

From Electoral Competition to Human Security Crisis: Polarization of the 2024 Puncak Jaya Regional Election in the Perspective of Human Security and National Security

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Abstract

This article examines the 2024 local election in Puncak Jaya Regency as a case in which electoral competition escalated into a human security crisis and tested national security capacity in managing local political conflict. Using a human security approach, the article places citizens, rather than only the state and electoral institutions, as the primary referent object of security. The study applies a qualitative case-study method based on document analysis of Constitutional Court decisions, General Elections Commission documents, information from the Election Supervisory Body, credible news reports, local socioeconomic data, and recent academic literature on electoral violence, the noken system, social conflict, and national security. The findings show that the Puncak Jaya conflict cannot be reduced to a dispute over vote counting. It reflects the accumulation of elite polarization, vulnerability in electoral logistics governance, intimidation, identity-based and local-network contestation, and limited state protection for citizens. Violence involving clashes between supporters, house burnings, citizen evacuation, sabotage or seizure of electoral logistics, injuries, and fatalities demonstrates the collapse of three layers of human security: freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity. From a national security perspective, the case confirms that electoral integrity in conflict-prone regions is part of democratic national resilience. The article proposes a mitigation model that integrates electoral early warning, citizen protection, logistics security, customary de-escalation, and post-conflict recovery.

Keywords: local election, Papua, Puncak Jaya, human security, national security, electoral violence, noken system.

A. Introduction

Regional head elections (Pilkada) are often read as a local democratic procedure to manage the peaceful transition of power. However, in certain contexts, especially in regions with a history of conflict, limited state infrastructure, social inequality, and strong identity polarization, regional elections can turn into an arena for authority that produces fear, economic vulnerability, and the destruction of social cohesion. In other words, elections are

not only a mechanism of political administration, but also a space where human security is tested in real terms. It is at this point that the relationship between elections, human security, and national security becomes relevant to be seriously studied.

The case of the 2024 Puncak Jaya Regency Regional Election in Central Papua shows that electoral disputes can develop into violent social conflicts. Field reports and legal documents show that there was mass mobilization between the camps of candidate pairs, mutual attacks, the use of arrows and sharp weapons, house burning, evacuation of residents, sabotage or deprivation of election logistics, injuries, and fatalities. The Constitutional Court (MK) in the case of disputes over the results of the Puncak Jaya Regional Election even noted that there were allegations of wars between support groups, intimidation, logistical sabotage, security disturbances, and threats to the safety of citizens. The Constitutional Court then annulled the decision of the Puncak Jaya Regency KPU on the election results and ordered a re-recapitulation for 22 districts by excluding four districts that were considered problematic.¹

This article departs from the argument that the violence of the Puncak Jaya Regional Election is not sufficiently analyzed through the framework of disputes over voting results or procedural violations alone. A more adequate framework is to see it as a human security crisis that also has implications for national security. In the classical approach, national security is often understood as the capacity of the state to protect national interests from internal and external threats. However, the critical security approach expands the question from 'how the country is safe' to 'who is secured'. This shift is important because civilians, health workers, school children, election organizers, and local communities are the direct victims of the impact of electoral violence.

The academic significance of this article lies in the effort to bring together the literature on electoral violence with the perspective of human security and national security theory. Studies on electoral violence have shown that electoral violence is not a random disturbance, but can be related to elite competition, patronage networks, institutional vulnerability, and claims to political resources. Meanwhile, the human security literature emphasizes that threats to citizens are not always in the form of open war, but can be present through fear, damage to homes, loss of livelihoods, social dislocation, political intimidation, and disconnection of access to basic services. In the context of Papua, this dimension is increasingly complex due to the presence of the noken system, difficult geographical terrain, a history of violence, and state-society relations that are not always perceived as neutral.

The research questions of this article are: how does the 2024 Puncak Jaya Regional Election show the transformation of electoral conflicts into human security crises, and what are its implications for the concept of Indonesia's national security? To answer this question, this article compiles four objectives. First, to map the chronology and anatomy of the 2024 Puncak Jaya Regional Election conflict. Second, to explain how electoral polarization,

¹ ANTARA, "Clash of supporters of the regent candidate in Puncak Jaya: 40 houses burned, 94 residents injured," November 29, 2024; General Election Supervisory Agency, Vulnerability Mapping for the 2024 Simultaneous Elections (Bawaslu RI, 2024); Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia, Overview of Decision Number 305/PHPU. BUP-XXIII/2024 concerning Disputes over the Results of the 2024 Regent and Deputy Regent Elections of Puncak Jaya Regency (2025).

logistical governance, the noken system, and intergroup relations trigger an escalation of violence. Third, analyze the impact of conflict on freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity. Fourth, formulate recommendations for mitigating electoral conflicts that are more sensitive to human security and democratic national resilience.

Electoral violence can be understood as a form of political violence that occurs in the election cycle, both before, during, and after voting. Birch, Daxecker, and Høglund (2020) emphasized that electoral violence has a distinctive dynamic because it is directly related to the struggle for office, control over institutions, and the ability of actors to influence political outcomes through threats or coercion. This kind of violence can target specific voters, candidates, organizers, officials, witnesses, or communities. It can appear in the form of intimidation, physical attacks, arson, destruction of facilities, or logistical seizures.²

In the Indonesian context, electoral violence cannot be separated from the post-decentralized local political structure. Tadjoeuddin (2012) shows that regional election conflicts in Indonesia are related to the quality of local democracy, the relationship between candidates and organizing institutions, and tensions that arise after voting. Harish and Toha (2019) develop a typology of electoral violence in Indonesia by distinguishing the targets of violence, including voters, candidates, and state institutions. Berenschot (2020) further shows that patronage networks can be an infrastructure for violent mobilization, especially when electoral competition is intertwined with access to public resources and positions.³

In the case of Papua, electoral violence needs to be placed in a more specific configuration. The noken system, which is recognized to some extent as an electoral practice based on local wisdom, is not always synonymous with violence. However, when it is applied in situations of elite polarization, weak oversight, information gaps, and low trust in organizers, such collective mechanisms can become an arena of political claims that are difficult to verify individually. Recent literature on the noken system places it as a complex local democratic practice: on the one hand it is a recognition of the political culture of indigenous Papuans; on the other hand it demands a very careful design of surveillance so as not to turn into an instrument of elite domination or the disenfranchisement of citizens.⁴

Human security emerged as a criticism of the security approach that is too state-centered. UNDP (1994, 2022) places human security on two main pillars: freedom from fear and freedom from want, which are then expanded to include freedom to live in dignity. With

² Sarah Birch, Ursula Daxecker, dan Kristine Høglund, "Electoral Violence: An Introduction," *Journal of Peace Research* 57, no. 1 (2020): 3–14.

³ M. Z. Tadjoeuddin, "Electoral Conflict and the Maturity of Local Democracy in Indonesia: Testing the Modernisation Hypothesis," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* 17, no. 3 (2012): 476–497; S. P. Harish dan R. J. Toha, "A New Typology of Electoral Violence: Insights from Indonesia," *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2019); Ward Berenschot, "Patterned Pogroms: Patronage Networks as Infrastructure for Electoral Violence in India and Indonesia," *Journal of Peace Research* 57, no. 1 (2020): 171–184.

⁴ N. Nashrullah, "The Challenges of Holding the 2024 National Simultaneous Elections and Regional Elections in the Four New Provinces of Papua," *Lex Renaissance* 8, no. 2 (2023): 214–233; K. Nugroho, "Conflict Transformation and Electoral Justice in Regional Elections in the Land of Papua," *Electoral Governance: Indonesian Election Governance Journal* 4, no. 1 (2022): 1–24; M. Pure, "Implementation of the Noken System in Papua," *KERUDI: Journal of Government Science* 10, no. 1 (2025); A. Razak, "Noken System in General Elections in Papuan Customary Territories," *Journal of Politics and Regional Government* (2025); T. Yuwono, B. Kurniawan, et al., "Noken System in General Elections in the Papua Region (1971–2024)," *JISIP University of Jambi* 9, no. 2 (2025): 184–200.

this framework, security threats are not only seen as military invasions or armed rebellions, but also collective violence, poverty, loss of access to basic services, erosion of political freedom, and the collapse of citizens' sense of security. The human security approach is relevant to analyze the Puncak Jaya Regional Election because the violence that occurred not only undermines the legitimacy of the election results, but also threatens people's daily lives.⁵

The critical security approach shifts the focus from *the security of the state* to the question of *whose security*. In this perspective, human security is defined as the liberation of human beings from physical, structural, and personal threats. Thus, when elections cause casualties, houses burn, health workers are evacuated, schools are damaged, citizens are homeless, and election organizers work under pressure, the problem no longer stops at election administration. It has become a matter of human security and at the same time a test for the state to protect its citizens.

The human security framework is also important because it rejects the rigid separation between political security and socio-economic security. Residents whose houses are burned down not only lose property, but also lose their living space, sense of security, social networks, and the ability to continue economic activities. Citizens who experience intimidation not only lose political choices, but also lose their dignity as democratic subjects. Therefore, human security analysis helps to show the humanitarian costs of electoral conflicts that are often hidden behind the technical language of voting disputes.

Classical national security theory places the state as the main actor obliged to safeguard national interests and protect territories, institutions, and citizens from internal and external threats. In a realist approach, national security is understood primarily as the state's ability to survive and control threats. However, liberal and constructivist perspectives expand this understanding. Liberalism emphasizes shared security, cooperation, the role of institutions, and the de-securitization of social life from military logic. Constructivism asserts that threats are not always objective, but rather are shaped through social identities, norms, perceptions, and interactions.⁶

In the context of the Puncak Jaya Regional Elections, constructivism helps explain why electoral competition can be perceived as an existential threat between groups. Candidate pairs are not simply seen as contestants of political administration, but as representations of honor, access to resources, group recognition, and the future of social networks. When political opponents are produced as parties who will take rights, dignity, and control over resources, the boundaries between competition and hostility become blurred. At the same time, conflict theory suggests that heterogeneous and dynamic societies always have the potential for conflict, especially when there are conflicting claims to scarce status, power, and resources.

⁵ United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security (Oxford University Press, 1994); United Nations Development Programme, New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene: Demanding Greater Solidarity (UNDP, 2022).

⁶ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Wheatsheaf Books, 1983); Margaretha Hanita, *National Security Theory*, teaching materials, Defense University of the Republic of Indonesia, no year.

Social conflict can be understood as a process that moves from natural differences between humans, develops into a dispute when the parties claim each other's rights to an interest, and then escalates into conflict when the practice of disenfranchisement occurs. If not managed, conflict can lead to violence, either in the form of actions, words, attitudes, or structures that damage social life (Malik et al., 2003; Fisher et al., 2001).⁷

In Indonesia, the sources of social conflict are often related to economic inequality, agrarian conflicts, policy dissatisfaction, cultural and religious differences, and identity politics polarization. Sources of conflict can also be stereotypes, prejudices, stigmatization, conflicts of interest, value conflicts, data conflicts, and structural conflicts such as access inequality and policies that are perceived as unfair. This framework is particularly relevant for reading Puncak Jaya because the Pilkada conflict takes place on top of a social structure that has stored historical, economic, and political vulnerabilities.

The World Economic Forum (2025) ranks state-based armed conflict as the number one global risk for 2025, while misinformation and disinformation and societal polarization are among the top risks on the short-term horizon. Although the report is global in scale, its relevance for the study lies in the relationship between polarization, erosion of trust, and violence. When societies are divided, information moves through closed networks, rumors are easily believed, and formal institutions lose moral authority. In the context of local elections, this can accelerate the escalation from protests to collective violence.⁸

The violence of the Regional Elections in Puncak Jaya shows how these global risks manifest at the local level. Polarization not only means differences in political choices, but also social divisions that make compromises difficult. In such situations, logistical issues, vote counting, or fraudulent claims can turn into triggers for violence because each camp reads the actions of the opponent as a threat to its political and social security.

B. Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative method with a single case study design. The 2024 Puncak Jaya Regency Regional Election was chosen purposively because it meets three criteria. First, conflicts occur in the Regional Election cycle and are directly related to the contestation of candidate pairs, logistical governance, and determination of results. Second, conflicts cause humanitarian impacts in the form of injuries, fatalities, house burnings, evacuation of residents, and damage to facilities. Third, this case has a strong documentary footprint through the Constitutional Court's decision, KPU decisions, Bawaslu information, credible media reports, and regional statistical documents.

Research data was collected through document studies. Primary sources include the Constitutional Court Decision Number 305/PHPU. BUP-XXIII/2024, the decision of the Puncak Jaya Regency KPU as a follow-up to the Constitutional Court's decision, as well as official documents related to election insecurity. Secondary sources include ANTARA news, MetroTV, local media containing information from officials or official institutions, BPS data

⁷ I. Malik, N. Fauzi, B. Wijardjo, and A. G. Royo, *Balancing Power: A Choice of Conflict Resolution Strategies for Natural Resources* (Jakarta: Yayasan Kemala, 2003); see also Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (SAGE, 1996).

⁸ World Economic Forum, *The Global Risks Report 2025*, 20th edition (World Economic Forum, 2025).

from Puncak Jaya Regency, World Economic Forum reports, UNDP documents on human security, as well as academic journals on electoral violence, the noken system, social conflicts, and national security.

The analysis was carried out through three stages. First, the researcher compiled a chronology of the conflict based on the time of the incident and the source of the data. Second, the researcher conducted thematic coding with the categories of polarization, election logistics, noken system, physical violence, socio-economic damage, intimidation, and institutional response. Third, the researcher interpreted the findings using the framework of human security and national security. Validity was increased through triangulation of sources, namely comparing legal documents, official data, and credible news. The limitation of this study is that it has not used field interviews, so the interpretation is focused on available and verifiable documentary data.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Anatomy of the 2024 Puncak Jaya Regional Election Conflict

The 2024 Puncak Jaya Regional Election brings together two main candidate pairs, namely Yuni Wonda-Mus Kogoya and Miren Kogoya-Mendi Wonerengga. The conflict did not arise suddenly after the results were determined, but developed since the voting and vote counting phases. ANTARA reported that on November 27, 2024, there was a clash between the masses of supporters that started from the ballot box issue and developed into mutual attacks. In initial reports, dozens of houses were burned and dozens of residents were injured. Bawaslu RI also delved into the triggers of the riot which included mutual arrows and burning houses, as well as exploring the possibility of taking ballots or ballot boxes.⁹

The Constitutional Court's decision then provides a legal framework to read the conflict. In the overview of Decision Number 305/PHPU. BUP-XXIII/2024, the applicant postulates violations in logistics distribution, voting and vote counting, determination of results colored by violence, fraud, intimidation, logistical sabotage, and wars between supporters. The Constitutional Court stated that there had been sabotage and logistical seizures in four districts, namely Mulia, Lumo, Tingginambut, and Gurage. The Constitutional Court finally canceled the Puncak Jaya Regency KPU Decision Number 476 of 2024 and ordered a recapitulation for 22 districts without including the votes from the four districts.¹⁰

The Puncak Jaya Regency KPU Decision Number 261 of 2025 then determined the results of the follow-up to the Constitutional Court's decision. The Yuni Wonda-Mus Kogoya pair received 77,296 votes, while Miren Kogoya-Mendi Wonerengga received

⁹ ANTARA, "Bawaslu Investigates the Triggers of the Puncak Jaya Regional Election Riots to Mutual Arrows and House Burning," November 27, 2024; ANTARA, "Clashes of Regent Supporters in Puncak Jaya: 40 Houses Burned, 94 Residents Injured," November 29, 2024; General Election Supervisory Agency, Mapping Vulnerabilities for the 2024 Simultaneous Elections.

¹⁰ Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia, Summary of Decision Number 305/PHPU. BUP-XXIII/2024 concerning Disputes over the Results of the Election of Regents and Deputy Regents of Puncak Jaya Regency in 2024 (2025).

65,787 votes. The next dispute filed after the determination was not accepted by the Constitutional Court because the applicant did not meet the formal requirements for the vote difference threshold. However, legal settlement does not necessarily erase the social impact of the conflict. From March to April 2025, media reports still recorded aftershocks, casualties, injuries, and burned buildings. Customary reconciliation through doli splitting in May 2025 is an important point to reduce escalation and reopen social space between supporters.¹¹

Table 1. Brief chronology of the 2024-2025 Puncak Jaya Regional Election conflict

Time	Events	Human security impact	Main source
27-28 November 2024	Clashes between masses of supporters; mutual arrows; burning houses; alleged ballot box problems/logistics.	Fear of residents, injured victims, evacuation or evacuation of residents and health workers, damage to homes.	ANTARA; Bawaslu RI
24 February 2025	The Constitutional Court granted part of the request, canceled the previous KPU results, and ordered a re-recapitulation of 22 districts without four problematic districts.	The crisis of legitimacy of election results; the need to secure the recap process.	Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia, Decision 305/PHPU. BUP-XXIII/2024
March-April 2025	Aftermath of violence was reported, including casualties, injuries, and burned buildings.	The security crisis continued after the legal ruling; citizens remained in a vulnerable situation.	Media reports citing security apparatus/operations
March 12, 2025	The KPU determined the results of the follow-up to the	Administrative settlement results, but it does not automatically	KPU Puncak Jaya Regency

¹¹ Puncak Jaya Regency General Election Commission, Puncak Jaya Regency KPU Decision Number 261 of 2025 concerning the Determination of the Results of the 2024 Puncak Jaya Regent and Deputy Regent Elections as a Follow-up to the Constitutional Court's Decision; Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia, Decision Number 311/PHPU. BUP-XXIII/2025; MetroTV, "Puncak Jaya Regional Election Riots: Cartenz Peace Operation and Reports of Victims and Burned Buildings," April 8, 2025.

	Constitutional Court's decision: Paslon 1 received 77,296 votes and Paslon 2 received 65,787 votes.	resolve social polarization.	
May 2025	Reconciliation of the customary division of doli wood between the camps of the candidate pairs.	The reopening of social spaces, citizen mobility, and post-conflict political recognition.	Puncak Jaya Regency Government

Source: extracted from the Constitutional Court's decision, KPU decision, Bawaslu statement, ANTARA report, media reports, and information from the Puncak Jaya Regency Government.

2. Electoral Polarization, Noken Systems, and Logistical Vulnerabilities

The escalation of the conflict in the Puncak Jaya Regional Election shows a meeting between electoral polarization and the vulnerability of logistics governance. In ordinary elections, logistics is an administrative tool. However, in areas that use the noken system, logistics can contain symbols of collective authority. Ballot boxes, minutes of events, and recapitulation results are not just procedural objects, but evidence of group political representation. Therefore, when there are accusations of logistical takeover, usurpation, or sabotage, the conflict immediately acquires a much greater meaning: the opposing party is perceived to be stealing the group's votes, rights, and dignity.

The noken system was in principle born from the social practices of the Papuan people that emphasize community deliberation, recognition of local chiefs or figures, and collective representation. But in modern electoral competitions, this system faces a serious dilemma. First, the relationship between individual choice and collective decisions is not always easy to verify. Second, the authority of local figures can change from a facilitator of deliberation to an instrument of pressure. Third, supposedly transparent election administration can collide with social mechanisms that are not fully documented. Fourth, when candidates bring a network of kinship, identity, and patronage, political differences can turn into a battle of group honor.¹²

The Constitutional Court's decision to exclude the votes of the four districts shows that logistical vulnerability is not a mere technical issue, but has constitutional and security consequences. The state, through the KPU, Bawaslu, Constitutional Court, and security forces, must ensure that election logistics do not only reach physically, but are also protected from intimidation, hijacking, manipulation, and unilateral claims. At this

¹² Nashrullah, "Challenges of Holding the 2024 National Simultaneous Elections and Regional Elections"; Pure, "Implementation of the Noken System in Papua"; Razak, "The Noken System in General Elections in the Papuan Customary Territory"; Yuwono, Kurniawan, et al., "The Noken System in the General Elections in the Papua Region (1971–2024)."

point, logistics integrity becomes part of human security protection because logistical failures can trigger violence that befalls civilians.

3. Impact on *Freedom from Fear*

The most direct dimension of the Puncak Jaya crisis is the collapse of *freedom from fear*. Citizens no longer experience elections as a peaceful procedure, but as events that can threaten physical safety. Mutual arrows, the use of sharp weapons, the burning of houses, the evacuation of health workers, and the loss of lives show that electoral conflicts are moving from the realm of competition to the realm of collective violence. When homes and public facilities are targeted, the boundaries between active supporters, ordinary citizens, women, children, and public service workers become blurred. All can be affected by conflicts produced by elites and political masses.¹³

In an electoral context, violence and intimidation can be used strategically to suppress opponents, reduce voter participation, mobilize supporters, or influence election results. But from a human security perspective, the most important thing is not only the motive of the perpetrator, but the condition of the victim. Citizens who are forced to flee or take refuge lose the sense of security that is a prerequisite for democratic participation. Election organizers who work under threat cannot carry out their mandate freely. Voters who see violence can choose to remain silent, follow the flow of dominant groups, or withdraw from the political process. Thus, the violence of the regional elections not only injures the bodies of citizens, but also damages their political freedom.¹⁴

The context of Puncak Jaya also shows the risk of ambivalent securitization. The presence of security forces is necessary to prevent violence, protect citizens, and ensure that the recapitulation runs safely. However, a security approach that is only oriented towards discipline can fail to understand the social roots of conflict. Therefore, the security of the Regional Elections in conflict-prone areas needs to move in two paths: firm protection of residents and logistics, as well as social de-escalation involving indigenous leaders, churches, youth, women, and local community networks.

4. Impact on *Freedom from Want*

The human security crisis does not stop at physical victims. Burning houses, damage to facilities, and disruption of public services have a direct impact on *freedom from want*. Homes are economic assets, social reproductive spaces, and family shelters. When tens to hundreds of buildings burn, citizens lose their living capital that is not easy to recover. Damage to schools or health facilities also prolongs the impact of conflict because it disrupts children's education, health services, and social mobility.

The socio-economic conditions of Puncak Jaya magnify this vulnerability. BPS data shows that the poverty rate in Puncak Jaya Regency in 2025 is still high, at 35.46 percent, although it has decreased compared to the previous year. In areas with high poverty rates, electoral violence has a double effect: residents not only lose their sense of security, but also lose assets that are difficult to replace. The cost of restoring homes, facilities, and

¹³ ANTARA, "Clash of Supporters of the Regent Candidate in Puncak Jaya," November 29, 2024; MetroTV, "Puncak Jaya Regional Election Riots," April 8, 2025.

¹⁴ Birch, Daxecker, dan Höglund, "Electoral Violence: An Introduction"; United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 1994.

livelihoods can exceed the capacity of families. Thus, electoral conflicts deepen pre-existing structural vulnerabilities.¹⁵

This is the reason why post-conflict handling should not stop at determining the winner of the regional elections or symbolic reconciliation. The state needs to ensure the material recovery of affected residents, access to basic services, victim data collection, home rehabilitation, psychosocial support, and educational recovery. From a human security perspective, post-conflict economic recovery is part of national security, not just a matter of social welfare. If citizens' losses are not recovered, resentment, distrust, and a sense of injustice can become the capital of the next conflict.

5. Impact on Freedom to Live in Dignity

The third dimension is the freedom to live in dignity. Local democracy is supposed to recognize the dignity of citizens as voters and political subjects. But intimidation, logistical deprivation, mob violence, and the annulment of results in a number of districts show that some citizens experience elections not as a space for recognition, but as a space for coercion. When citizens cannot ensure that their votes are honestly counted, their political dignity is compromised. When violence requires citizens to take refuge, their social dignity collapses.

Dignity is also related to the recognition of local culture. The noken system cannot be seen solely as a deviation from individualistic liberal democracy. It is part of the political practices of indigenous peoples that need to be understood contextually. However, cultural recognition must not sacrifice the protection of citizens' rights. The principle that needs to be built is not to unilaterally erase local culture, but to ensure that local mechanisms are not used to erase the freedom, safety, and dignity of voters. This is where the role of election organizers, the state, and indigenous leaders becomes crucial.¹⁶

The Puncak Jaya case shows that dignity must be read in two directions. First, the dignity of indigenous communities needs to be respected through settlement mechanisms that understand the local social structure. The reconciliation of doli timber customary shows that communities have the local tools to end conflicts. Second, the dignity of individuals as citizens must remain protected through national law, election supervision, and the guarantee of freedom of choice. A culturally sensitive democracy must not turn into a democracy that is permissive towards violence.

Table 2. Matrix of the impact of the Puncak Jaya Regional Election on human security

Human security dimension	Indicators in the case	Impact on residents	Policy implications
Freedom from fear	Attacking each other, arrowing each other, burning houses,	Fear, displacement/evacuation, trauma, decreased free participation.	Security is based on citizen protection, rapid response, and

¹⁵ Central Statistics Agency of Puncak Jaya Regency, Poverty Profile of Puncak Jaya Regency 2025 (BPS Puncak Jaya Regency, 2025).

¹⁶ Nugroho, "Conflict Transformation and Electoral Justice in Regional Elections in the Land of Papua"; Pure, "Implementation of the Noken System in Papua"; Razak, "The Noken System in General Elections in Papua's Customary Territories."

	intimidation, injuries and deaths.		conflict de-escalation.
Freedom from want	Damage to houses and facilities, service interruptions, high regional poverty.	Loss of assets, disruption of education and health, economic burden of recovery.	Rehabilitation of homes and facilities, victim assistance, psychosocial and economic support.
Freedom to live in dignity	Political intimidation, alleged logistical hijacking, disconnection of citizens' votes, stigma between groups.	Political dignity is disturbed, citizens do not feel recognized as free voters.	Protection of voting rights, supervision of the noken system, customary reconciliation that does not sacrifice the rights of citizens.

Source: author's analysis based on UNDP framework, national security documents, Constitutional Court decisions, official reports, and credible news.

6. Regional Elections as a Democratic National Security Issue

Why should the Puncak Jaya Regional Election conflict be read as a national security issue? The answer is not that every local conflict must be militarized, but because the integrity of elections is the foundation of the legitimacy of a democratic state. If local elections result in violence, fatalities, destruction of homes, and delegitimization of results, then the state faces a threat to public trust, social order, and government capacity. National security in a democratic country means not only the absence of war, but also the sustainability of trusted political institutions, the protection of citizens' rights, and the state's ability to prevent horizontal conflicts.¹⁷

From a critical security perspective, a country is not safe enough if its citizens are not safe. The government can determine the outcome of the elections, but if people are still living in fear, their homes have not been restored, and supporters have not been able to interact again, then substantive security has not been achieved. Democratic national security must combine three agendas: electoral integrity, citizen protection, and conflict transformation. Election integrity ensures that procedures run legally. Citizen protection ensures that elections do not take victims. Conflict transformation ensures that political competition does not leave long-term hostilities.

The Puncak Jaya case also shows the limits of an overly administrative security approach. Recapitulation is important, but not enough. Determination of results is important, but not enough. The Constitutional Court's decision is important, but not enough. When a conflict has entered social networks, its resolution requires cross-

¹⁷ Buzan, People, States and Fear; Hanita, Teori Keamanan Nasional; International IDEA, Guide on Risk Factors for Electoral Integrity (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2024).

sectoral work: the KPU, Bawaslu, local governments, security forces, traditional leaders, religious leaders, civil society organizations, health services, and victim recovery institutions. Thus, democratic national security needs to be understood as the ability of the state and society to manage political competition without destroying human safety.

7. Mitigation Model: From Regional Election Security to Human Security Protection

Based on the above analysis, this article offers a model for mitigating regional elections conflicts in vulnerable areas with five components. First, strengthening early warning based on socio-political indicators. Bawaslu already has a mapping of election vulnerabilities with dimensions of socio-political context, election implementation, contestation, and participation. This instrument needs to be operationalized more sharply for areas with noken systems, a history of conflict, and difficult geographical access. Early warning must include indicators of mass mobilization, local hate speech, logistical disputes, unilateral claims of collective votes, and relationships between supporters of candidate pairs.¹⁸

Second, logistics security based on integrity and transparency. Election logistics in vulnerable areas must be treated as a vital object of democracy. Security must not only be physical, but also procedural: distribution documentation, involvement of supervisors, cross-camp witnesses, digital recording if possible, and emergency mechanisms in the event of seizure or sabotage. In the noken system, logistics security must be complemented by verification of community deliberations, documentation of agreements, and protection of citizens who disagree with collective decisions.

Third, de-escalation based on local actors. Indigenous leaders, religious leaders, youth, women, and public service networks need to be involved from the campaign stage, not after violence occurs. The experience of reconciliation with doli wood splitting shows that customary mechanisms have a social capacity to defuse conflicts. However, customary mechanisms need to be combined with the principles of human rights, victim protection, and legal accountability so that they do not stop at elite symbols of peace.

Fourth, the protocol for the protection of civilians. Every regional election in conflict-prone areas requires an evacuation plan, safe points, emergency communication, protection of health workers and teachers, and a mechanism for collecting data on victims. This protocol needs to be prepared with local governments, security forces, election organizers, and local communities. The focus is not only on guarding the ballot box, but also on keeping residents from becoming victims of political conflicts.

Fifth, post-conflict recovery as part of the election cycle. So far, the election stages tend to end in the determination of the results. In fact, in conflict-prone areas, the post-conflict stage needs to be institutionalized. The local and central governments need to prepare assistance for home rehabilitation, restoration of public facilities, psychosocial support, advanced mediation, and monitoring of potential for aftershock. Without recovery, the next Regional Election will inherit the same social wounds.

¹⁸ General Election Supervisory Agency, Simultaneous Election Vulnerability Mapping 2024; International IDEA, Guide on Risk Factors for Electoral Integrity (2024).

D. Conclusions and Recommendations

The 2024 Puncak Jaya Regional Election shows that local elections in conflict-prone areas can change from democratic procedures to human security crises. Conflicts involving mutual attacks, house burning, sabotage or logistical confiscation, injuries, casualties, evacuation of citizens, and post-conflict customary reconciliation show that electoral disputes cannot be understood only through the legal framework of the vote. It must be analyzed as a confluence between elite polarization, vulnerability of the noken system, weak logistical protections, fragile socioeconomic structures, and limited de-escalation capacity.

From a human security perspective, this conflict collapses the three layers of citizen security. Freedom from fear is disrupted by physical violence and intimidation. Freedom from want is disrupted by the destruction of homes, facilities, and living assets of residents in areas with high levels of poverty. Freedom to live in dignity is disrupted by threats to the political dignity of citizens, especially when their voices, choices, and safety are caught up in intercamp conflicts. From a national security perspective, this case confirms that election integrity, citizen protection, and conflict transformation are part of democratic national resilience.

This article concludes that the security approach to the Regional Elections in Papua and other vulnerable areas needs to move beyond the paradigm of procedural security. The state needs to build a model that integrates early warning of elections, logistical security, customary and community de-escalation, protection of civilians, and post-conflict recovery. Thus, elections are not only formally legitimate, but also humanely safe and strong nationally. First, the KPU and Bawaslu need to develop special standards for noken-based election governance that are more measurable, documented, and auditable without losing respect for local wisdom. Second, the central and regional governments need to include the human security dimension in planning for the security of the regional elections, including the protection of citizens, health workers, teachers, and public facilities.

Third, security forces need to prioritize prevention, neutrality, and de-escalation, not just repressive responses after conflict breaks. Fourth, customary reconciliation needs to be linked to victim recovery, material assistance, and accountability so that peace does not only occur at the elite level. Fifth, follow-up research needs to use field interviews with organizers, victims, indigenous leaders, officials, and voters to deepen understanding of how citizens experience elections in conflict situations.

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