

Analyzing of Religious and Cultural Conflicts in West Java

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Abstract

Keywords

Diversity; FKUB; peace

Indonesia is a country with a diversity of ethnicities, cultures, races, and religions, which reflects the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. Although this diversity is a source of harmony, social and religious-based conflicts are inevitable, as seen in the cases in West Java. This paper explores the role of the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) as a mediator in resolving religious conflicts. Using the conflict cycle framework, this paper analyzes the dynamics of conflict, starting from the basis of conflict to its resolution. This research highlights the challenges of FKUB in maintaining neutrality, limited authority, and the importance of the government's role in creating policies that support religious harmony. Short, medium, and long-term action plans are formulated to strengthen the role of FKUB, enhance interfaith dialogue, and build a network of cooperation with various related parties. The conclusion shows that strengthening FKUB and tolerance education are key steps to encourage the sustainability of peace in society.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with various ethnicities, races, cultures and religions. This causes Indonesia to have differences in character between tribes and cultures (Ali et al., 2024; Harmi et al., 2022; Mazya et al., 2024). On the other hand, the existence of high diversity can potentially cause conflicts in society. With this diversity, the Indonesian people are also instilled with an attitude of tolerance, respect, and respect for other cultures and religions. To foster these attitudes, harmony between religious communities is very important to be realized, to strive for the welfare of the people (Makalew, et al, 2021)

The Indonesian nation is the embodiment of unity with the state motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" which represents the principle of diversity and unity of the Indonesian nation (Herman et al., 2023; Riyanti et al., 2023; Utama & Mubarak, 2024). The reality in a plural and heterogeneous Indonesian society shows that the integrity of the state is based on differences that come from diversity in society (Akrim, 2023; Saepulmilah et al., 2025; Simanjuntak et al., 2025; Utama & Mubarak, 2024). The concept of diversity in the Indonesian state makes everything different in Indonesia recognized for its existence. Making all the elements feel equal and equal. This sense has been encouraged since the pre-independence period, by fostering a sense of solidarity and solidarity regardless of the elements of SARA (Rahman, et al, 2020).

In addition to the state motto, Indonesia also has a state ideology, namely Pancasila, which is the basis of the state and contains the value of unity above pluralism in Indonesia (Nurdianzah et al., 2024). Pancasila is the result of a combination of the success of the 'founders of the nation' who have a tolerant and open view in religious pluralism (Kawangung, 2019; Mushodiq et al., 2025) and the embodiment of local wisdom, customs, and culture values that have been passed down from generation to generation (Simatupang & Wahyuni, 2024). In the

First Precept of Pancasila, God Almighty is recognized as containing the meaning that every human being in Indonesia is obliged to respect the religion and beliefs of others (Nufus et al., 2023), because it is the right of everyone to choose, embrace, and practice their religious teachings freely without being disturbed (Saidurrahman & Arifin, 2019) and also without disturbing other parties (Mualimah et al., 2023; Rethinking Religious Freedom, 2025).

Indonesia has 1,340 ethnic groups from various regions grouped based on lineage, 6 religions legalized by the state based on the 1st precept of Pancasila. There are also different kinds of races whose classification is characterized by their physical similarities and geographical origins, as well as vertical diversity that is differentiated through educational, social, and other, as well as other horizontal diversity (detik.com, 2023).

The diversity that has accompanied the people of Indonesia for hundreds of years has become something that has been embedded and accepted in every individual in society, and carried out in a peaceful and harmonious manner. Nevertheless, religious conflicts in Indonesia are inevitable. As we know, there have been many major conflicts between tribes and religions in Indonesia, including the Sampit conflict (2001), the Poso conflict (1998), Ambon (1998), and various conflicts between other tribes and religions. Currently, major conflicts between tribes and religions have subsided and the state is trying to prevent such conflicts from recurring, but without many people realizing it, the condition of the post-conflict community still feels deep trauma and is difficult to heal.

The urgency of this research is driven by several factors. First, West Java consistently has the highest rate of religious violations in Indonesia according to the Wahid Institute's annual reports, with incidents including church closures (GKI Bandung, Santa Clara Bekasi, HKBP Bethany), attacks on Ahmadiyya communities, and restrictions on minority worship. Second, the Religious Harmony Index in West Java was recorded at 72.7, below the national average, indicating room for improvement in interfaith relations. Third, the Center for Detention Studies recorded 429 incidents of terrorism in West Java with 183 perpetrators, highlighting the severity of religiously motivated violence. Fourth, although FKUB has been established across regions, its effectiveness as a mediator remains questioned due to limited authority, potential subjectivity, and lack of systematic operational guidelines. Fifth, without a structured understanding of conflict stages, interventions cannot be timed effectively. The novelty of this research lies in several aspects. First, it applies Kriesberg and Dayton's (2012) conflict cycle framework to analyze religious conflicts in West Java, providing a systematic stage-by-stage understanding that has not been previously applied in this context. Second, it conducts a comparative analysis across three conflict cases (Bandung, Tasikmalaya, Bekasi) rather than a single case study. Third, it integrates Tillett's (1999) practical conflict resolution approaches (mediation, negotiation, arbitration, conciliation) into concrete short, medium, and long-term action plans. Fourth, it includes SWOT analysis to identify FKUB's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

The State of the Republic of Indonesia guarantees the right to freedom of religion and worship, as stipulated in Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, which reads as follows: 1) The state is based on the One Godhead. 2) The state guarantees the freedom of each citizen to embrace his or her own religion and to worship according to his religion and belief.

Freedom of religion is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (DUHAM). This is stated in Article 18, everyone has

the right to freedom of thought, belief, and religion, and in Article 22 of Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning human rights, freedom of religion and worship is guaranteed as human rights that cannot be reduced under any circumstances (Rahardjo, in Faturrohman, et al., 2024). So in this case, the Government has a strategic role in maintaining tolerance between religious communities to build harmony, so that the Government forms a forum for religious unity.

The implementation of FKUB is contained in the 11th Joint Decree of the Minister of Religion and the Minister of Home Affairs. On August 8, 2006, the Religious Harmony Discussion Committee (FKUB) was formed as an intermediary between religious people and local governments, defining the role of local governments in promoting harmony between religious communities in religious communities (Firdaus, in Purwandari, et al., 2022). The Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) is a forum that plays an important role in attracting consensus among religious people. The community hopes that FKUB can help the government not only solve many problems of life, but also protect religion, and as a forum for harmony between people.

In the Regulation of the Governor of West Java No. 40 of 2012, Chapter III Article 8 paragraphs 1 & 2 there are duties and functions of FKUB, as follows:

(1) FKUB has the task of building, maintaining and empowering religious people through dialogue with religious leaders and community leaders, accommodating and channeling the aspirations of religious organizations and the community, compiling recommendations as material for the Governor's policy, and carrying out socialization of the provisions of laws and regulations in the religious sector.

(2) In carrying out the duties as intended in paragraph (1), FKUB shall have the following functions: a) implementation of dialogue with religious leaders and community leaders; b) the implementation of facilitation of the empowerment of religious organizations by accommodating and channeling the aspirations of religious organizations and the community; c) the preparation of recommendations related to religious harmony as material for the Governor's policy; and d) Implementation of socialization of the provisions of laws and regulations and policies in the religious field related to religious harmony with related agencies.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method, which aims to understand and analyze socio-religious conflicts in West Java and the role of the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) in conflict resolution efforts. This approach was chosen because it is able to describe in depth the dynamics of the conflict, the actors involved, and the mediation process carried out.

The data sources in this study come from secondary data, in the form of scientific journals, books, research reports, laws and regulations, and online media news relevant to religious conflicts and the role of FKUB in West Java. Data is collected through library research techniques by examining and examining various sources related to the research topic.

The data analysis technique was carried out using the conflict cycle framework of Kriesberg and Dayton (2012), which includes the stages of bases, emergence, escalation, de-escalation, settlement, and outcomes. Each stage is used to study cases of religious conflict in West Java, so that a systematic understanding of the causes of conflicts, the dynamics of escalation, and efforts to resolve them can be obtained.

The results of the analysis were then prepared descriptively and interpretively to explain the role of FKUB as a mediator, the challenges faced, and the strategies that can be carried out in building religious harmony in a sustainable manner.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

West Java is the province with the highest population density in Indonesia. This density is caused by the presence of industrial estates in Bekasi, Cikarang, and Karawang. So that many residents from outside West Java came and settled to work as factory workers in industrial areas. The increase in the number of immigrants to West Java also led to an increase in people of different religions and races. Until now, the Central Statistics Agency (2021) stated that the population of this province is around 48 million people. Of the total, the population of West Java is dominated by adherents of Islam (97.22%), followed by Protestants (1.83%), Catholics (0.65%), Buddhists (0.22%), Hindus (0.04%), Confucianism (0.03%), and other faiths (0.01%). The Religious Harmony Index in West Java was recorded at 72.7. But in fact, the Center of Detention Studies recorded as many as 429 incidents of terrorism in the province with 183 people declared as perpetrators.

The Wahid Institute, which researches religious harmony, reported that from year to year, until 2011, there was a higher level of intolerance than in previous years, mostly in the name of religious violence against Ahmadiyya citizens. The Wahid Institute also found that West Java is the province that has the highest rate of violations from year to year (Miharja and Mulyana, 2019). The case that occurred in Bandung at that time, in 2010, was the act of sealing the GKI church by the local government. In addition to the GKI church, sealing was also carried out against the Bethany HKBP, the Philadelphia Congregation GKII, the Immanuel Church of the Pentecostal Church, the Maranatha Congregation of the Tebernakel Pentecostal Church, and the Stasi Rancaekek Catholic Church of Santa Odillia Cicadas Parish on the grounds that the congregation was considered to be using their homes as places of worship (Miharja and Mulyana, 2019).

A similar thing happened in Tasikmalaya, which involved social and religious conflicts. The conflict cannot be said to be an open conflict involving many actors, and the origin of the problem occurred long before the Indonesian reform period (Miharja and Mulyana, 2019). The involvement of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at has also occurred, but conflict with this involvement has occurred in the early 2000s. Because of the background of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at which is seen as deviating from the true teachings of Islam, other Muslim communities consider Ahmadiyya to blaspheme the beliefs of Muslims (Zuldin, 2016).

Bekasi City is one of the areas of concern because of repeated cases of violence against minority religious groups. This is difficult to avoid because Bekasi is one of the destinations for migration from various regions in Indonesia so that more and more residents have different religious and ethnic backgrounds (Miharja and Mulyana, 2019). The occurrence of clashes related to the rejection of the establishment of the Santa Clara church in Bekasi also became one of the major religious issues in 2017. This happened because initially there was a group of people who were known to demand that the Bekasi City Government revoke the building permit (IMB) against the Santa Clara Church, but the Bekasi City Government rejected the demand (Kompas.com, 2017).

The construction process of the Santa Clara Church has gone through the approval process from the FKUB of Bekasi City, this indicates that the construction process does not have legal defects. However, in the end, the Bekasi City government decided that the Santa Clara Church was in the status quo or frozen, so that the construction process stopped (Halim, 2018). According to Turner (1991) in Halim (2018), in the social context, religion can play a role as social cohesion. Religion can be a social glue in society through beliefs and rituals that bind society, especially in traditional society.

Turner also stated that religion would become the social glue if conditions did not provide a favorable solution to class problems and class conflicts in an industrial society. In this case, religion is the solution to the problem. But religion as a social glue can be eroded by various attitudes towards material factors such as strength, economic coercion, economic dependence, legal pressure, economic scarcity, habits and emergency conditions of daily life. Religion can be a social glue if we pay full attention to practicing discipline.

Every effort to obtain recognized legality was made to build this church. By obtaining permission from residents at the village and sub-district levels, the Church obtained the approval of the local government of Bekasi City with the issuance of a Building Permit (IMB) of the Santa Clara Church Number 503/0535/1.B.BPPT.2 on July 28, 2015 (Halim, 2018).

Unfortunately, this convenience did not last long. The Bekasi Muslim Friendship Council (MSUIB) protested against the government's decision to grant permission for the construction of the Santa Clara Church. The MSUIB protest is a religious expression that shows the strength of the Islamic roots of Muslims in Bekasi, this is a form of the identity of the Islamic community there. MSUIB's actions in protesting against government policies show the role of social control, because religion itself can play a role as social control in society (Halim, 2018).

The role of the government and the state can also be related to the theory of the function of the state, namely carrying out law and order, seeking the welfare and prosperity of its people, defense and upholding justice. As Aristotle said about the functions of the state, in terms of discussion, administrative and judicial. The function of the State from Aristotle's thought shows that the problem of the state is a common problem of the citizen concerned and the problem can be solved if it is discussed by the citizen concerned (Halim 2018).

The role of the government shows that the State as an organizer of order and social control The Government in the state plays the role of the owner of the authority of power in formulating and implementing decisions that are binding on all residents in its territory. The government's decision to maintain the legality of the Santa Clara Church building permit shows that the state has played a role as a social controller. In this case, the government took an accommodation action, which was an action to ease conflict and legitimacy to Catholic groups. From the description mentioned above, the role of religion and the state can be simplified as shown in the chart below (Halim, 2018):

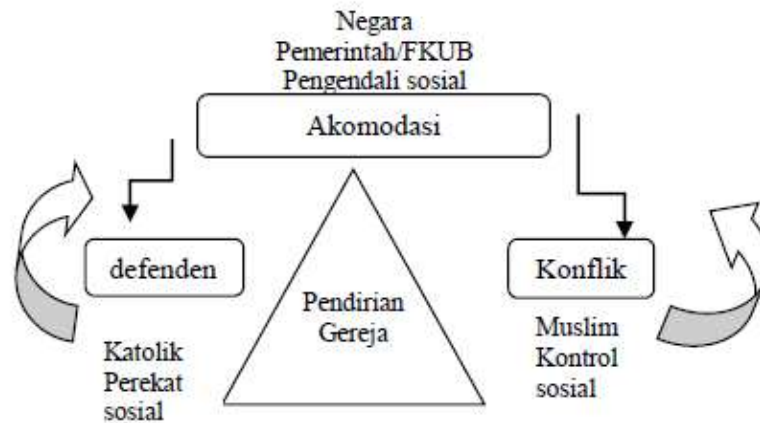


Figure 1 The Role of the State, FKUB, and Religious Groups in the Santa Clara Church Conflict

The Role of FKUB in Religious Cases in West Java

FKUB has been formed in various regions with the aim of creating harmony between religious communities in Indonesia. FKUB also has a legal umbrella as the basis for its legality. To accommodate this, the Ministry of Religion has formulated it in the Draft Bill on the Protection of Religious Communities. Looking at the formulation of the body of the PUB Bill, it indicates that what is to be protected is the minority (Miharja and Mulyana, 2019).

The purpose of the establishment of FKUB is as an external forum for harmony between religious communities (Article 8 paragraph 1). However, even though FKUB was formed based on the proposal of the Religious Council, and/or the local community, the role of FKUB still poses a dilemma in its implementation. In terms of construction, FKUB has a role as a consultative partner of the Regional Government and provides policy recommendations for Governors and Regents/Mayors. This makes FKUB as a replacement for the position of the Regional MUI, while the Religious Council as a replacement for the Central MUI. The role and function of FKUB is recognized as a consultative institution with the Governor and Regent/Mayor, explaining that FKUB is an institution that has legal standing.

Overall, the religious and social conflicts that occurred in 3 regions in West Java province were caused by the low tolerance between religious people in the community. There is still a lack of humanity and empathy that causes an escalation of conflict. Where this conflict involves many actors and questions the existing facilities. In this case, the role of FKUB is very necessary as a party in a neutral position, FKUB must provide conflict resolution that does not harm any party. Looking at the duties and functions of FKUB in the above article, FKUB must be the key to maintaining peace and establishing networks from various parties, in order to realize welfare for religious people.

Conceptual Framework

In this paper, the conceptual framework used is the framework of Kriesberg and Dayton (2012) about the conflict cycle, with the following figure:

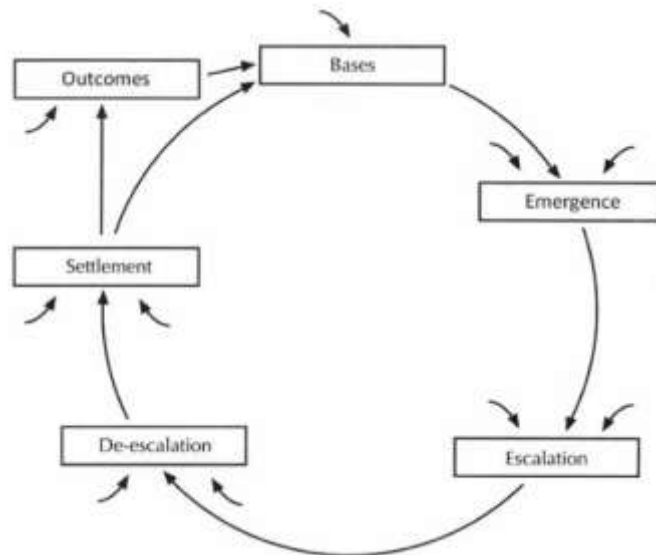


Figure 2 Kriesberg and Dayton’s Conflict Cycle Framework in Religious Conflict Analysis

Here is an explanation of each stage seen in the cycle:

1. Bases, which are the initial stages of the conflict cycle. At this stage, there is a root of the problem or an initial condition that has the potential to cause conflict. The basis of conflict can be differences in values, interests, resources, ideologies, or perceptions between parties. In the conflict in West Java, the basis of the conflict that occurred was:
 - a. Social discrimination
 - b. Tensions between groups
 - c. Lack of objectivity of FKUB as a neutral party
 - d. Lack of government firmness
 - e. Procedures for the construction of houses of worship that are not transparent
2. Emergence (the stage of emergence of conflict), at this stage it begins to be seen that tensions and conflicts begin to emerge to the surface, and related parties begin to show resistance. In the Kriesberg framework, this stage is identified based on identity, complaints, goals, and beliefs.

Table 1 Identification of Actors, Complaints, Objectives, and Beliefs in the Emergence Stage of Religious Conflict

Identity	Religious groups, FKUB, City/Regency Government, MSIUB
Complaints	Religious minority groups lose the right to worship
Purpose	- The community can carry out worship peacefully - Obtaining the right to erect buildings as houses of worship in certain places
Trust	Some people believe that protesting and rejecting other religious activities can be a source of strength for their religion.

3. Escalation, where the conflict increases in intensity, the parties involved begin to take actions that worsen the situation, such as:
 - a. Mass Protests
 - b. Spread of hostile rhetoric
 - c. Sealing of houses of worship
 - d. Freeze of the construction process of houses of worship

4. De-escalation, at this stage, the conflict begins to subside after it reaches its peak. This can happen due to the following factors:
 - a. Stop protests against development
 - b. The intervention of a mediator who is not inclined to one of the parties
 - c. Public awareness of the need for solutions for sustainable peace
 - d. Supervision in the implementation of the mediation agreement
5. Settlement, the conflict begins to enter a settlement phase where the parties involved seek a mutually acceptable solution. The solutions carried out can be in the form of:
 - a. Deliberation to find a peaceful solution
 - b. Building a mediation system to realize peace among local religious people
 - c. FKUB builds a network to formulate peace policies and dialogue with the community as a way to handle conflicts
6. Outcomes In this stage, the final outcome of conflict resolution there are three main possibilities:
 - a. Resolution: The conflict was resolved successfully and did not reappear.
 - b. Transformation: Conflicts undergo positive changes, such as increased understanding between parties.
 - c. Stalemate: The conflict subsides, but is not completely resolved, so it can reappear in the future and will return to its basic stage if new tensions arise.

In this West Java conflict, the outcomes obtained are:

- a. Changes in the democratic system in the City/Regency
- b. The realization of peace between religious groups
- c. Creating a higher tolerance attitude
- d. Strengthening institutions to create objectivity

In the Kriesberg conflict cycle, each stage has a relationship within the cycle, which makes this cycle dynamic, the conflict can move forward or backward between the stages. Then, if the settlement is not effective, the conflict can return to the bases or emergence phase. However, if conflicts can be resolved properly, then a positive transformation occurs and can drive more sustainable outcomes.

Action Plan

Gregory Tillett in his book *Resolving Conflict: A Practical Approach*, Second Edition (2000), provides a comprehensive guide to understanding and resolving conflicts in various situations. In his writing, Tillett provides directions to design practical approaches to resolving conflicts, including:

- a. Mediation: Using a neutral third party to facilitate communication and help the conflicting parties reach an agreement.
- b. Negotiation: A process in which the parties involved work together to find a mutually beneficial solution.
- c. Arbitration: A settlement decision made by a third party after hearing arguments from the disputing parties.
- d. Conciliation: Efforts to improve relations between parties to the conflict through dialogue and building trust.

The steps in developing a practical approach are explained:

1. Mediation

Mediation is a process in which a neutral third party (mediator) helps the conflicting parties reach an agreement. In this step, the mediator does not make a decision; They only facilitate communication so that the parties can understand each other's needs and interests.

The steps include:

- a. Opening: The mediator sets the ground rules and creates a neutral and conducive atmosphere.
- b. Problem Identification: All parties convey their views, feelings, and positions.
- c. Solution Exploration: Mediators encourage dialogue to come up with solution options that accommodate the interests of all parties.
- d. Negotiation: The parties negotiate to reach an agreement.
- e. Closing: A formal agreement is reached, and implementation steps are drafted.

2. Negotiation

Negotiation is a direct dialogue between the parties to the conflict with the aim of reaching a win-win solution. Here, Tillett emphasizes interest-based negotiations rather than position. The focus is to understand the needs behind each party's demands. The techniques in negotiation are:

- a. Focus on the problem, not the personal.
- b. Think creatively to find innovative solutions.
- c. Looking for results that can benefit all parties.
- d. Avoiding "win-lose" and striving for "win-win".

3. Arbitrase

Arbitration involves a third party deciding on the resolution of the conflict after listening to arguments from both sides. This is different from mediation; the arbitrator has the authority to give a binding decision. This process is often used when negotiations or mediation do not reach an agreement between the two parties. Arbitration has its disadvantages and advantages:

- a. Advantages: Faster and firmer resolution.
- b. Disadvantages: The losing party may feel dissatisfied for not being involved in the creation of the solution.

4. Conciliation

Conciliation is the process of rebuilding good relations between parties to the conflict. The focus is not only on problem solving but also on improving relationships and building trust. Tillett writes that conciliation is often used after intense conflicts that damage communication or long-term relationships.

Through this practical approach, action plans that can be carried out include the short term in the form of increasing youth representation in FKUB and innovating religious activities, in the medium term through strengthening the capacity of FKUB as a forum for dialogue and increasing coordination with stakeholders, and in the long term by building, maintaining, and empowering religious people up to the village level as well as socializing policies and laws and regulations in the field of religious. The implementation of this plan requires the involvement of important factors, such as religious communities, regional leaders from the RT to city/district levels, relevant government agencies such as the Ministry of Religion and the Ministry of Home Affairs, and FKUB as a neutral mediator. Based on the SWOT analysis, the strength lies in the strategic and representative role of the FKUB,

weaknesses in subjectivity and limited authority, opportunities in coordination and support of government programs, and threats in the form of provocations by the media and parties riding on conflicts.

CONCLUSION

This paper shows that social and religious conflicts in Indonesia, especially in West Java, are often caused by discrimination, lack of tolerance, and tensions between community groups. The Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) plays an important role as a forum for dialogue and facilitation of religious people, although it still faces challenges such as limited authority and potential subjectivity. In the context of the conflict cycle, FKUB can be a key actor in de-escalating conflict and promoting sustainable resolution. Conflict resolution efforts require collaboration between FKUB, the community, and the government, with strategic steps such as increasing representation in FKUB, implementing tolerance education programs, and strengthening the legal umbrella. The short, medium, and long-term action plans provide practical direction to create harmony, prevent recurrent conflicts, and build mutual respect between religious communities. With this approach, it is hoped that sustainable peace will be created and the quality of religious harmony in Indonesia will be improved.

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