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Examining Islamism, Peacebuilding, and Interfaith Dialogue in Papua, Indonesia

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Abstract

A nexus of Islamism, peacebuilding, and interfaith dialogue in Papua is an important topic to be explicated because studies on the dynamics and the relationship have yet to be widely available. Hence, this article analyses the complex relationship between Islamisation, peacebuilding, and interfaith dialogue in Papua. Historically, before the presence of transnational Islam, the relationship between Muslims and Christians was in harmony, and they lived peacefully. However, such radical transnational Islamic groups, to some extent, have created tensions and conflict between these two religions as well as intra-religious frictions among Islamic groups. Furthermore, tensions among different religions have provided another nuance to the long-running separatism-flavoured conflict in Papua. This academic paper explains the presence of transnational groups, especially Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) and Salafy-Wahhaby group in Papua before 2020s and how the religious leaders in Papua, through *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama* or FKUB [the Religious Forum for Tolerance], working for building communal harmony by making *Deklarasi Papua Tanah Damai* [Papua Land of Peace Declaration]. Moreover, it elucidates the framework of interfaith dialogue and how it is practised to maintain communal harmony in Papua. However, interfaith dialogue is still used traditionally in Papua, and the root cause of the existing religious conflicts has yet to be resolved.

Keywords: islamism, communal conflict, transnational islam, peacebuilding, interfaith dialogue.

Introduction

Since the Indonesian democratic era began after the 1998 Reformation, Papua Province has displayed a paradox. After Aceh reached its conflict resolution in 2005, and various communal conflicts in Indonesia—including the Ambon, Poso, Sambas, and Sampit regions—have been resolved and begun to undergo a democratisation process, Papua remains the only region continues to experience a protracted violent conflict. There are no signs of when the prolonged conflict will end. Previous studies mention four roots of Papua conflict: (1) Political identity and rewriting of Papuan history, (2) Human rights abuse by Indonesian armed forces and police, (3) Marginalization and discrimination of Papuan people (4) The failure of development.¹ Also, Papua faces communal conflicts.² In sum, the protracted conflict relates to the Papuan nationalists' aspiration to create an independent country, separating from Indonesia.

Meanwhile, conflict in Papua is predominantly characterised by nuances of separatism. Hernawan called it the “theatre of violence” as it is a protracted separatism-related conflict.³ This fact is supported by some scholars whose works focus more on the violent conflict, democracy, human rights, and good governance in Papua.⁴ The circumstances have increasingly become more complex due to the tensions between Muslim migrants from outside Papua Island and indigenous Papuans who are predominantly Christian.⁵ Before the Reformation of 1998, the relationship between Muslims and Christians seems to be in harmony, with relatively no religious-related tensions and conflicts visible. Such tensions arise, among others, with the presence of transnational Islamist groups that voice the creation of an Islamic state and a global Islamic caliphate and the growing prevalence of Islamisation, which will be elaborated on in the next section. As a result, resolving conflicts in Papua has become more complicated.⁶

A body of literature maintains that before the Reformation, Muslims and Christians lived in a relatively harmonious relationship in Papua.⁷ From a historical perspective, the Dutch occupation witnessed a friendly relationship between Muslims and Christians that had been established. Beyond their religious beliefs and practices, there were no

¹ Muridan S. Widjojo, *Papua Road Map: Negotiating the Past, Improving the Present and Securing the Future* (Jakarta: LIPI Press, Yayasan TIFA, dan Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2009), 2.

² International Crisis Group, *Indonesia: Communal tensions in Papua*, Asia Report No. 154 (16 June 2008), i-24. <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/icg/2008/en/58966>; International Crisis Group, *Indonesia: Dynamics of Violence in Papua*, Asia Report No. 232 (9 August 2012). <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/icg/2012/en/88080>.

³ Budi Hernawan, *Torture and Peacebuilding In Indonesia: The Case of Papua* (Oxon: New York, Routledge, 2018), 4.

⁴ Richard Chauvel, “The Land Of Papua And The Indonesian State: Essays On West Papua,” vol. 2 (Australia: Monash University, 2003), 4; Yorrys TH. Raweyai, *Mengapa Papua Ingin Merdeka* (Jayapura: Presidium Dewan Papua, 2002).

⁵ International Crisis Group, *Indonesia*, 1.

⁶ Ridwan al-Makassary, *Islam Transnasional di Tanah Papua: Proyek Jihad Ja'far Umar Thalib, Kontroversi Menara Masjid Sentani, Hizbut Tahir Indonesia* (Papua: Pokja Agama Majelis Rakyat Papua, 2019), 11.

⁷ J.F. Onim, *Islam & Kristen Di Tanah Papua: Meniti Jalan Bersama: Hubungan Islam-Kristen Dalam Sejarah Penyebaran Dan Perjumpaannya Di Wilayah Semenanjung Onin Fakfak* (Jurnal Info Media, 2006) 15-20.

significant differences between Muslims and Christians in everyday life. They lived together in harmony because religion and customs were the pillars of harmony in their social and religious life.

At that period, transnational Islamic groups had not influenced religions in Papua. Additionally, there was no radical Islam movement against the Netherlands government and its policies. As a result, Muslims and Christians lived harmoniously in the Fakfak region and surrounding areas.⁸ A similar phenomenon occurred during the reign of Soekarno (1945-1965) when a slight conflict between Muslims and Christians in Papua was observable. A little tension happened in Kaimana before the Trikora when Raja Kasim Ombaiyer of Namaatora tended to support the integration. So, tensions rise between the Christian village head and the Muslim village head.⁹ Yet, Soeharto's transmigration policy of moving employees and migrants to Papua enlarged the number of Muslims, fundamentally changing Papua's demography, which was once a Christian-majority region.¹⁰

Among religious communities, the peaceful relationship was also evident in politics. Muslims who lived in the Raja Ampat and Fakfak areas established a political party to locate their representatives in the New Guinea parliament created by the Dutch. In 1961, Haji Ibrahim Bauw created *Partai Gerakan Persatuan New Guinea*, GPNG [The Islamic Unity Party of New Guinea], in Sorong. Meanwhile, some Muslims collaborated with Christians in Raja Ampat to establish *Partai Persatuan Christen Islam Raja Ampat*, Perchisra [The Party of Christianity-Islam Raja Ampat].¹¹

A custom or unwritten law to share political power among Muslims, Protestants, and Catholics in Fakfak, Sorong, and Kaimana is evident.¹² For example, in a case where a selected Regent is a Muslim, his deputy should be a Protestant, and the regional secretary should be a Catholic. Similarly, visiting one another on 'Eid al-Fitr and Christmas is a local tradition that signifies harmony. In sum, Muslims and Christians have long had a peaceful relationship with an emphasis on tolerance.

In the same tone, Al-Hamid maintains that religious conflict has infrequently been a problem in Jayapura.¹³ In most groups, the relationship between Christians and Muslims is very peaceful, marked by the "open house" concept (opening one's house to anyone who wants to visit or participate in celebrations) and visiting each other on 'Eid al-Fitr and Christmas events, including sharing each other food and drink. In addition,

⁸ R Tirtosudarmo, "Migrasi Di Papua: Sejarah Dan Konteks Politik (Migration in Papua: History and Political Context (Unpublished Draft)," 2020, 7.

⁹ Cahyo Pamungkas, "Hubungan Antar Umat Beragama di Kaimana dalam Tinjauan Sejarah Sosial," *Patrawidya* 16, no. 1 (2015): 11, <https://repositori.kemdikbud.go.id/5167/1/Patrawidya-Vol-16-No-1-Maret-2015.pdf>.

¹⁰ Neles Tebay, "'Papua, the Land of Peace': The Interfaith Vision and Commitment for West Papua," *Exchange* 36, no. 4 (2007): 342, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157254307X225025>.

¹¹ Jusuf Fredrik Onim, *Islam & Kristen Di Tanah Papua: Meniti Jalan Bersama: Hubungan Islam-Kristen Dalam Sejarah Penyebaran Dan Perjumpaannya Di Wilayah Semenanjung Onin Fakfak*, (Bandung: Jurnal Info Media, 2006), 15.

¹² Toni Victor M and Wanggai, *Rekonstruksi Sejarah Umat Islam Di Tanah Papua* (Jakarta: Litbang Kemenag RI, 2009), 163.

¹³ I Al-Hamid, *Jalan Panjang Perdamaian Papua: Memahami Sejarah Dan Peradaban* (Yogyakarta: The Phinisi Press, 2017), 69.

the two communities often support each other in creating places of worship. As Al-Hamid stated, "The Foundation of Laskar Kristus [The Christ's Army] has helped build mosques in Jayapura, even outside Jayapura".¹⁴ In the early 1980s, the author witnessed how the relationship between Muslim and Christian communities was relatively harmonious in Serui, Papua. Although the author was aware of some frequent attacks on migrants by Papuan nationalists, religious tensions have never been observed.

However, there were tensions, although very rare, between migrant Muslims and Christian Papuans. For instance, Timmer asserts that in 1994, there were interfaith tensions in Teminabuan, southern Sorong, and West Papua Province that could potentially change into a religious conflict.¹⁵ As a background, *Pancasila's* emphasis on housing different religions under its first precept, "Belief in the Almighty God", caused suspicion among religious communities across the Indonesian archipelago because it was too exclusive. Teminabuan had three mosques and a Protestant church, and the two communities had shared little tolerance for each other. Furthermore, the practice of Islam by several migrant Muslims had become a worry of the Imyan people of the Teminabuan Subdistrict of the Bird's Head Peninsula of Papua. They alleged Islam was part of Javanese imperialism that deteriorated Papuan Christian identity. In this light, Timmer argues that the Imyan justified this belief by mentioning news reports of Muslims attacking Christian churches in several regions in Indonesia.¹⁶ As a result, one mosque in Teminabuan was burned down in November 1994, dealing a shock to communal harmony.

Recently, tensions and conflicts between primarily migrant Muslims and Christian indigenous Papuans fuelled by fears of strengthening Islamism in Papua began the emergence of studies on Islam in Papua.¹⁷ The marginalization and discrimination of the Papuan people, as well as the failure of development, cannot be ignored. This adds to the nuances of communal conflict amid the protracted conflict of separatism. On this basis, the author argues that by examining the conflicts in Papua from a broader perspective while ignoring the religious aspect of the issue, we have denied the dynamics of communal conflict in Papua, which is also strongly influenced by religious behaviours and views adopted by the Papuan community. Meanwhile, the religious dimension is not much discussed as it is not deemed fundamental in the conflict dynamic between the Indonesian military and Papuan nationalists.

To the best of the author's knowledge, studies on the dynamics of Islamisation, peace, and interfaith dialogue efforts in Papua have yet to be widely available; therefore, this article will focus on these dynamics to enrich the body of knowledge. This paper is based on the author's literature review and observations during his fieldwork in Papua

¹⁴ I Al-Hamid, *Jalan Panjang Perdamaian Papua: Memahami Sejarah Dan Peradaban* (Yogyakarta: The Phinisi Press, 2017), 72.

¹⁵ Jaap Timmer, "The Return of the Kingdom: Agama and the Millennium among the Imyan of Irian Jaya, Indonesia," *Ethnohistory* 47, no. 1 (2000): 29–65, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-47-1-29>.

¹⁶ Timmer, "The Return of the Kingdom," 35.

¹⁷ Al-Makassary, *Islam Transnasional di Tanah Papua*, 33.

at the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019 for his doctoral dissertation. This paper explains four related matters: First, Islamism in Papua and its threat to communal harmony as the socio-religious context surrounding the writing. Second, the peacebuilding concept within the *Papua Tanah Damai* (Papua Land of Peace) conceptual framework examines the threat of conflict with religious nuances. Third, an interfaith dialogue theoretical framework will be launched to provide insights and an effort to defend the Papua Land of Peace through interfaith dialogue. Fourth, the discourse and practice of interfaith dialogue in Papua.

Islamism and its Threat to Communal Harmony

Historically, Islam was the first religion to arrive in Papua compared to Christianity.¹⁸ However, considering their number, Muslim people were only a minority, and most of their population concentrated in the Fakfak and Raja Ampat regions in West Papua Province. Moreover, Christians dominated most mountainous regions because their missionaries devoted themselves to these remote areas of Papuan Island. The development of Islam in the Papua Province, along and beyond its coastal areas, only started in the 1960s, stimulated mainly by transmigration policies enforced by the Indonesian government. In 1963, the Indonesian government applied a policy to send public servants, teachers, and Muslim preachers to work in Papua. Gradually, some areas with a Christian majority turned to Islam because of the interaction between Papuans and Muslim Indonesian migrants. This fact happened in Walesi, Wamena, Karubaga, and Tolikara.¹⁹

Indonesia has witnessed an Islamisation of the public sphere since the 1998 Reformation Era, along with a growing number of *Shari'a* banks, private Islamic schools, Islamic universities, and mosques.²⁰ Additionally, radical transnational Islamic groups, including *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI) and *Salafi-Wahabi* groups, started to function openly in Indonesia and have stimulated the development of Islamism within the country.²¹ The thorough process has happened in Papua, where it is more noticeable because Papua has long been deemed a predominantly Christian region.

Currently, five transnational Islamic groups are recorded in Papua: (1) *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI), (2) *Salafi Wahabi*, (3) *Jemaah Tabligh*, (4) *Jemaah Ahmadiyah*, and (5) *Global Ikhwan*. In brief, *Jemaah Tabligh* came to Papua in 1988 and is presently in Jayapura. Its members have been spreading to various towns in Papua.²² Based on the fieldwork

¹⁸ Toni Victor M and Wanggai, *Rekonstruksi Sejarah*, 1.

¹⁹ Ridwan Al-Makassary, *Insiden Tolikara & Ja'far Umar Thalib: Kontroversi Mushalla yang "dibakar" dan Drama Jihad di Tanah Papua* (Jayapura: Kementerian Agama Papua, 2017); Suparto Iribaram, "Satu Tungku Tiga Batu: Kerjasama Tiga Agama dalam Kehidupan Beragama di Fakfak (Unpublished Master's Thesis)" (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University, 2011).

²⁰ Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn"* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013), 15.

²¹ Al-Makassary, *Insiden Tolikara*, 11.

²² Farish A. Noor, "The Tablighi Jama'at in West Papua, Indonesia: The Impact of a Lay Missionary Movement in a Plural Multi-Religious and Multi-Ethnic Setting," in *Proselytizing and The Limits Of Religious Pluralism In Contemporary Asia*, ed. J. Finucane and R. M. Feener (Singapore: Springer, 2014), 65–80.

experience in 2018, this group is still actively engaged in the city of Jayapura and its surroundings. Still, they are not seen as radical because they only focus on worship. Meanwhile, *Jemaah Ahmadiyah* emerged in Papua in 2000, and their movement is heavily associated with cases of persecution. Moreover, their mosques are padlocked by conservative Muslims to stop the *Ahmadiyah* from functioning freely because they are deemed to deviate from pure Islam. Meanwhile, the *Global Ikhwan* (now *Darul Arqam*), banned in Malaysia, arrived in Papua in 2013. This global movement encourages economic development by building restaurants and schools in many countries, including Australia and Indonesia. In Papua, the *Ikhwan* has operated mainly in Jayapura. In short, the arrival of some transnational Islamic groups in Papua has heightened conflict as they enhance religious sentiments between Christians and Muslims.²³

Muslims and non-Muslims do not oppose all transnational Islamic organisations mentioned earlier. Muslims and non-Muslims have no disputes with the *Jemaah Tabligh* and *Global Ikhwan*. Instead of with *Jemaah Ahmadiyah*, non-Muslims have issues with conservative Muslims. The *Salafi-Wahabi* Groups and HTI notably have caused tensions with the *Nahdlatul Ulama* and the *Muhammadiyah* and non-Muslims who consider them radical and potentially endangering communal harmony in Papua.

Historically, in June 2008, ten years after the dawn of the Reformation, the International Crisis Group (ICG) released its report on the development of radical movements among both Muslims and Christians. Those categorised radical Christian groups are the Pentecostal-Charismatic/Evangelical Churches. On the other hand, those considered radical transnational Islamic groups are, among others, *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI) and the *Salafi* Movement. These two Islamic groups are characterised by caliphate/jihadi tendencies.²⁴

The emergence of transnational Islamic movements in Papua has caused disharmony among religious communities. Christians are worried about Islamisation, which is denoted by increased Islamic activities, Islamic institutions, and Muslim organisations. One of the latent issues among religious leaders in Papua is Islamisation, as it is, for example, related to Uztaz Fadhlan Garamatan, who is seen as an HTI member in Papua.

Multiple incidents have been recorded, and mosque construction has been halted due to campaigns to change Manokwari into the Gospel City. 2006, the problem regarding the draft regulation for this goal first emerged. In 2007, small-scale conflicts occurred in Manokwari and Kaimana. In addition, various circulars from the Association of Churches in Jayawijaya (2016) and the Communion of Churches in the Jayapura District (2018) on the prohibition of mosque construction triggered tension with Muslims peaking in the Tolikara Incident.²⁵

²³ Ridwan Al-Makassary, *Dialog dan Radikalisme Agama di Tanah Papua* (Jayapura: FKUB Papua, 2016), 71-118.

²⁴ Peter Mandaville, "Muslim Transnational Identity and State Responses In Europe and The UK After 9/11: Political Community, Ideology and Authority," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 491-506, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830802704681>.

²⁵ A detailed incident was fully described in Al-Makassary, 2017.

There are four main threats to maintaining religious tolerance and peace in Papua: over-religious extremism or fanaticism, over-ethnic primordialism, the marginalisation of the Papuan indigenous people, and social change due to the number of migrants settling in Papua.²⁶ In the same vein, several factors are also accounted for the cause of conflict in Papua: migration of Muslim communities from other parts of Indonesia into Papua; the emergence of exclusive groups of Muslims and Christians that view each other as enemies; remnants of former Jihadists from the Moluccas conflict; and the results of extensive development outside Papua.²⁷

Overall, the growing prejudice and suspicion between Muslims and Christians indeed cause their relationship to be highly volatile at the grassroots level. Fortunately, on 5 February 2003, the Papua Land of Peace Declaration was proclaimed, which socially united Papua. Hence, this paper will examine the development of interfaith dialogue from a broader perspective, particularly regarding the growth of radicalism and peacebuilding in Papua amid prolonged political conflict.

Peacebuilding and “Papua Land of Peace”

The term “peacebuilding” has various definitions. However, present-day peacebuilding practices reflect the definition adopted by the United Nations (UN) since the 1990s as action to support structures that will tend to solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict.²⁸

In discussing the phenomenon in Papua, this academic paper refers to John Paul Lederach’s concept of peacebuilding.²⁹ He defines peacebuilding as a “comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships”. In other words, Lederach sees peacebuilding as a process.

The “Papua Land of Peace” Declaration echoes Lederach’s idea of peacebuilding. Notably, the religious leaders in Papua made the declaration as a social construct to avoid conflict and build continuous peace in Papua.³⁰ However, the arrival of transnational Islamic groups challenges the “Papua Land of Peace” notion. To a certain degree, transnational groups have tried to construct a narrative that Christianity with the independence movement and Islam with allegiance to the Indonesian unity (*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*, NKRI).

Undoubtedly, the Reformation Era also experienced communal (ethnoreligious) conflicts that exploded in some regions of Indonesia (among others in Ambon, Sambas,

²⁶ “These Four Roots of Conflict Based on a Strategic Planning And Discussion Initiated by Institut Dian/Interfidei and FKUB Papua in 2015,” n.d.

²⁷ International Crisis Group, *Indonesia*, 1-2.

²⁸ Alpaslan Ozerdem and SungYong Lee, *International Peacebuilding: An Introduction* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 16-20.

²⁹ John Paul Lederach, *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring, and Learning Tool Kit* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2007), 5-7, https://pulte.nd.edu/assets/172927/reflective_peacebuilding_a_planning_monitoring_and_learning_toolkit.pdf.

³⁰ Hernawan, *Torture and Peacebuilding In Indonesia*, 230-240.

and Sampit). In 2001, a peace agreement was enacted to resolve the conflict in the Moluccas that caused *Laskar Jihad* to drop its effect.³¹ The leader of *Laskar Jihad*, Ja'far Umar Thalib, was found planning to exercise its *jihad* in Papua. At the same time, Papua was in turmoil in determining its own political fate because East Timor's success inspired it to become an independent state. Therefore, on 5 February 2003, to anticipate the fears of the emergence of Ja'far and to maintain peace in Papua, religious leaders in Papua decided to declare the 'Papua Land of Peace'.³² The 'Papua Land of Peace' project aims to respond to the abandonment of civil and political rights (CPR), economic, cultural, and social rights (ESCR), excessive security approaches, welfare gaps in Papua, and the destruction of places of worship outside Papua.

To date, some *civil* society groups (CSO) in Papua, such as *Jaringan Damai Papua* (JDP) and *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama Papua/FKUB* [Papuan Religious Harmony Forum], have carried out peacebuilding efforts to achieve positive peace. These CSOs emphasise dialogue to solve the problems in Papua and seek support from the Indonesian government and other CSOs in Papua.

Conceptual Framework of Interfaith Dialogue

Generally, the *protracted* conflict in Papua is more politically and economically nuanced, as mentioned above, primarily related to the roots of the Papua conflict. However, interfaith relations between migrants from outside Muslim-majority Papua and Christian-majority indigenous Papuans have been strained mainly due to the arrival of transnational Islamic groups, such as HTI and Salafy-Wahabby, that teach religious beliefs that are not suitable for a plural Papua. In this context, interfaith dialogue is a way to reduce prejudice and suspicion that can lead to communal tensions and conflicts. The threat of communal conflict is a puzzle that completes the full picture of separatism-flavored conflict in Papua.

The interfaith dialogue is a growing field in International Relations (IR), especially after the 9/11 tragedy, as well as the Madrid Bombing in 2005. In response to these acts, some intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), such as the United Nations, the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation), religious institutions, and the Catholic Church, work to promote interreligious dialogue.

It is essential first to clarify the concepts of religion, conflict, and peace. Religion refers to various forms of thought and behaviour by which the individual becomes conscious or related to the ultimate reality (i.e., God). Each religion generally has four elements: religious values and beliefs, rituals, behavioural norms, and community recognition. Together, these elements form a living culture that affects personal and social identity, behaviour, and thinking.³³ Abu Nimer defines conflict as "a relationship between two or more parties (individual or groups) who have, or think they have, incompatible goals or may have compatible goals but different

³¹ A full story about *Laskar Jihad* was fully described in Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militansi, Dan Pencarian Identitas Di Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2008).

³² Neles Tebay, "'Papua, the Land of Peace'," 345.

³³ Reina C. Neufeldt, "Interfaith Dialogue: Assessing Theories of Change," *Peace & Change* 36, no. 3 (2011): 344–72, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0130.2011.00702.x>.

means, processes, approaches". Meanwhile, peace or dialogue can be understood as "a safe 'container' for people to surface their assumptions, to question their previous perceptions and judgments".³⁴

The relationship between religion and conflict is often comprehended in three ways: cause inspiration or an exacerbating factor in interfaith conflict. The latter suggests that religion is used as a vehicle to activate conflict; however, in truth, there is no pure religious conflict in any country. Some claim religion is the cause of violent conflict when faith (religious teaching scholars) defines the ultimate goal. For example, a group wanted to establish a state based on one religion in a plural society, or when inspiring oppression of communities by embracing different faiths and creating an exclusive identity group as a wall of supremacy. Also, militant religious groups deteriorate the meaning of religion as peace through their Jihadists. Others imply that religion inspires violence by providing absolute ideology and discourse supporting the holy war. Here, religious fighters engage in a cosmic struggle between good and evil, presenting meaning and preventing compromise. Other scholars argue that religion can be misused to aggravate conflict when the political elite manipulates religion to politicise the masses for their interests.³⁵

In strengthening the peacebuilding process, religion is a factor that needs to be considered as the root of conflict, along with economic and political aspects.³⁶ In this light, Appleby stresses that all great religions have traditions that can be activated to legitimise conflict and war and can also function as resources to promote non-violent conflict resolution and peace.³⁷ In some ways, Islamic militant groups seem to use religion to legitimise and justify conflict. For example, the rise of Boko Haram is a significant obstacle to the development and peacebuilding in Nigeria.³⁸ Similarly, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) also use religious injunctions to target both non-Muslim and Shi'ite communities in areas under their influence.³⁹ Interfaith dialogue is an effective way to promote peacebuilding and overcome this problem.

Interfaith dialogue has influenced international relations and vice versa. The following two events describe this phenomenon.⁴⁰ The first one is the controversial speech by Pop Benedict XVI at Rosenburg University in 2006. Through his speech, "Faith, Reason and University: Memories and Reflections", his scholarship delighted the participants who attended the lecture. However, his speech echoed beyond the lecture hall, mainly because the

³⁴ Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Anas Alabbadi, *Interreligious Dialogue Resource Guide* (Austria: KAICIID, 2017), 7, https://www.kaiciid.org/sites/default/files/fellows_manual_electronic_0.pdf.

³⁵ Neufeldt, "Interfaith Dialogue," 346.

³⁶ Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence And Peacebuilding In Islam: Theory And Practice* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 15-20.

³⁷ R.S. Appleby, *The Ambivalence Of The Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 5-7.

³⁸ Abdul-Wasi Moshood and Paul-Sewa Thovoethin, "Insurgency and Development in Nigeria: Assessing Reintegration Efforts in the North-East," *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 12, no. 3 (May 2017): 108-113, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2017.1338157>.

³⁹ Anthony Celso, "Zarqawi's Legacy: Al Qaeda's ISIS 'Renegade,'" *Mediterranean Quarterly* 26 (May 29, 2015): 21-41, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10474552-2914495>.

⁴⁰ "Interreligious Dialogue and International Relations" in *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs*, ed. Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan, and Monica Duffy Toft (London: Oxford University Press, 2012), 204-16.

Pope mentioned some harsh quotations regarding the Prophet Muhammad and Islam that angered Muslims. It took two years to solve the tension after a high-level dialogue between the Vatican and Muslim leaders was conducted. Another event was the accession of Turkey (now Türkiye) into the European Union (EU). It was not an easy process because two influential countries in the EU—Germany and France—believed that Türkiye’s culture did not fit that of the EU, which is dominated by secular values. Also, Islam in Europe has been associated with, among others, extremism, terrorism, and ignorance.

There are some models and paradigms in interfaith dialogue. Smith describes nine discussion models in the United States of America.⁴¹ One is the Persuasion Model, which is considered conservative because it does not promote understanding of “other”. Another example is the Get to Know You Model, deemed “the safest kind of dialogue” because it invites Muslims or Christians to explain what the participants seek to know. Meanwhile, there are three main paradigms or orientations related to the changes that occur through dialogue: theological, political, and peacebuilding.⁴² Essentially, a theological dialogue develops in a study of religion or theology, a political dialogue in political science and international relations, and a peacebuilding dialogue related to conflict transformation.

Interreligious dialogue based on theology aims to understand the clergy, grassroots religious leaders, and theologians, commonly through exchanging papers, discussions, thematic panels, and training. The goal is to understand the “other”. Meanwhile, the political dialogue of religion aims to produce social coexistence or harmony and increases the legitimacy of perceived political actors and processes. On the other hand, based on peacebuilding, interfaith dialogue rests on a previous dialogue model but relies on conflict resolution and transformation. The third type, called religious dialogue, has four purposes: changing attitudes and perceptions of others, building respect and mutual understanding, broadening participation in peacebuilding activities, and building a common framework for action that addresses the roots of conflict.

Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia with an Emphasis on the Papuan Region

This section elucidates the history of interfaith dialogue in Indonesia by emphasising the conditions and status of interfaith dialogue in Papua in response to religious radicalism.

In Indonesia, the ideas and practices of interfaith dialogue have been introduced previously. They emerged in 1969, after the 1965-1966 conflicted religious communities when Muslims and Christians began to experience fragmentation.⁴³ However, the practice of interfaith dialogue is decentralised, and a robust conceptual framework has yet to be found. The late Mukti Ali, a former Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs (1972-1978), intensified interfaith dialogue initiatives in the 1980s. His contributions included being one of the crucial figures who encouraged the establishment of the

⁴¹ Jane Idleman Smith, “Models of Christian-Muslim Dialogue in America,” in *Muslims, Christians, and the Challenge of Interfaith Dialogue*, ed. Smith, Jane I. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 68.

⁴² Neufeldt, “Interfaith Dialogue,” 349.

⁴³ Al-Makassary, *Dialog dan Radikalisme Agama*, 71-118.

Comparative Study of Religion at the IAIN *Sunan Kalijaga* campus, Yogyakarta. However, the state constructed the notion of dialogue between religions at that time in a narrower sense: to create interfaith ties that were still understood but also limit religious influence among religions. This means people with specific religious identities must have a spirit of tolerance without being influenced by religious teachings other than those of their faith. This suggests that interfaith dialogue is more of a theological dialogue developed in the study of religion or theology. As mentioned above, the goal of this model is only to understand the “other”. However, perhaps its weakness is that it does not address the political aspects that are often the roots of the conflict that occurred.

Moreover, the spaces for interfaith dialogue constructed during the New Order regime were more oriented towards structural rather than cultural approaches, resulting in a shift of cultural wealth aspects already inherent in people’s lives. As a result, inter-religious discourse further strengthened formal and communal religious attributes and identities to marginalise the cultural elements that are also important to develop. Society tends to have “religious” rather than “cultural” awareness. As a result, many lose their cultural identity and local wisdom, often deemed not an essential part of religion.

Interfaith dialogue in Papua was a phenomenon after the 1998 New Order era, as the transnational Islam movement surfaced and threatened communal harmony in Papua. Historically, at the height of the communal conflict between Muslims and Christians from 1999 to 2001 in Ambon, the emergence of a conflict between religions in Papua was feared around the same period.

Therefore, to prevent a similar conflict, the religious leaders who are members of the Forum for Harmony in Religion [*Forum Konsultasi Para Pemimpin Agama, FKPPA*] declared Papua Land of Peace [*Papua Tanah Damai*] on 5 February 2003.⁴⁴ The declaration is commemorated annually in Papua on the same date. Moreover, the date also refers to the day when the Gospel first arrived on Mansinam Island, Papua, on 5 February 1855, and has since been marked as a facultative holiday.

The Declaration was triggered by communal conflicts in Eastern Indonesia, especially in Ambon and Moluccas. The Declaration is an effort to prevent conflicts from entering Papua. In addition, criticism of the government's failure to deliver welfare, especially in economic, social, and cultural rights, and excessive use of violence. Fortunately, communal conflicts abated in Indonesia, and Papua survived the domino effect. Later, FKUB, formed by the government, participated in maintaining harmony safely.

For the Papua context, *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama Papua/FKUB* [Papuan Religious Harmony Forum] and *Jaringan Damai Papua* [The Network of Papua Peace] can play a significant role by involving interfaith religious leaders in supporting the peacebuilding process. The Tolikara incident on 17 July 2015 and the polemic

⁴⁴ “Before FKUB Was Established in Papua, Religious Leaders in Papua Were in an Organisation Called as FKPPA. Then, FKUB Replaced FKPPA and All Members of FKPPA Became Members of FKUB. There Are No Records about FKPPA,,” n.d.

surrounding the construction of a mosque in Manokwari City shocked the nation. Papua and West Papua remain a model of harmony with local wisdom embedded since more than hundreds of years ago, with *Satu Tungku Tiga Batu* and respect for houses of worship that are believed to have a negative impact on the culprits of the previously mentioned incidents.⁴⁵ FKUB has played a significant role in facing this religious intolerance, including initiating a peace agreement between GIDI and Tolikara Muslims on 29 July 2015. At the city level, the *Hizbut-Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI) group is obliged to apply for a permit from FKUB whenever they need to hold activities involving the public. However, even when a crowd permit is requested, obtaining one for a grand caliphate parade, for instance, seems impossible, considering the movement undermines the sovereignty of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia with the issue of caliphate.

The success of FKUB in maintaining harmony also includes networking with other CSOs. FKUB received funding from *Cordaid* before it was banned from operating in Papua. This allowed the forum to actively implement various programs actively, even conducting a comparative study in Mindanao, a turbulent region in the Philippines. The forum is currently networking with the Yogyakarta *Interfidei* Foundation to carry out harmony activities through FGDs, seminars, and conferences locally and nationally.

Following are some FKUB activities, awarded third place to receive the Harmony Award and coaching funds from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. First, FKUB Papua routinely conducts information sessions to nurture harmony in various cities in Papua. Secondly, FKUB Papua proactively seeks to maintain religious harmony, using peace, dialogue, comparative studies, and knowledge exchange. Third, FKUB Papua networked with similar foundations striving for tolerance and harmony. However, this cooperation has not reached optimal in Papua, as many foundations still tend to be decentralised.

In the context of the homeland, efforts to make interfaith dialogue an instrument of peace, especially conflict resolution, have begun to be put into practice. In Papua, credit must be given to FKUB as they often serve as moral goalkeepers to prevent religious conflict. For example, they put exceptional effort into the *qui vive* for post-conflict local elections prone to religious resistance and mediating some religious strains. This should be appreciated, mainly because they still work despite the limited, yet to maximise funding from provincial and city governments. In this regard, FKUB Papua has played a significant role in education, advocacy, clerical diplomacy, observation, assistance, data seekers, good offices, conciliation, witness provision, facilitation/mediation, and witness to the truth.

One model of interfaith dialogue that is sufficient and addresses issues of theology, politics, and peacebuilding without ignoring the role of other similar organisations is carried out by the DIAN/Interfidei Institute. As one of the co-coordinators of the *Jaringan*

⁴⁵ "Literal Trans 'Satu Tungku Tiga Batu' Means 'One Furnace Three Stones' Philosophy; the 'Furnace' Symbolises Life, While the 'Three Stones' Are Symbols for 'You', 'Me', and 'She/He', Which Draws Different Religions, Ethnicities, and Social Statuses in under One Brotherhood.," n.d.

Lintas Iman Indonesia or JAI [Indonesian Interfaith Network] in Papua, the author is involved in the work of the DIAN/Interfidei Institute, such as creating modules, training, conferences, etc., in Papua. The author holds that interfaith dialogue can be a vehicle for maximising religion as a source of peace.

Spaces to meet for interfaith dialogue must be developed to eliminate prejudice and suspicion to ensure that the dialogue is not only limited to recognising other people's religions but is expected to work together to overcome practical problems concerning all religious communities. However, it is crucial to remember that the best dialogue model for one community depends on the socio-political context of the community.

Conclusion

Before 1998, the narrative of religious life in Papua was originally harmonious. To date, it has been in danger when the transnational Islamic movement, partly radical, attempted to create an Islamic state and caliphate, which created tension and even a threat to communal harmony. Although radical transnational Islamist movements, particularly HTI, have been banned in May 2017 in Indonesia, including in Papua, the movement still operates underground. This needs to be studied further. Without appropriate interventions, the transnational Islamic movement can exacerbate peacebuilding in Papua in the long run.

The relationship among different religious communities in Papua is unique and coloured by various tensions, proving that the interfaith dialogue has yet to help holistic peace and harmony agendas. This happens because the dialogue approach still adopts conventional models that do not massively involve grassroots religious leaders. Moreover, interfaith dialogue activists focus more on the theological and ideological aspects rather than working together to solve social problems. Therefore, interfaith dialogue initiatives in Papua must be further strengthened by engaging grassroots religious leaders and considering issues beyond the ideological and theological ones. It is time for the interfaith dialogue agenda to influence more inter-religious collaboration to solve social problems, including promoting dialogue for peace.

To conclude, the author maintains that the Islamisation process continues and affects the Papuan region despite the ban on HTI mass organisations in May 2017 at the national level. Papuan religious leaders sought to stem radical Islamisation by seeking peace through interfaith dialogue. The interfaith dialogue initiated by the FKUB has relatively successfully maintained communal harmony among religious communities. But the future of communal harmony in Papua remains in question.

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