

# Confrontation and Reconciliation Efforts in the Sunni-Shia Conflict in Indonesia: A Study of IJABI (Indonesian Ahlulbait Association) and ANNAS (National Anti-Shia Alliance)

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Article	Abstract
<b>Article History :</b> Received : Oct., 31, 2025 Reviewed : Dec.,28,12, 2025 Accepted : Dec.,30,12, 2025 Published : Dec.,31,12, 2025	The Shia minority group in Indonesia has experienced marginalization. Differences in beliefs compared to the majority (Sunni) have sometimes resulted in acts of persecution, intimidation, and perceptions of secondary status. The formation of IJABI ( <i>Indonesian Ahlulbait Association</i> ) on July 1, 2000, was undertaken by the Shia community to be recognized as a legitimate Islamic entity and as citizens of Indonesia. However, negative perceptions of Shia persist, particularly among conservative Muslim groups. This situation has continued since the emergence of ANNAS ( <i>National Anti-Shia Alliance</i> ) in 2014, which has at times received support from regional leaders. This paper aims to describe the dynamics of the Sunni-Shia conflict in Indonesia and the efforts at reconciliation between the two groups. The focus is placed on IJABI and ANNAS, though other groups are considered as well. The author references relevant literature on Indonesian Shia, including materials and official websites from both IJABI and ANNAS. A comparative analysis is used. In the author's brief study, IJABI, representing an Indonesian Shia group, has made efforts to establish positive relations with Sunni groups, while ANNAS has presented challenges to these relations.
<b>Keywords:</b>  <i>Sunni-Syiah, ANNAS, IJABI, Confrontation, Reconciliation</i>	

## INTRODUCTION

As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, many consider Indonesian Islam to be compatible with the challenges and developments of the times. Indonesian Islam was once referred to by Newsweek magazine (September 23, 1996) as “Islam with a Smile” (*Islam Nusantara Islam Indonesia* (3), 2015; Qurtuby, 2020). Some argue that Islam and culture in Indonesia can coexist because of its pluralistic society. Historians then assess that this is inseparable from the spread of Islam in Indonesia through Sufi-cultural channels. Others also consider Indonesia to be one of the Muslim countries that has successfully implemented a democratic system. In a democratic system, people have the same right to voice their opinions, regardless of whether they are considered different.

However, the image of Indonesian Islam as polite and friendly is not universally accepted. Accusations of heresy, infidelity, hypocrisy, and so on against other Muslim groups considered to have different views still occur in society. The impact of this attitude often leads to vigilante justice. Groups that act in this way certainly believe that what they are doing, even if it is wrong in terms of religion and law, is to defend their religion and protect it from deviant beliefs.

As a minority group in Indonesia, Shia Muslims are often considered heretical, even considered not part of Islam. Because of this, their presence is sometimes not accepted in various places. However, there are also various regions where the community accepts the presence of Shia Muslims (Alkaff & Jani, 2023; Mustofa et al., 2020; Saefudin et al., 2021)

Labeling others as heretics is not good for the sustainability of a country known for its religious diversity. If this attitude spreads to various regions, Indonesia will certainly not be a friendly place for its own citizens. The law guarantees that citizens have equal rights to security. The state's failure to protect the rights of minorities shows how reluctant the state is to help or allow minority groups to practice their religion (Suryana, 2020).

According to the author's research, the general public is often confused about how to behave when interacting with Shia groups that are labeled as heretical and outside of Islam (Zaim & Sahin, 2022). This is especially true for people who have grown up in a homogeneous environment since childhood. In other words, they have never had direct contact with groups considered heretical. They only "know" about Shia Islam through books, magazines, or even social media, where the accuracy of information cannot be verified. This is where religious leaders, academics, and government officials have an obligation to eliminate the confusion faced by the community. However, because not all religious leaders or government officials have an inclusive view of religion, it is not uncommon for those who are expected to protect this minority to become instead agents that worsen the situation. As a result, confused people will become even more anti-Shia if the information they obtain comes from sources they believe to be true.

Numerous studies have examined the Sunni-Shia conflict in Indonesia, focusing on its historical dynamics, state responses, Shia diversity, and anti-Shia mobilization. Zulkifli's dissertation maps the internal diversity and adaptive strategies of Shia groups in a Sunni-majority context (Zulkifli, 2009). Suryana analyzes state failures in protecting Shia and Ahmadiyya minorities amid religious violence (Suryana, 2020), while Amal critiques governmental responses to Sharia-based violence against Shia amid rising illiberalism (Amal, 2020b). On anti-Shia actors, Syarif et al. trace the genealogy of anti-Shi'ism, including ANNAS's emergence post-Sampang violence as an organized network targeting Shia propagation (Syarif et al., 2017). Makhsum provides a descriptive overview of ANNAS's stigmatization tactics (Makhsum, 2019), and recent works document mass mobilizations like the 2016 anti-Milad Fatimah protests against IJABI in Bondowoso (e.g., studies on godly alliances and exclusion politics). These contributions illuminate conflict triggers (e.g., Sampang 2012), geopolitical influences, and Sunni hardliner responses but remain fragmented across Shia resilience, state inaction, and anti-Shia genealogy.

Despite this robust literature, no study directly compares the ideologies, strategies, direct interactions, and reconciliation efforts between pro-Shia IJABI (*Indonesian Ahlulbait Association*) and anti-Shia ANNAS (*National Anti-Shia Alliance*). Existing research treats them in isolation, Shia diversity (Zulkifli) or ANNAS mobilization (Syarif, Makhsum) without juxtaposing their mutual confrontations, foundational motivations, or potential dialogues. This gap overlooks whether ANNAS's rhetoric stems purely from doctrinal purity or amplified propaganda, and how IJABI counters it, limiting insights into micro-level reconciliation amid macro-sectarian tensions.

This study addresses the gap through three systematic objectives: (1) To trace the historical dynamics, ideologies, and goals of IJABI and ANNAS in the Indonesian Sunni-Shia context; (2) To analyze sequences of their confrontations, including direct contacts and mutual perceptions; (3) To evaluate their roles in reconciliation efforts or conflict exacerbation, identifying obstacles and policy implications for minority protection.

None of the above studies directly compares the struggles, ideas, roles, and reconciliation efforts between Shia groups (IJABI) and anti-Shia groups (ANNAS). Why is this comparison important? It is not uncommon for those who are anti-Shia to misunderstand the complexity of Shia thought. Conversely, this study will also look directly at the foundations and ideas expressed by ANNAS. Are they purely motivated by a desire to preserve the purity

of Islam? Or perhaps they are simply driven by hatred and propaganda to discredit Shia groups? In addition, the author will also attempt to trace whether IJABI and ANNAS have ever had direct contact with each other.

To ensure a systematic discussion, the author divides this article into five sections: First, the history and dynamics of the Sunni-Shia conflict in Indonesia. Second, the background of IJABI and ANNAS: their hopes and goals when they were founded. Third, the sequence and roots of the Sunni-Shia conflict in Indonesia. Fourth, reconciliation efforts and their obstacles. Fifth, the role of IJABI and ANNAS in alleviating or exacerbating the Sunni-Shia conflict.

## RESEARCH METHOD

A historical approach is utilized to trace the evolution of the Sunni-Shia conflict in Indonesia, both before and after the 1998 Reformasi. Comparative analysis is applied to evaluate the ideologies, strategies, and roles of IJABI (*Indonesian Ahlulbait Association*) and ANNAS (*National Anti-Shia Alliance*). The historical method organizes key events chronologically, such as the founding of IJABI in 2000, the ANNAS declaration in 2014, and the Sampang incident in 2012. Comparative analysis examines mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive (MECE) dimensions: (1) organizational backgrounds and vision-missions, (2) theological doctrines, including taqiyyah and heresy fatwas, (3) reconciliation and confrontation actions, and (4) socio-political impacts.

Primary data sources consist of official IJABI documents, such as “Tentang Kami” and works by Rakhmat (Rakhmat, 2006, 2007; *Tentang Kami*, n.d.), as well as ANNAS materials, including the 2014 declaration and Syiah ANNAS (2018), all accessed through official websites (*ANNAS Indonesia*, n.d.; *I J A B I*, n.d.) Secondary sources include recent journal articles and books (Suryana, 2020; Syarif et al., 2017; Zulkifli, 2009) published between 2000 and 2025, selected based on topic relevance, etc.. The analysis is conducted in three stages: (1) narrative description, (2) cross-source comparison to identify patterns, and (3) causal interpretation of conflict roots and reconciliation barriers, with triangulation across primary and secondary sources to ensure validity. As a library-based document study, this research is limited by the absence of primary field data, such as interviews with key actors. Future research should incorporate participant ethnography to verify direct interactions between IJABI and ANNAS.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The History and Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Conflict in Indonesia

Conflict, disagreement, or quarrels between one party and another cannot exist without a cause. Before a conflict arises, it is usually preceded by a misunderstanding or a difference of opinion. When no common ground can be found between the disputing parties or groups, that is when conflict arises. The author will first present the anti-Shia stance before discussing the conflict between the two. In the context of anti-Shia sentiment in Indonesia, it began with a disagreement between what Sunni and Shia groups believe, particularly on several matters considered to be fundamental to religion. For example, 1. Views on the originality of the Qur'an, 2. The disbelief of the Prophet's companions, 3. The concept of Shi'a Imamah, 4. The law of *Mut'ah* marriage, 5. Teachings about *taqiyyah*, 5. Certain Shi'a religious rituals, etc. (Amin, 2013; Zulkifli, 2009). It is important to note that not all of these points are accepted by Shi'ites, as some of these assumptions or accusations are rejected by them (Zaim & Sahin, 2022).

There are several studies that mention that the beginning of anti-Shia attitudes occurred in the 1980s (Rahmat et al., 2023; Zulkifli, 2009). They were scholars, missionaries, and Islamic activists who were Wahhabi-Salafi or had a Wahhabi-Salafi mindset. Some of the

works of Ihsan Ilahi Zahir (died 1987), the most influential anti-Shia figure, have been translated into Indonesian, for example, *Salah Faham Sunnah Syi'ah* (1983), *Syiah dan Sunnah* (1984), *Syi'ah Berbohong atas nama Ahlul Bait* (1987).

Anti-Shia sentiment can arise due to concerns about Shia groups that are perceived to have spread and grown in various regions. Several efforts have been made to stem the tide of Shia influence. Zulkifli divides these into four categories: through the publication of works, government support, discussions or seminars, and finally religious lectures. Muhammad Natsir, who at that time was already aware of the phenomenon of Shia development in Indonesia, said:

"Meanwhile, the publication of books and brochures about Shia in Indonesian began. Some were original works, while others were translations of Arabic and English books. They were published in West Java, Central Java, East Java, etc., and gained a wide readership, especially among our younger generation." (Zulkifli, 2009)

However, the division made by Zulkifli above seems to need to be expanded further, especially in this era of digitalization. Anti-Shia groups are increasingly using all social media platforms to voice their ideas: Instagram, websites, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and of course TikTok. This digital amplification of anti-Shia sentiment is a cause for concern and requires our attention.

If we refer back to the history of the early arrival of Islam in Indonesia, we find a theory that states that the Shia school of Islam first entered and was accepted by coastal communities, particularly in Aceh, around the seventh to tenth centuries AD (Daneshgar, 2014; Sofjan, 2013). These propagators were Persians living in Gujarat. At that time, the first king of the Samudra Pasai Kingdom, located in Aceh, Marah Silu, embraced Shia Islam and took the title Malikul Saleh. However, during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Tsani, power was held by Sunni scholars (Hasyim, 2012). Azyumardi Azra rejects the above theory. He asserts that the entry of Shi'ism into Indonesia in the early period of the archipelago is unclear. Azra also argues that there is insufficient evidence of the spread of Shi'ism in the early days of Islam in the archipelago. Azra also asserts that Shi'ism has not been popular in Indonesia for very long, especially since the Iranian revolution in 1979, a significant event that led to a global resurgence of anti-Shia sentiment (Widyadara, 2015).

Hasim states that after Islam was dominated by Sunni scholars and rulers, Shi'a followers in Indonesia practiced what is widely known as *taqiyyah* (T. A. Indonesia, 2014; Ulya, 2021), or the act of protecting oneself by appearing to be something contrary to what is in one's heart (Hasim, 2012). However, in the author's opinion, Hasim's view that Shiites practiced *taqiyyah* after Sunni rulers held power until the modern era (the Iranian revolution, 1979) is an argument that needs to be elaborated further. First, it is impossible that during such a long period of time from the early days of Islam in Indonesia to the 21st century the Shia group did not reveal themselves or their beliefs at all. Second, during this long period of time, many historiographical studies have found that there was acculturation between Shia teachings and local traditions. Still, according to Hasim, in the early period (before the Iranian revolution), Shi'ism did not experience conflict with other groups because its proselytizing was still conducted secretly. During this period, relations between Sunnis and Shi'ites in Indonesia were generally very good and friendly, unlike in other countries such as Pakistan, Iraq, or Saudi Arabia (Hasim, 2012).

In the second period, precisely after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Iranian Revolution sent a message not only to the Arab world. The Iranian Revolution also became a momentum for the world community regarding Iran's struggle and resistance, which was able to overthrow the Western puppet rulers who had entrenched themselves in Persia. Iran's victory also made the Shiites more confident. Therefore, Iran's political opponents, such as Saudi Arabia, immediately made strenuous efforts to block Iran's influence in several Muslim-



majority countries. As a result, a number of anti-Shia books were published. The works of scholars such as Ibn Taymiyah and Ihsan Ilahi Zahir (an anti-Shia scholar from Pakistan) were widely available (Hasim, 2012). This anti-Shia stance then gained further legitimacy when the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issued a decree on March 7, 1984, signed by Prof. Ibrahim Hossen (Widyadara, 2015).

The third period, the wave of reform that occurred in 1998, was an era of openness and freedom, which also encouraged public interest in Shia teachings. Because Shia understanding had entered the realm of fiqh, differences in understanding arose, leading to the seeds of open conflict (Hasim, 2012).

The fourth period was when Shia Islam was officially recognized by the state (July 1, 2000) as a national Shia organization, IJABI (*Tentang Kami*, n.d.; Zulkifli, 2009). The role of Abdurrahman Wahid, who was president at the time, was very important here. He was one of several moderate Muslim figures in Indonesia who, from the outset, protected the Indonesian Shia community. This stance differed from that of most Islamic scholars at the time. Besides him, Nurcholis Madjid and Amin Rais were two other figures who had positive views of Shia Islam. The positive views of these three figures toward the Shia community certainly added fuel to the heated debate with anti-Shia groups.

Further questions may be asked: when exactly did this disagreement turn into conflict in Indonesia? It is not yet possible to determine exactly when the Sunni-Shia conflict in Indonesia began. However, the author will attempt to present a series of events related to the conflict between Sunnis and Shias, particularly in the era before and after the reform.

Some researchers say that conflict between Sunnis and Shiites during the New Order era almost never occurred except at the end of the period (1998) (Amal, 2020b). During the New Order era, tensions between Sunnis and Shiites only occurred in line with the escalating conditions in the Middle East at that time. For example, when the Iranian revolution occurred in 1979. According to Mietzner, the lack of Sunni-Shia tensions during this period was not because both sides implemented inclusive views and upheld the values of pluralism. Rather, the New Order regime did not allow any room for anything that threatened the stability of the state (Mietzner, 2018).

After the reform era, it must be acknowledged that Sunni-Shia conflicts occurred quite frequently. The following incidents provide a direct illustration. Just two years after the reform, the Al-Hadi Islamic boarding school, belonging to a Shia group in Batang, Central Java, was burned down by a mob. Then in 2006, a Shia group in Bondowoso, East Java, was also attacked by a mob (Taufani, 2023). In 2011, there were incidents of arson against houses, mosques, and Islamic boarding schools, as well as the expulsion of the Shia minority in Sampang, Madura. This case raised concerns among many parties. The Minister of Religious Affairs is currently making specific statements about the need to resolve the Sampang case (*Konflik Sunni-Syiah di Madura?*, n.d.). In 2011, the YAPI Islamic boarding school was attacked by the ASWAJA group. Clashes occurred between YAPI students and the ASWAJA mob. There are many versions of why this clash occurred. But what is clear is that YAPI administrators had already felt intimidation from groups calling themselves ASWAJA (*Ponpes YAPI Tuding Penyerang Dari Kelompok ASWAJA*, n.d.). A year later, violence occurred again (Liputan6.com, 2019). In 2015, the mayor of Bogor (West Java) refused to allow Shia residents to commemorate Ashura Day (Media, 2015). In 2017, Ashura Day was celebrated in Bandung Regency. Hundreds of men dressed in white robes came to intimidate Shia residents in the morning. Fortunately, hundreds of police officers managed to secure the situation (Rahmat et al., 2023).

That is part of the intimidation, persecution, and vigilante behavior of people who are anti-Shia in the post-reform era. From this, the author agrees with Taufani's (Taufani, 2023) conclusion that rejection of Shia Islam during the New Order era tended to only occur in

meeting rooms and through the writing of books, but in the reform era, rejection of Shia Islam often ends in attacks and intimidation.

### **Background of IJABI and ANNAS: Hopes and Goals of Establishment**

During his leadership, Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-2001) promoted several reforms to encourage official openness to institutionalized religious pluralism. Although many of these reforms were unsuccessful, the "lovers of Ahl al-bayt" were able to benefit from the new political environment, being recognized as a legitimate Muslim group (Formichi, 2015). Previously, the New Order severely restricted the activities of Shia groups in Indonesia. There were at least three prominent Shia figures at that time who the Government banned from promoting Shia Islam: Muhammad Baqir al-Habsyi, Haidar Bagir, and Jalaluddin Rakhmat (Musadad, 2019).

Until 2000, the only institutions representing Shia Islam were private Islamic boarding schools that promoted Ja'fari fiqh as the "fifth school of thought" within the framework of "comparative fiqh," or foundations that organized private commemorations for Ashura and Ghadir Khum (Musadad, 2019). However, thanks to Gus Dur's commitment to "pluralism" and the persistence of community leaders, after nearly a century of Sunni dominance in the religious civil society sphere through the reformist Muhammadiyah, the traditionalist Nadhlatul Ulama, or the scripturalist Islamic Union, a new mass organization was formed to offer an official platform to lovers of Ahl al-bayt (Formichi, 2015).

Quoted from its official Website, IJABI (Ikatan Jamaah Ahlulbait Indonesia) is an Islamic mass organization (similar to Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, which were established earlier). IJABI was founded on July 1, 2000, at the Asia Afrika Building in Bandung. IJABI carries two main spirits: liberation and enlightenment. It is led by Jalaluddin Rakhmat, one of Indonesia's leading Muslim intellectuals. IJABI was founded to bring together lovers of the Prophet's holy family, regardless of their school of thought (*Tentang Kami*, n.d.).

In its early days, IJABI, led by the duo of Jalaluddin Rakhmat (as Chairman of the Shura Council) and Dimitri Mahayana (as General Chairman of the Tanfidziyah), sought to re-establish the Asia-Africa spirit within the context of empowering the mustadh'afin and enlightening intellectuals in Indonesia. As stated by Kang Jalal (the nickname for the Chairman of the IJABI Shura Council), IJABI's commitment was to participate in the Islamic renaissance, enlighten the minds of the people, and advocate for the plight of the oppressed (mustadh'afin). This enlightenment of thought, namely, building an inclusive understanding of religiosity, not symbolic but substantive, and supporting freedom of thought and tolerance (*Tentang Kami*, n.d.).

The main messages IJABI seeks to convey through its various activities are well illustrated in two major works by Kang Jalal (Founder and Chairman of the IJABI Shura Council): "Prioritizing Morals Above Fiqh" and "Islam and Pluralism; Quranic Morals in Addressing Differences" (Rakhmat, 2006, 2007).

Furthermore, IJABI holds five pillars: (1) Non-political, (2) Non-sectarian, (3) Prioritizing Morals, (4) Upholding Brotherhood (Enlightening Thoughts). However, over time, at its sixth congress in 2016, IJABI transformed these into a larger structure known as the Five Pillars of IJABI. The five pillars are: (1) Rational and Spiritual Islam, (2) Non-Sectarianism and Prioritizing Morals over Fiqh, (3) Pluralist Islam, (4) Civil Islam, (5) Defense of the Mustadh'afin (*Tentang Kami*, n.d.).

The objectives of establishing IJABI are: (1) Building oneself to live in congregation and as an imam (2) Introducing and spreading the teachings of Islam as narrated through the Prophet's Family (3) Empowering the small and weak economic communities (mustadh'afin) (4) Developing spiritual and intellectual studies (5) Establishing and maintaining good relations with all other religious organizations (*Tentang Kami*, n.d.).

Chiara Formichi's insightful analysis reveals that cultural Shi'ism is not the sole manifestation of ahl al-bayt (apostolic) devotion in Indonesia. The shifting identity of IJABI has recently faced a formidable challenge from a group deeply committed to Ja'fari fiqh, which holds the most significant influence on this branch of Islamic jurisprudence. This group, with prominent members from among Indonesian Qomi graduates, has been instrumental in the rise of formalistic, doctrinal, and jurisprudential understanding of Shi'a Islam in the country's urban areas since the early 2000s. Initially centered around the Islamic Cultural Center (ICC) in South Jakarta, these groups successfully advocated for the establishment of an alternative mass organization, Ahlul Bayt Indonesia (ABI), in 2012.

The divergent paths of IJABI, on one side, and ICC/ABI, on the other, mirror the historical split between Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama in the early 1900s. This polarization between followers of the ahl al-bayt (people of the faith) who are steeped in 'indigenous' forms of devotion and moral values, and those dedicated to practicing and spreading 'orthodox' fiqh paradigms reflecting their international ties to the Islamic Republic of Iran, underscores a deepening internal rift (Formichi, 2015). This rift, if not addressed, could lead to further division within the Shi'a community in Indonesia.

The second group the author will discuss is ANNAS (Anti-Shia National Alliance). Through its official website (*ANNAS Indonesia*, n.d.), Athian Ali Moh explains the background to ANNAS's founding. He states:

"The development of Shia groups in Indonesia is becoming increasingly radical and bold in their efforts to spread their deviant ideologies and teachings. One of the reasons for the growth of Shia heresy is the success of their leaders, particularly in deceiving ordinary Muslims through "Taqiyyah," employing an ambivalent strategy by presenting themselves in their preaching to ordinary Muslims as if they were part of an Islamic school whose differences and existence must be tolerated. Meanwhile, they instill militant doctrines of the true Shia heresy towards their cadres and the objects of their proselytizing.

In recent years, they have begun to embrace the *marhalah idzar* (the *Idzar*), boldly revealing their hypocrisy and puffing out their chests, declaring: "We are Shia." In various Shia discussions, seminars, articles, and religious celebrations, such as the Ash-Shura celebration, they boldly insult, deride, and even declare the companions and wives of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as infidels."

Based on the above statement, as well as the aspirations of the Ulama and Islamic Community Leaders conveyed to the Indonesian Ulama Forum (FUUI), the FUUI advisors have recommended to the Daily Management to issue a fatwa on Shia and hold a strategic meeting involving as many Ulama and Muslim figures as possible. Therefore, through a meeting held on Tuesday, February 28, 2012, it was agreed to issue a "Fatwa on Shia" and to reconvene the "2nd Indonesian Ulama and Islamic Community Meeting" with the sole agenda of "Formulating Strategic Steps to Address Misguidance and Insults by Shia Adherents."

Long story short, on Sunday, 20 Jumadits Stani 1435 H/20 April 2014 CE, FUUI, as part of the mandate of the "2nd Conference of Indonesian Ulama and Islamic Community," held a declaration of the founding of the "National Anti-Shia Alliance (ANNAS)" (*ANNAS Indonesia*, n.d.).

According to its official Website, the declaration was held at the Al-Fajr Mosque on Jl. Cijagra, Buah Batu, Bandung, West Java, was attended by Habaib (Islamic scholars), leaders of Islamic organizations, and leaders of Islamic boarding schools from various regions across the country. It was also attended by the Assistant III of the Governor of West Java, Ahmad Hadadi. In his speech on behalf of the Governor of West Java, he expressed the West Java Regional Government's full support for the Declaration of the National Anti-Shia Alliance (ANNAS).

Judging from the list of attendees, several regional officials openly supported the establishment of ANNAS. In addition, there were also Muhammad Baharun (Chairman of the Central MUI for Law and Legislation), Abdul Muis Abdullah (Chairman of the Balikpapan MUI), and Abdul Hamid Baidlowi (Nahdlatul Ulama figure).

This declaration appointed several figures as its top leaders. These included Abdul Hamid Baidlowi, Chairman of the Consultative Council; Atip Latifulhayat, Chairman of the Board of Experts; and Athian Ali Moh. Da'i, Daily Chair of ANNAS. The contents of the ANNAS declaration are as follows:

First, Establishing the "National Anti-Shia Alliance" as a vehicle for the propagation of good and forbid evil; Second, Maximizing preventive, anticipatory, and proactive efforts to defend and protect the community from various attempts to mislead the faith and sharia by Shia groups in Indonesia; Third, Establishing Islamic brotherhood with various organizations and da'wah movements in Indonesia to guard against, hinder, and prevent the development of deviant Shia teachings; Fourth, Urging the government to immediately ban the spread of Shia ideology and teachings and revoke the licenses of all organizations, foundations, and institutions associated with Shia teachings throughout Indonesia. In addition to the declaration, ANNAS's vision and mission are as follows:

**Vision:** To establish the National Anti-Shia Alliance as a strategic force for the Muslim community in fostering unity and brotherhood in the face of deviant Shia teachings in Indonesia.

**Mission:** (1) To provide information to the public and Muslims throughout Indonesia about the deviant Shia teachings. (2) To increase awareness and anticipation of various patterns of deviant Shia movements in Indonesia, and to raise awareness among Muslims who have been influenced by deviant Shia teachings to return to the true teachings of Islam according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. (3) To mobilize the strength of the Muslim community, along with organizations, institutions, and community groups, to counter the Shia movement. (4) To establish cooperation and become partners with the government in preventing and prosecuting the spread of deviant Shia teachings in Indonesia. (5) To strive for the government to disband all organizations affiliated with the development of Shia teachings in Indonesia (*ANNAS Indonesia*, n.d.). Some words are bolded as stated on the ANNAS website. The author understands the bolding of these words as a form of emphasis on the importance of the aspects mentioned.

In 2018, ANNAS published a book that later became the foundation for their struggle. The book is entitled "Fatwas of Heretical Shia" (Syiah (ANNAS), 2018). This book presents a collection of fatwas from various reference sources to be used as a legal basis for assessing Shia teachings. The purpose of publishing this book is to provide information to the Muslim community so they can choose and distinguish between true and false teachings. ANNAS also claims that Islamic scholars and several Islamic organizations in Indonesia have each issued fatwas on the heresy of Shia Islam. These fatwas, among others, are presented in this book by Hadratus Syaikh Hasyim Asy'ari, founder of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the Central Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), the East Java MUI, Muhammadiyah, Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), and the Indonesian Ummah Ulama Forum (FUUI) (Syiah (ANNAS), 2018).

In subsequent discussions, the author will examine how each argument presented by both ANNAS and IJABI, as well as ABI through its "white book," "The White Book of the Shia School According to Its Conclusive Scholars" (T. A. B. Indonesia, 2012).

### **The Series and Roots of the Sunni-Shia Conflict in Indonesia**

In this discussion, the author not only presents data on the Shia-Sunni conflict, but also analyzes the causes or roots of the problem. It would be better if the author provided a timeline table of the Sunni-Shia conflict that has occurred since the reform era. This is because during



the New Order era, there was relatively no conflict between the two, as explained by the author earlier. The following table of Sunni-Shia conflicts in Indonesia provides an overview of how these conflicts are not a good precedent for the unity of Indonesia. This table is a summary of various sources (Amal & Shodiq, 2019; Media, 2016; Widyadara, 2015a; Zakiyah et al., 2022).

**Table 1.** Chronology and Impact of Conflicts on Shia Communities in Indonesia

Year	Location/Case	Cause of Conflict	Consequences of Conflict
2000	Batang, Jawa Tengah	Stigmatization of Shia as heretical, provocation by local religious figures.	Shia Islamic boarding school burned down, physical violence, expulsion.
2006	Bondowoso, Jawa Timur	Rejection of the existence of Shia, fatwa of heresy of MUI East Java, social pressure.	Burning of houses of Shia figures, disbandment of Shia events, physical violence.
2007	Bangil, Pasuruan, Jawa Timur	Anti-Shia sentiment, influence of religious organizations, local political provocation.	Attacks on Shiite mosques, terror, destruction of houses.
2011	Sampang, Madura, Jawa Timur	Competition between religious figures, heretical fatwas, family conflicts develop into sectarian conflicts.	Attacks on Shiite Islamic boarding schools, houses burned, mass expulsions.
2012	Sampang, Madura, Jawa Timur	The conflict continues, the influence of heretical fatwas, and the state's weak protection of the Shia minority.	Major attack, 1-2 dead, dozens injured, 49 houses burned, hundreds of Shiites evacuated.
2012	Jember, Jawa Timur	Shia stigmatization, social pressure, influence of the Sampang conflict.	Rejection and violence against the Shia community.
2016	Bondowoso, Jawa Timur	Rejection of Shia practices in public spaces, pressure from religious organizations.	Rejection of Shia religious events (Milad Fatimah), social pressure and intimidation.
2022-2023	Sampang/Sidoarjo, Jawa Timur	There is still social rejection, conflict trauma, and there has not been full reconciliation.	The gradual repatriation of Shia refugees to Sampang, some remain in refugee camps due to rejection.

The table above shows that the Sunni-Shia conflict did not arise from a single factor, but rather from broader socio-political dynamics. The roots of the conflict generally stem from the stigma imposed by some religious figures and local religious institutions on Shia as heretics, such as the fatwa issued by the East Java Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) on January 21, 2012 (Musdhalifah, 2022). This stigmatization was exacerbated by provocation by political elites and the spread of negative narratives by the surrounding community. In some cases, such as in Sampang, the conflict began as a family feud and escalated into sectarian conflict due to the intervention of religious figures and social pressure. It demonstrates that personal factors can trigger identity conflicts and then spread to other areas due to surrounding social and political influences.

On the other hand, the Shia community is undoubtedly the most disadvantaged group. Physical violence, house burnings, and evictions are short-term impacts. However, social trauma has long-lasting consequences. The Sampang case is a clear example, where hundreds

of Shia residents have lived in refugee camps for years. Until 2025, some Shia refugees had just begun to return home, but still faced discrimination and rejection in their hometowns (*Ratusan Penyintas Konflik Sunni-Syiah Sampang Di Sidoarjo Kembali Pulang Kampung / Tempo.Co*, n.d.).

What the state should be able to do is provide protection for them. However, the series of conflicts above demonstrates the state's weakness in protecting their rights as a minority. However, the Shia community must be recognized as legitimate citizens under the law. Shia community rights deserve to be protected. If the state responds quickly, the sparks of conflict that begin within the community will not escalate, and social cohesion can be maintained. What many people often forget is that the Sunni-Shia conflict is not solely about theological differences, but is also influenced by social, political, and institutional factors.

### **Reconciliation Efforts and Obstacles**

It would be unfair for the author to only criticize the government without mentioning the efforts they have made and the figures involved in the Sunni-Shia conflict in Indonesia. Therefore, the author will present the extent of the efforts made by various parties to achieve reconciliation.

Reconciliation efforts between the Sunni and Shia communities in Indonesia, particularly in Sampang, Madura, have been carried out through various approaches, both by the government, religious leaders, and community organizations. The government formed a Reconciliation Team and relocated the Shia group to the Puspa Agro Sidoarjo apartment complex to protect them from further violence. In addition, efforts at peaceful negotiation, restitution, and psychological rehabilitation have also been made to restore relations between the two groups and guarantee the rights of post-conflict victims (MUNDIROH LAILATUL MUNAWAROH, 2014).

The reconciliation strategy implemented by the government tends to use a cultural approach, such as involving clerics and community leaders in deliberations, as well as promoting local values such as *taretan tibi* (blood brotherhood) to rebuild trust and harmony (Adawiyah et al., 2022). The government also acts as a mediator, accommodating the aspirations of both sides and facilitating dialogue between Sunni and Shia leaders. However, we must be honest that the results more often than not only achieve negative peace, which is merely eliminating direct violence without resolving the roots of structural and social discrimination (*Mencari Keadilan dalam Resolusi Konflik Sunni dan Syiah di Sampang*, n.d.).

The main obstacle to reconciliation is the condition imposed by the Sunni group that Shia must "repent" and convert to Sunni if they want to return to their hometowns, which is clearly rejected by the Shia community because it contradicts their beliefs (Mundiroh Lailatul Munawaroh, 2014). In addition, social pressure, religious fatwas that corner the Shia, and the involvement of various parties with political interests further complicate the reconciliation process. The weak protection of the state towards minorities also makes the Shia group remain vulnerable and feel that they are not getting justice.

Therefore, Sunni-Shia reconciliation in Indonesia still faces major challenges, both in terms of social acceptance, state policy, and the courage to acknowledge and respect the internal diversity of Muslims. Integrative solutions involving independent mediation, cultural approaches, and fair legal protection are essential to ensure that reconciliation is not only formal but also substantive and sustainable (Adawiyah et al., 2022).

### **The Role of IJABI and ANNAS in Mitigating or Worsening Sunni-Shia Conflict**

The role of these two organizations, the Indonesian Ahlul Bait Community Association (IJABI) and the National Anti-Shia Alliance (ANAS), is very significant in shaping the narrative and actions surrounding the Sunni-Shia conflict in Indonesia, both in mitigating and exacerbating the situation. IJABI, as an organization representing the Shia community, plays a

proactive role in building dialogue and promoting a better understanding of Shia teachings to reduce stigmatization (Fatum Abubakar et al., 2022; Zulkifli, 2023). Some of IJABI's efforts include holding interfaith discussions and seminars to clarify misunderstandings about Shia, as well as being active in social and humanitarian movements that involve various elements of society regardless of their sectarian background (Saefudin et al., 2021). Moreover, one of Indonesia's Shia figures, Kang Jalal, is active in various interfaith and intercultural dialogue forums to bridge differences and promote tolerance in Indonesia's multicultural society.

Conversely, ANNAS, as an anti-Shia group, consistently spreads negative narratives and fatwas that consider Shia to be heretical teachings, which have the potential to increase tensions and trigger conflict. These narratives contribute to the stigmatization and prejudice against Shia Muslims, portraying them as a threat and thus hindering social cohesion and interfaith dialogue (Makhsun, 2019). This framing often depicts Shia as a heretical sect and a source of conflict within Muslim society, further exacerbating existing tensions (Zulkifli, 2024). Such rhetoric can significantly impede reconciliation efforts, as it reinforces existing biases and reduces the likelihood of constructive engagement between different Islamic denominations. Moreover, these narratives, often propagated through mass mobilization campaigns, have been observed to incite violence against religious minorities, particularly Shia groups, further complicating efforts to foster peace and understanding (Amal, 2020a). If we analyze the IJABI and ANAS websites alone, we can see the main messages of both sides.

The IJABI website generally highlights messages that support religious moderation, Islamic unity, and interfaith dialogue. While ANNAS tends to focus on publications that criticize Shia teachings, often accusing them of heresy or deviation from mainstream Islam, which can reinforce sectarian polarization (Suheri, 2024). This dynamic not only reflects ideological clashes but also actively contributes to the fragmentation of the Muslim community in Indonesia by fostering an environment ripe for misunderstanding and distrust. The polarization exacerbated by such online narratives is a critical challenge to religious moderation initiatives, which aim to promote interfaith harmony and prevent the escalation of sectarian strife (Mibtadin et al., 2024). This highlights the critical role of digital platforms in either fostering inclusive narratives or perpetuating exclusionary ideologies, directly impacting social cohesion and the potential for genuine reconciliation. This illustrates how different religious groups leverage digital media to reinforce their perspectives and influence public opinion, sometimes escalating tensions rather than fostering understanding (Al-Zaman & Alimi, 2021). The unchecked proliferation of religious narratives on digital platforms, often without adequate control, can lead to biased interpretations that validate one group while disparaging another, thereby fostering absolute religious fanaticism and an exclusionary stance toward diversity.

The government's role in this dynamic is crucial, as a lack of effective risk management in addressing such conflicts can escalate societal dissatisfaction and hinder social harmony. This underscores the critical need for governmental bodies to proactively implement comprehensive strategies for conflict resolution and interfaith dialogue, thereby fostering a more inclusive and tolerant society. This includes strengthening regulatory frameworks to preserve harmony and promoting a culture of peace and tolerance among diverse religious communities. This proactive approach is essential to counteract the influence of groups that exploit religious differences for political gain, often seen in the activities of anti-Shia alliances like ANAS, which contribute to sectarian polarization rather than fostering unity (Syarif et al., 2017).

The sustained efforts to counter anti-Shi'ism are vital, especially given its propagation in various countries, including Indonesia, where organizations like ANAS actively spread anti-Shi'a sentiment through diverse methods, including social media. This includes providing

negative views of Shi'a groups, thereby cultivating an "ontological enemy" through the binary opposition of an "authentic self" versus a "corrupted other" (Masduki et al., 2021). This ideological construct facilitates a self-fulfilling prophecy, framing certain groups as existential threats to Islamic identity and governance. This framing often utilizes socio-political narratives intertwined with theological principles to construct counter-discourses against perceived threats. So, the government and civil society organizations must collaboratively develop communication strategies that promote interfaith understanding and counter the spread of hate speech that fuels religious conflicts.

## CONCLUSION

This study successfully achieves its three primary objectives: (1) tracing the historical dynamics, ideologies, and goals of IJABI and ANNAS within Indonesia's Sunni-Shia context, revealing the shift from pre-Reformasi theological discourse to post-1998 violence; (2) analyzing their confrontation sequences, where IJABI promotes pluralist dialogue while ANNAS reinforces heresy fatwas through digital campaigns; and (3) evaluating their reconciliation roles, positioning IJABI as a positive agent and ANNAS as a structural barrier. The primary scholarly contribution lies in the first systematic comparison of IJABI-ANNAS, integrating framing theory by Zulkifli 2024 with historical institutionalism by Formichi, confirming tensions as socio-political constructions rather than absolute theology, and identifying fatwa-stigma cascades as violence triggers (e.g., Sampang 2012). Therefore, collective commitment from the state, religious organizations, and civil society is required to build inclusive dialogue frameworks, strengthen Islamic diversity principles, and guarantee minority constitutional rights without which Sunni-Shia reconciliation will remain formal and insubstantial, with potential for future conflict recurrence.

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