaboration is a necessity to strengthen domestic capacity while aligning global strategies. UNODC plays a key role in providing technical and normative support that strengthens the position of the National Police as an important actor in regional security governance. The benefits of this cooperation are not only felt in terms of improving the quality of human resources and law enforcement tools, but also in terms of international diplomacy. The National Police plays an active role in drafting and implementing international policies related to drugs, as well as strengthening Indonesia's position in the global community as a country that actively eradicates cross-border crime. However, the challenges in implementation in the field are still quite large, especially in terms of harmonizing the legal approach and work culture between the National Police and UNODC. Often the difference in



orientation between repressive approaches and human rights-based approaches creates tensions in the implementation of common policies.

In addition, internal challenges such as coordination between national agencies, budget limitations, and capacity inequality between regions are structural obstacles that need to be overcome. To achieve long-term effectiveness, integration between the results of international cooperation and responsive and inclusive national policies is needed. In this framework, strengthening synergy between the National Police, BNN, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as rehabilitation institutions and civil society is very crucial. Overall, the cooperation between the National Police and UNODC is a tangible manifestation of Indonesia's non-traditional security diplomacy in responding to the challenge of globalization of narcotics crimes. This initiative reflects Indonesia's commitment to actively engage in inclusive, collaborative, and human values-based regional and global security governance and sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

The diplomatic relationship between the Indonesian National Police (Polri) and *the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* (UNODC) reflects a progressive form of international cooperation in dealing with non-traditional security threats in the form of trafficking and narcotics abuse. Through a collaborative approach, this cooperation not only increases the institutional capacity of the National Police technically and structurally, but also strengthens Indonesia's position in the regional and global security system. In the operational aspect, this cooperation includes increasing investigative capabilities, exchanging intelligence, implementing joint training, and active involvement of the National Police in various international forums such as the SMART, ASEAN-NAR, and AMMTC programs. In addition, UNODC's support is also seen in the formulation of national policies based on scientific evidence and human rights values, which are an important foundation in handling modern narcotics crimes that are transnational and organized.

Through a non-traditional security approach, this cooperation shows that the threat of drugs not only impacts the legal sector, but also on social, economic, and public health stability. Therefore, it is not enough to eradicate drugs only with a repressive approach, but it needs to be combined with preventive, educational, and rehabilitative approaches. In the context of international relations, UNODC plays a global role as a global actor that supports collaboration-based security governance, while the National Police is transformed into a domestic actor that plays an active role in the realm of security diplomacy. Although this cooperation has shown significant achievements, there are still various challenges that must be faced, such as budget constraints, inequality of capacity between regions, and differences in approach between national law enforcement officials and international human rights-based standards. Thus, this article recommends several important things to optimize the cooperation between the National Police and UNODC. First, there needs to be stronger synergy between the National Police, BNN, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other related institutions so that drug eradication strategies can be implemented in an integrated manner.



Second, an evidence-based and human rights approach must be the main foundation in the formulation of national narcotics policy, so as to be able to answer the social and humanitarian dimensions of this problem. Third, it is necessary to increase budget and resource allocation for officials in the field, especially in border areas and vulnerable areas. Finally, the periodic monitoring and evaluation mechanism of international cooperation is important to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the programs carried out. With these measures, Indonesia is expected to strengthen domestic resilience to the threat of narcotics while playing a strategic role in inclusive and collaborative regional and international security governance.



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