

Pancasila, Human Rights, and Democracy in the Era of Globalisation: Between Idealism and Reality in Papua

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the implementation of freedom of expression and democracy in Papua, with particular emphasis on the structural, social, political, and cultural challenges that shape the region's democratic quality. A qualitative approach was employed through an extensive literature review and document analysis, encompassing statutory regulations, official state reports, academic publications, and media coverage. The findings reveal that, although Indonesia's legal framework guarantees freedom of expression as an integral part of human rights, its realization in Papua faces multiple barriers, including limited access to information, persistent tensions between security forces and local communities, and perceived injustices in development policies and resource management. Political discourse is often polarized, reinforced by ethnic identity dynamics and a history of conflict, thereby constraining the climate for civil liberties. The study concludes that enhancing democratic quality in Papua requires a multidimensional strategy, encompassing stronger civil rights protection, government transparency, inclusive development, and participatory dialogue mechanisms. These findings underscore the need for coordinated efforts among the central government, local authorities, civil society, and the international community to secure a substantive and equitable democracy in Papua.

Keywords: democracy, freedom of expression, human rights, special autonomy

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Introduction

The era of globalization—characterized by rapid advancements in information technology, deepening economic interconnectivity, and swift cross-cultural exchange—has exerted a profound influence on political and social systems across nations, including Indonesia. This global current not only fosters

economic growth but also amplifies demands for the adoption of universal democratic values and the enforcement of internationally recognised human rights (Held & McGrew, 2007). Nevertheless, for Indonesia, the challenges posed by globalisation cannot be divorced from the imperative to safeguard national unity and cultural diversity, a responsibility that is philosophically anchored in Pancasila as the nation's ideological foundation and guiding principle (Kaelan, 2013).

Pancasila places the principles of just and civilised humanity, national unity, and social justice at the very foundation of state governance (Notonagoro, 1984). These principles presuppose a delicate equilibrium between individual rights and collective interests, as well as between civil liberties and national stability (Latif, 2011). However, the practical realisation of these values often encounters profound challenges, particularly when confronted with the complex political and social dynamics of regions possessing distinctive historical, cultural, and political characteristics, such as Papua.

Papua has long been one of the regions in Indonesia most frequently placed under the spotlight in discussions of human rights violations and the practice of democracy (International Crisis Group, 2011). Amnesty International's 2023 report documents a series of human rights abuses in Papua throughout 2024–2025, including the shooting of peaceful demonstrators, arbitrary arrests of activists, restrictions on journalistic access, and intimidation of the civilian population (Kompas.com, March 31, 2023). Such actions are often justified by the state as measures to safeguard territorial integrity and maintain national security (Al-Rahab, 2015). However, they simultaneously raise critical debates over the consistency of Pancasila's values in the actual conduct of political and security affairs.

Within the framework of Pancasila democracy, freedom of expression is recognised as a constitutional right that must be exercised responsibly (Kaelan, 2013). However, in the context of Papua, this freedom is frequently curtailed on grounds of security and perceived threats of national disintegration, thereby raising critical questions about the limits of liberty and the protection of human rights in Indonesia. The predominance of a security-oriented approach, in turn, risks eroding public trust in the state and exacerbating social tensions (Chauvel & Bhakti, 2004).

Conversely, globalisation has expanded the scope of international scrutiny over human rights policies in Papua. International organisations, global media, and transnational civil society networks play a pivotal role in drawing attention to the situation. This dynamic places Indonesia in a strategic dilemma: on one hand, it seeks to safeguard national sovereignty from foreign interference; on the other, it must demonstrate a genuine commitment to the international human rights norms it has ratified (Human Rights Monitor, April 7, 2025).

Scholarly inquiries into the relationship between Pancasila, human rights, and democracy in Papua are abundant, yet most have tended to focus separately on either human rights violations or political conflict (Al-Rahab, 2015; International Crisis Group, 2011). There remains significant scope for research that examines how Pancasila's values can serve as both an ideological and practical framework for bridging the gap between normative idealism and the realities of implementing human rights and democracy in the region. Consequently, this study holds strategic relevance not only for enriching the academic literature but also for offering policy recommendations that are more humanistic and aligned with Indonesia's constitutional principles.

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilising library research and document analysis as its primary methods. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research focuses on developing an in-depth understanding of the complex and context-specific dynamics underlying the relationship between Pancasila's values, human rights enforcement, and democratic practices in Papua (Creswell, 2014).

The data for this research consist of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data are drawn from official state documents, including the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, People's Consultative Assembly decrees related to Pancasila, legislation concerning human rights and security, as well as reports issued by official bodies such as the National Commission on Human Rights. Secondary data are obtained from academic literature, scholarly journals, books, reports from international organisations (e.g., Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch), and credible online media coverage concerning the human rights and democracy situation in Papua.

Data collection techniques were carried out through: (1) Library Research, by reviewing relevant literature to understand the conceptual framework of Pancasila, human rights, and democracy within the Indonesian context; and (2) Document Analysis, by identifying and examining legal documents, government policies, and reports from both national and international institutions that contain factual data on the situation in Papua.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis, a process involving the categorisation, coding, and interpretation of document contents to identify patterns, themes, and relationships among relevant variables (Krippendorff, 2018). The analysis followed an inductive process, beginning with data collection, followed by data reduction, data presentation, and concluding with the formulation of findings (Miles et al., 2014).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study employed source triangulation, namely by cross-checking information obtained from various types of sources—such as legal documents, institutional reports, academic publications, and credible media—in order to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the information (Patton et al., 2015).

This method is expected to provide a comprehensive depiction of the gap between the normative idealism of Pancasila and the realities of human rights and democracy implementation in Papua, while simultaneously offering policy recommendations grounded in Pancasila's values.

Findings

Analysis of legal documents, reports from national and international institutions, academic publications, and credible media coverage indicates that human rights and democracy issues in Papua have reached a critical juncture, testing the consistency of Pancasila's value implementation. According to Amnesty International (2023), between 2022 and 2023, there were at least 61 documented incidents of serious human rights violations in the Papua region. These violations include the shooting of peaceful demonstrators, arbitrary arrests and detentions of activists, restrictions on journalistic access and work, intimidation of civilians, and the closure of public spaces for expressing political aspirations. Such incidents reveal a persistent reliance on a security-oriented approach rather than prioritising dialogue and socio-economic development. These findings reinforce Al-Rahab's (2015) analysis that coercive measures tend to perpetuate cycles of violence and deepen the distrust of Papuan communities toward the central government.

Furthermore, data from the Central Statistics Agency (2023) reveal that poverty rates in Papua (26.56%) and West Papua (21.33%) are the highest in Indonesia. The persistently high levels of poverty, coupled with limited infrastructure, education, and healthcare services, underscore a significant development gap compared to other regions of the country. This structural disparity reinforces perceptions of injustice and forms a backdrop that complicates the resolution of political and security issues in Papua. This condition aligns with Rawls's (1971) view that a political system can only be deemed just if it provides equal opportunities for all citizens, particularly those who are least advantaged.

From the perspective of civil liberties, the findings indicate that the space for expressing opinions and assembling in Papua remains severely constrained. Peaceful demonstrations are frequently dispersed by security forces on the grounds of disturbing public order or threatening territorial integrity. Political activities touching on issues of independence or referendums often result in criminalisation, in some cases accompanied by physical violence. Human Rights Watch (2023) reports that restrictions on freedom of expression in Papua are often carried out without clear legal procedures, raising concerns over the persistence of impunity within the security apparatus.

The Papua issue has also drawn increasing attention from the international community. The United Nations, through its Human Rights Council (Human Rights Monitor, April 7, 2025), has expressed concern over restrictions on access for independent observers and foreign journalists to the region. While the Indonesian government has reaffirmed its commitment to human rights, such restrictive measures are viewed as counterproductive to the principles of transparency and state accountability in the eyes of the global community. This situation reflects a strategic dilemma for Indonesia: on one hand, it seeks to preserve sovereignty without foreign interference; on the other, it must demonstrate a genuine commitment to the human rights principles it has ratified.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate a substantial gap between the normative values of Pancasila and their actual implementation in Papua. The second principle—Just and Civilised Humanity—and the

fifth principle—Social Justice for All the People of Indonesia—remain only partially realised in the context of human rights enforcement and democratic practice in the region. This situation is further exacerbated by development disparities, restrictions on civil liberties, and the state's tendency to prioritise security-oriented approaches over participatory and dialogic ones. These findings underscore the urgent need for a policy reorientation grounded substantively, rather than merely symbolically, in Pancasila's values, so that Pancasila democracy can be fully and equitably realised in Papua.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the implementation of Pancasila's values in Papua continues to face a range of structural, cultural, and political challenges. Structurally, there remains a substantial development gap compared to other regions of Indonesia. Basic infrastructure—such as road access, electricity, and public services—remains unevenly distributed, thereby affecting community participation in democratic processes and the enforcement of human rights. This disparity also shapes Papuans' perceptions of the state's presence, with segments of the population feeling that the social justice principle embodied in Pancasila's fifth tenet has yet to be fully realised.

From a cultural perspective, Papuan society possesses a strong system of local values, customs, and traditions that at times run parallel to, yet may also come into tension with, state policies. For example, the practice of customary deliberation has long served as a traditional mechanism for dispute resolution within Papuan communities, but it is not always accommodated within the framework of nationally applicable formal law. Such disharmony can undermine the effectiveness of implementing Pancasila democracy, which emphasises deliberation to achieve consensus as enshrined in its fourth principle.

On the political dimension, dynamics in Papua are often shaped by issues of separatism, security, and identity politics. These factors complicate the creation of a healthy democratic climate, in which political participation should be encouraged through freedom of expression, opinion, and assembly, yet is instead hindered by political and security tensions. Communities critical of government policies at times face restrictions on their civic space, fostering the perception that democratic values are not being implemented consistently.

In addition, challenges to the implementation of human rights in Papua are closely tied to the domain of law enforcement. In several cases, reports of human rights violations—whether individual or systemic—have not always been addressed with adequate transparency and accountability. This can create the perception that the principle of just and civilised humanity, as mandated by Pancasila's second tenet, has yet to become a genuine priority in governance practices in Papua.

Nevertheless, this study also identifies positive initiatives, both from the central and regional governments, aimed at strengthening Pancasila's values and human rights through educational programs, intercultural dialogue, and local economic empowerment. For instance, involving traditional leaders, religious figures, and youth in Pancasila socialisation programs can help bridge communication gaps between the government and local communities. If implemented consistently and sustainably, such efforts hold the potential to strengthen social cohesion and build public trust in the state.

Accordingly, this discussion affirms that the implementation of Pancasila, human rights, and democracy in Papua is not merely a matter of regulation or policy, but also involves the integration of national values with local socio-cultural realities. An adaptive, participatory, and context-sensitive strategy is required to ensure that these values are meaningfully actualised and their benefits tangibly experienced by all segments of Papua's population.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the application of Pancasila values, human rights principles, and the democratic system in Papua continues to face substantial challenges in the context of globalisation. Normatively, Indonesia's legal framework guarantees the protection of human rights and political freedoms while positioning Pancasila as the ideological foundation uniting all citizens. In practice, however, the realisation of these values is often hindered by socio-economic disparities, limited access to education, and low levels of public participation in political processes. The findings reveal a misalignment between the ideals enshrined in the Constitution and Pancasila and the social realities in Papua, where structural injustices, human rights violations, and social conflicts remain prevalent. Globalisation, on one hand, offers

opportunities through increased information access and engagement with international networks; on the other, it accelerates the flow of ideologies, global public opinion, and demands for democratisation, which may trigger political frictions. Therefore, strengthening civic education grounded in Pancasila values, empowering local communities, reforming governance structures, and ensuring consistent law enforcement are essential steps toward enabling Papua to achieve a democratic order that aligns with human rights principles and Indonesia's national identity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed. The central government is encouraged to strengthen an equitable development approach in Papua by prioritising the equal distribution of infrastructure, education access, and healthcare services, while ensuring that the Special Autonomy policy is genuinely implemented in line with the aspirations and needs of the local population. Regional governments, in collaboration with law enforcement agencies, should enhance transparency and accountability in budget management, development programs, and law enforcement, while adopting dialogical and human-centred approaches in addressing potential conflicts to safeguard the human rights of all citizens. Educational institutions and civil society organisations are advised to intensify civic education and the contextual application of Pancasila values, tailoring learning materials to Papua's socio-cultural realities, and fostering active public participation in democratic processes, accompanied by independent oversight of public policy. Meanwhile, the international community and the media are expected to maintain objectivity in reporting on Papua-related issues, promote peaceful dialogue, and direct assistance toward strengthening local capacity, empowering the economy, and protecting fundamental rights—without infringing upon national sovereignty.

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